

An Overview of the Office of Small Business Advocate

Lauren Plunk

Small Business Advocate

Office of Small Business Advocate

General Sub of Consumer & Employee Affairs

January 25, 2012



Office of Small Business Advocate

History of the Office

- ◆ In 2010, 106th General Assembly passed Senate Bill 3484.
 - Public Acts 2010, Chapter 1129
 - Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-4-701 et seq.

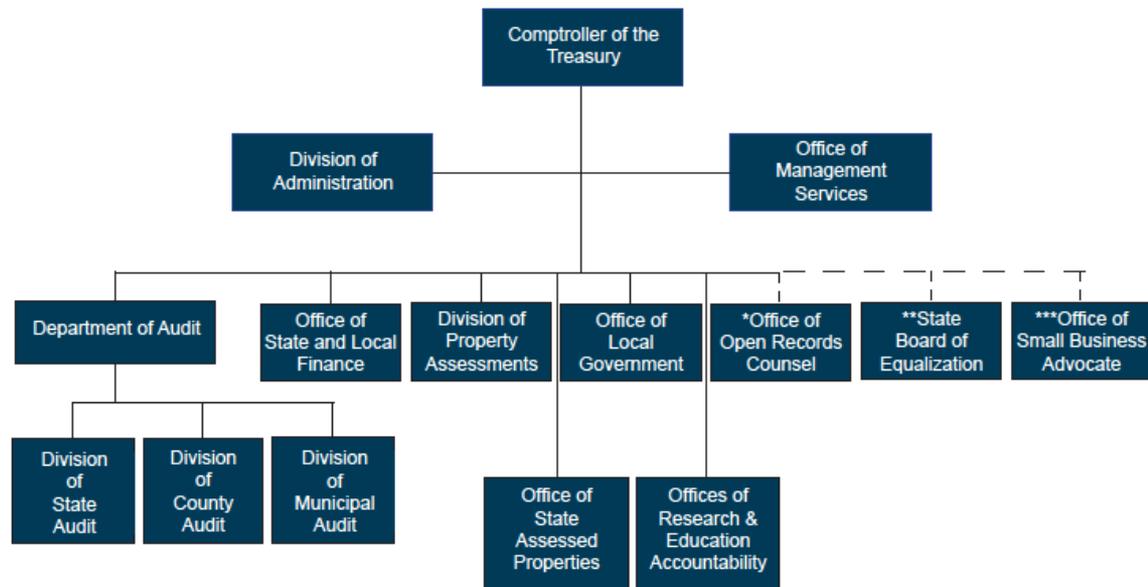
Office of Small Business Advocate

History of the Office

- ◆ The Office is Housed within the Comptroller of the Treasury's office.
- ◆ Mission Statement: The mission of the Comptroller's Office is to improve the quality of life for all Tennesseans by making government work better.

Office of Small Business Advocate History of the Office

Comptroller of the Treasury Organizational Chart



- * The Office of Open Records Counsel is housed within the Comptroller's office for administrative purposes.
- ** The Comptroller is a member of the State Board of Equalization, and the Board staff is housed within the Comptroller's office for administrative purposes.
- *** The Office of Small Business Advocate is housed within the Comptroller's office for administrative purposes.

Office of Small Business Advocate

History of the Office

- ◆ Joined the office in June of 2011

- ◆ Background

- ◆ Contact Information
 - Phone: (615) 401-7806
 - Toll free phone: 1-866-831-3750
 - Email: smallbusiness.advocate@cot.tn.gov
 - Website: www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/OSBA



Office of Small Business Advocate

◆ Goals for the Office:

- Serve as a guide for small business owners to state government.
- Advocate on behalf of small business owners to the executive branch.
- Become another voice for small business owners in the legislative process.

Office of Small Business Advocate

Purpose of the Office

- ◆ The Office of Small Business Advocate serves as a point of contact in state government for owners of businesses with **fifty (50) or fewer employees**.
- ◆ The Office provides information and answers questions for Tennesseans who are starting a small business or who already own a small business.
- ◆ The Office assists in the resolution of issues concerning small businesses and state departments and agencies.

Office of Small Business Advocate Statutory Duties

- ◆ Answer questions and provide information.
- ◆ Informally mediate.
- ◆ Ensure small business owners are provided a means to communicate or comment on enforcement activity by a state department or agency.
- ◆ Receive comments from small business owners.
- ◆ Refer comments to the affected department or agency.

