



OFFICE OF
SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE

ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 2016

Justin P. Wilson
Comptroller of the Treasury

Richard Wilson
Small Business Advocate

The 2016 Annual Report of the Office of Small Business Advocate is prepared in accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-4-706. This report provides an overview of the Office's activities during the past year.

Dear Members of the 109th General Assembly,

As the Small Business Advocate of Tennessee, I am here to assist the small business owners in your community. The Office of Small Business Advocate (OSBA) is a central resource available to answer questions affecting small businesses, including, how to obtain business licenses and register an LLC. I am available to offer guidance and facilitate conversations between small business owners and state agencies.



Small businesses are a vital part of Tennessee's economy and it is my ultimate goal to ensure potential business owners have all the necessary information to be successful in creating or running a small business. In Tennessee, 94% of businesses have 20 or fewer employees. The OSBA is the most direct path, when business owners have limited resources and expertise, to navigate complicated issues that relate to state government.

During 2015, I traveled the state to meet with various small business groups and receive comments on common issues facing small businesses in the current economic environment. I also met with the leaders of Small Business Development Centers to discuss how our offices can work together to strengthen relationships between state government and small business owners.

In September of 2015, the Office hosted a State Agency Roundtable discussion in conjunction with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development's Business Enterprise Resource Office (BERO). The OSBA and BERO host this meeting biannually to help foster collaboration between state agencies. This year's event focused on a cross-agency discussion of recently-passed legislation that impacts Tennessee's small businesses.

Improving access to essential information will encourage the creation and growth of more small businesses in our state. Please help me support the businesses in your community by sharing information about the Office.

If I can be of assistance to you or your constituents, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Richard Wilson
Small Business Advocate

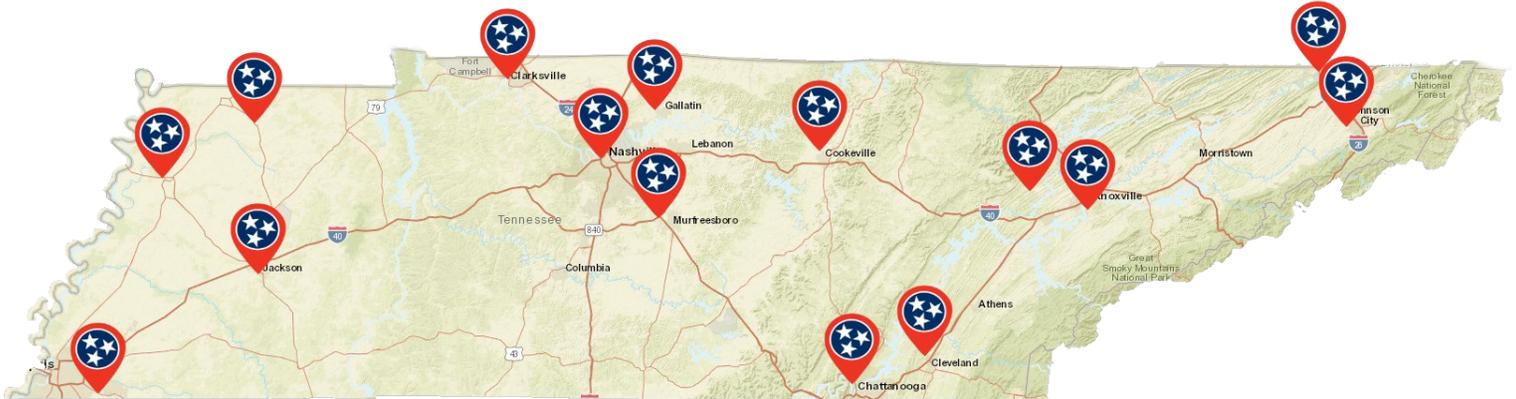
RAISING AWARENESS

During the past year, the Small Business Advocate raised awareness of the Office by:

- ✪✪ Traveling across the state to engage with the leaders of Tennessee's Small Business Development Centers (*Please see the map on the next page.*);
- ✪✪ Coordinating and hosting a biannual roundtable discussion with ECD's Business Enterprise Resource Office;
- ✪✪ Working with media on interviews, articles, and newspaper columns; and
- ✪✪ Meeting with community and civic groups across the state.

MAP OF TENNESSEE'S SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

During the summer of 2015, the OSBA conducted a road trip across the state to visit with each of the directors of the Small Business Development Centers. Small Business Development Centers are a part of the U.S. Small Business Administration. They offer free one-on-one guidance for potential or existing small business owners.



