



Office of Small Business Advocate

A Report to the Governor and Tennessee General Assembly

July 1, 2012



STATE OF TENNESSEE
COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY
OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE
James K. Polk State Office Building
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 1700
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-1402

Justin P. Wilson
Comptroller

July 1, 2012

The Honorable Bill Haslam, Governor
The Honorable Ron Ramsey, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Senate
The Honorable Beth Harwell, Speaker of the House of Representatives
State Capitol
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Dear Governor Haslam, Lieutenant Governor Ramsey, and Speaker Harwell:

Transmitted herewith is the annual report from the Office of Small Business Advocate pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated Section 8-4-706.

Thank you for your consideration of this report, and please do not hesitate to contact the office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauren Plunk".

Lauren V. Plunk
Small Business Advocate

BACKGROUND

On July 1, 2010, Public Chapter 1129, Acts of 2010 became law and established the Office of Small Business Advocate (Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-4-701 et seq.). The Office of Small Business Advocate is administratively attached to the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury. The Office of Small Business Advocate is currently staffed by Lauren Plunk and Tanya Stoner.

PURPOSE

The Office of Small Business Advocate provides information and answers questions for owners of businesses with fifty (50) or fewer employees. The Office has the authority to act as an informal mediator to help resolve issues involving small businesses and state departments and agencies.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the Office include: receiving comments from small business owners regarding actions by agency or department employees conducting compliance or enforcement activities; referring comments from small business owners to the contact person for the appropriate agency or department and to maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the person making such comment; assisting with the resolution of issues concerning small business owners and state departments and agencies; ensure that small business owners who receive or are subject to an audit, on-site inspection, compliance assistance effort, or other enforcement-related communication or contact by agency or department personnel are provided with a means to communicate or comment on the enforcement activity conducted by such personnel; and rating agencies on the extent to which they notify small business owners about the existence of the small business advocate.

ORGANIZATION

The Office is currently staffed with the Small Business Advocate and an executive assistant.

OPERATIONS

The current contact information for the Office is:

Office of Small Business Advocate
1700 James K. Polk Building 505 Deaderick Street Nashville, TN 37243
Phone: (615) 401-7806
Toll-free phone (866) 831-3750
Fax: (615) 741-1551
Email: smallbusiness.advocate@cot.tn.gov
Website: www.comptroller1.tn.gov/OSBA

INQUIRIES AND ACTIVITIES

The Office of Small Business Advocate provides advice and guidance orally and in writing to small business owners. All issues or inquiries are addressed through phone calls and/or e-mails. The Office has received 180 inquiries this year. The information below details the work of the Office from July 1, 2011 (the date of the prior report of the Office to the Governor and the Speakers of the House and Senate) through June 30, 2012.

| | |
|--|-----|
| <u>Total Number of Inquiries:</u> | 180 |
| <u>Inquiries by Topic:</u> | |
| Application Status: | 11 |
| Enforcement: | 22 |
| Financial Assistance: | 26 |
| “How To” Questions: | 24 |
| Licensure: | 8 |
| Procurement: | 15 |
| Regulatory Compliance: | 48 |
| Role of the Office: | 8 |
| Other: | 18 |
| <u>Media:</u> | |
| Interviews: | 9 |
| Articles & Guest Columns: | 7 |
| <u>Presentations and Community Visits:</u> | 38 |

* Presentations and community visits made per the request of local chambers, business assistance programs, civic clubs, and legislators.

WEBSITE

The enabling legislation requires the Office of Small Business Advocate to have an internet presence. (See Attachment 1). Over the last year, the Office has improved its web presence to include a “Frequently Asked Questions” page as well as electronic posting of reports, presentations, and press releases issued and produced by the Office.

Tennessee Code Annotated Section 8-4-707 requires the Office to post to its website the contact information for the small business advocate and the names of all contact persons for each state department and agency as provided in Tennessee Code Annotated Section 8-4-703.