Office of Small Business Advocate Reporting Duties

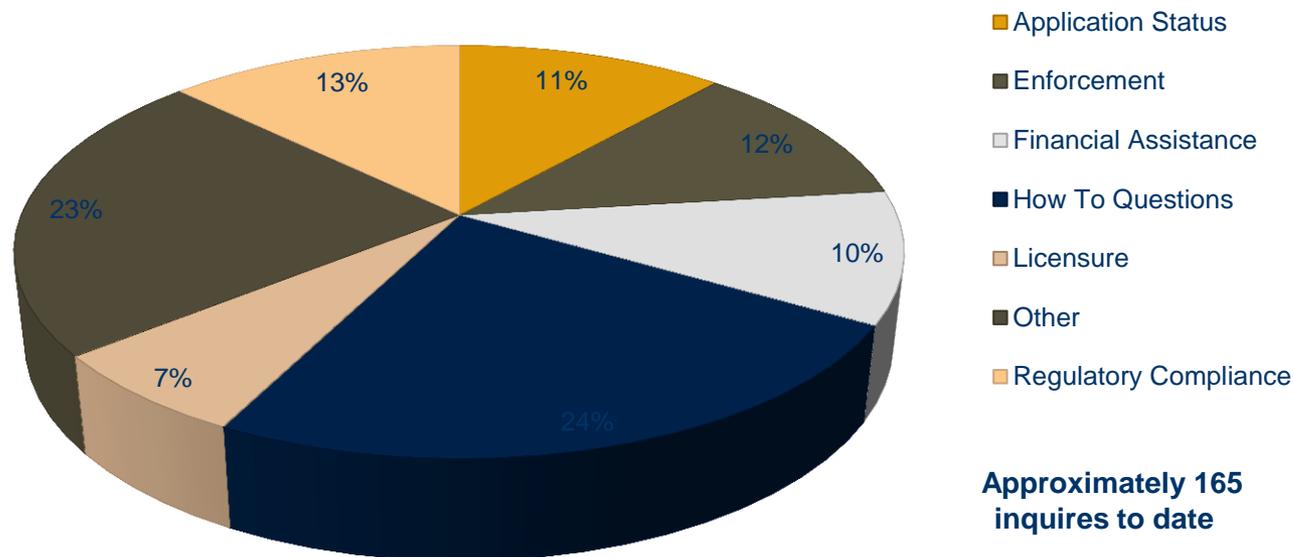
- ◆ Report annually to the Governor, Members of the General Assembly, and department and agency heads.
- ◆ Report annually to Commerce Committee.
 - First reports - July 1, 2010

Office of Small Business Advocate Frequent Inquires

- ◆ Application Status
- ◆ Enforcement
- ◆ Financial Assistance
- ◆ “How To” Questions
- ◆ Licensure
- ◆ Regulatory Compliance

Office of Small Business Advocate

Frequent Inquiries to the Office of Small Business Advocate



Office of Small Business Advocate

Frequent Inquiry Examples

- ◆ Application Status:
 - Filed X, Y days ago
- ◆ Enforcement:
 - Audit findings; Payment plan assistance
- ◆ Financial Assistance:
 - Specific types of business; Grants; Loans

Office of Small Business Advocate

Frequent Inquiry Examples

- ◆ “How To” Questions:
 - General information; Doing business with the state; Getting started
- ◆ Licensure:
 - The process; Requirements for a particular licensure; Do I need one at all?
- ◆ Regulatory Compliance:
 - Unemployment rate; Sales tax collection; Closing a business
- ◆ Other
 - Local issues; Other regulations

Office of Small Business Advocate Inquiry Procedure

- ◆ Contact in each department and agency with regulatory authority over business
- ◆ Formal v. Informal process
- ◆ Each inquiry is different

Office of Small Business Advocate Moving Forward

- ◆ Website updates
- ◆ Electronic comment form
- ◆ Community outreach & presentations

Office of Small Business Advocate

Small business owners should not have to waste their time figuring out the who, what, where, when, and why of state government.

Office of Small Business Advocate

Contact Information

Office of Small Business Advocate
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 1700
James K. Polk Building
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Phone: 615.401.7806

Toll-free phone: 1.866.831.3750

Email: smallbusiness.advocate@cot.tn.gov

Web: www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/OSBA