OFFICE GOALS

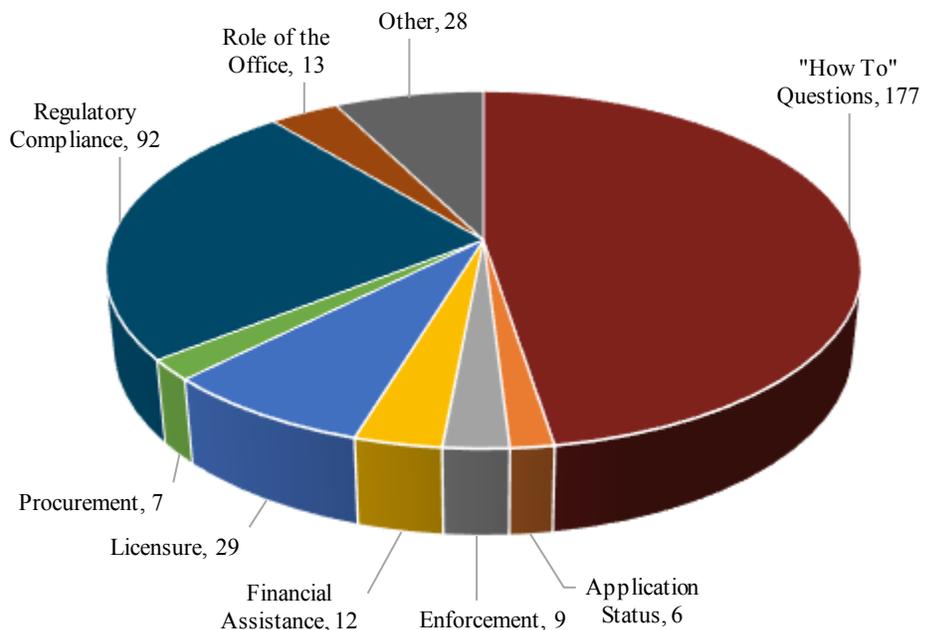
The objectives of the Office of Small Business Advocate are to:

- ★ Answer questions and provide information to individuals who are starting a small business or who already own a small business in Tennessee;
- ★ Informally mediate and assist with the resolution of issues concerning small business owners and state departments or agencies;
- ★ Work with each state agency and department with regulatory authority over businesses;
- ★ Receive comments from small business owners regarding actions by agency or department employees conducting compliance or enforcement activities; and
- ★ Refer comments from small business owners to the contact person of the involved agency or department in the appropriate circumstances and maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the person making such comments.

INQUIRIES BY THE NUMBERS

- Since its creation, the Office has assisted in resolving more than **1,600** inquiries.
- From July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016, the Office assisted small businesses with **373** inquiries.
- Over the past year, small business inquiries were referred to **18** state agencies.

INQUIRIES BY CATEGORY



AGENCY CONTACTS

As required by Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-4-703, the thirty state departments and agencies that report having regulatory authority over business have provided the Office of Small Business Advocate with a contact person. These contacts assist in the resolution of issues involving their agency. A complete list of agency contacts is available on the [Office's website](#).

AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS

Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-4-705 requires the Office of Small Business Advocate to evaluate and report annually to the General Assembly on state government's responsiveness to small business owners' concerns. On January 1, 2013, a rating system for timeliness of response was implemented. For a chart showing this year's ratings of state agencies, please visit the Office's website.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does the Office of Small Business Advocate do?

The Office of Small Business Advocate was established to make Tennessee government more responsive to small business owners. When a small business owner has questions about which state government department they need to speak with, or if they are experiencing difficulties with a state department or agency, they may contact the Office of Small Business Advocate.

When should a small business owner contact the Office of Small Business Advocate?

If a small business owner does not know who to contact or what procedure to use, then the Office can assist. If a small business owner has attempted to resolve an issue with a department or agency and they are unable to reach a solution, or if a small business owner is having difficulties navigating state government, then he or she should contact the Office of Small Business Advocate.

Who does the Office of Small Business Advocate contact within a department or agency to resolve an issue?

The law requires leaders of departments or agencies with regulatory authority over small businesses to appoint an employee to serve as the Office of Small Business Advocate's point of contact. A complete list of these individuals can be found on the Office's website.

INQUIRIES BY AGENCY

Alcoholic Beverage Commission	2
Department of Agriculture	5
Department of Commerce and Insurance	13
Department of Correction	1
Department of Environment and Conservation	1
Department of Financial Institutions	2
Department of Health	6
Department of Human Services	2
Department of Labor and Workforce Development	4
Department of Mental Health	2
Department of Revenue	30
Department of Safety & Homeland Security	2
Department of State	9
Department of Transportation	3
Health Services and Development Agency	1
Higher Education Commission	3
Tennessee Regulatory Authority	1
Wildlife Resources Agency	1

CONTACT INFORMATION

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