The home page for the Office of Small Business Advocate is located at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/OSBA/>

The department & agency contact list for the Office of Small Business Advocate is located at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/OSBA/ContactList.asp>

Attachment 1

Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury
Office of Small Business Advocate



Lauren Plunk
Small Business Advocate

Divisions / Offices ▾ Boards & Agencies ▾ Investor Information ▾ Publications ▾ Calendar & Public Notices Contact Us

Google Custom Search

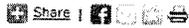
- Office of Small Business Advocate Home
- Our Office
- Law
- Reports
- Department & Agency Contact List
- Department & Agency Comment Form
- FAQ
- Press Releases
- Presentations
- Calendar
- Links

Contact Us:

Office of Small Business Advocate
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 1700
James K. Polk Building
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-1402
Phone: (615) 401-7806
Toll free phone: 1-866-831-3750
Fax: (615) 741-1551
smallbusiness.advocate@cot.tn.gov

What's New

Electronic Comment Form Available Now.
Click on "Department & Agency Comment Form" to access.



DEPARTMENT AND AGENCY CONTACTS

As required by Tennessee Code Annotated Section 8-4-703, thirty-four (34) state departments and agencies report having regulatory authority over business and have provided the Office of Small Business Advocate with a contact person.

| Department | Contact |
|---|----------------------|
| Tennessee Department of Agriculture | Keith Hodges |
| Tennessee Department of Children's Services | Mary Beth Franklyn |
| Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance | Steve Majchrzak |
| Tennessee Department of Correction | Emily Gibson |
| Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development | Josh Helton |
| Tennessee Department of Education | Stephen Smith |
| Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation | Linda Sadler |
| Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration | Robert Yemm |
| Tennessee Department of Financial Institutions | Tina Miller |
| Tennessee Department of General Services | Shelia Simpson |
| Tennessee Department of Health | Eugene Neubert |
| Tennessee Department of Human Services | Nathalie Essex |
| Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities | Frederick Zimmermann |
| Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development | Stephanie Mitchell |
| Tennessee Department of Mental Health | Cynthia Tyler |
| Tennessee Department of Military | William Wenzler |
| Tennessee Department of Revenue | Barbara Sampson |
| Tennessee Department of Safety & Homeland Security | Roger Hutto |
| Tennessee Department of State | Mona Hart |
| Tennessee Department of Tourist Development | Carter Meadows |
| Tennessee Department of Transportation | Deborah Luter |
| Tennessee Department of Treasury | Josh Stites |
| Tennessee Department of Veterans' Affairs | Wendell Cheek |
| Bureau of TennCare | Keith Gaither |
| Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission | Keith Bell |
| Tennessee Board of Probation and Parole | Donna Burke |
| Tennessee Human Rights Commission | Tiffany Baker Cox |
| Tennessee Education Lottery Corporation | Cynthia Fitzgerald |
| Tennessee Higher Education Commission | Julie Woodruff |
| Tennessee Peace Officer Standards & Training Commission | Brian Grisham |
| Tennessee Regulatory Authority | David Foster |
| Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation | Peter Abernathy |
| TRICOR | Adrienne Brandon |
| Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency | Nat E. Johnson |

COMMON EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

- Application Status:
 - Can you check on the status of a particular permit or application that I filed?

- Enforcement:
 - The Department is telling me that I owe X amount in taxes or fees. Can you assist me with resolving this issue?
 - The Department is telling me that I am required to get this type of licensure or permit. I disagree; can you assist me with resolving this issue?

- Financial Assistance:
 - Is there financial assistance, grant money, or a loan program available to start a particular type of small business?

- “How To” Questions:
 - How do I open a business in Tennessee?
 - How do I register with the State for tax purposes?
 - How do I write a business plan?

- Licensure:
 - Do I need a license to operate this type of business?
 - What are the requirements to receive this type of licensure?
 - How does the licensure application process work?

- Procurement:
 - How do I register to do business with the State?
 - What certifications are available to small businesses?
 - How do I become certified as a small business, women-owned business, or minority-owned business?

- Regulatory Compliance:
 - How is my unemployment tax rate calculated; how do I lower the rate?
 - What are the regulatory obligations to open a particular type of business?
 - Do I need to collect sales tax for this type of business activity?
 - How do I close out my business?