



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: October 30, 2002

Contact: Roger Hopkins (202) 205-6567

Release Number: 02-58

Internet Address: <http://www.sba.gov/news/indexheadline.html>

NATIONAL OMBUDSMAN WEB SITE LOGS A MILLION HITS FOR REGULATORY ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of the National Ombudsman has recorded one million hits to its Web site offering assistance and information to small businesses with complaints about excessive regulatory enforcement.

"One of President Bush's top priorities is giving small business owners a voice in the complex and confusing federal regulatory process," said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto. "It is extremely gratifying to know that the SBA, through National Ombudsman Michael Barrera and his office, has been able to reach so many small business people with this important service."

In the nine months that the Web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman has been available it has become a valuable informational tool and an efficient and effective way to file complaints and concerns. The online complaint system can be accessed 24 hours a day whenever a small business owner finds time in his or her busy schedule.

A three-question preview page helps determine whether or not the ONO can help. After answering the questions a short, two-page confidential form pops up that can be mailed, faxed or electronically delivered to the office. Complaints and comments can also be delivered by calling 1-888 REGFAIR or by writing the Office of the National Ombudsman, U.S. Small Business Administration, 409 3rd St. SW, MC2120, Washington, D.C. 20416-0005.

National Ombudsman Barrera acts as a neutral liaison between small businesses and federal regulatory agencies, bringing complaints and concerns about unfair regulatory enforcement actions to the attention of high level agency officials. Such actions may include repetitive audits or investigations, excessive and unfair fines or penalties, and threats of retaliation for complaints.

"Entrepreneurs cannot operate effectively in a regulatory enforcement environment of uncertainty and confusion," said Barrera. "Such an environment makes entrepreneurs spend more time sorting through complex material and less time with their customers."

Small business owners can also voice complaints and concerns to Barrera and his staff at Regulatory Fairness Board hearings conducted across the country. They are typically attended by representatives of federal regulatory agencies who sometimes can resolve problems on the spot.

For more information about SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA or TDD 704-344-6640 or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov.

*SBA, in partnership with Staples, has introduced an online newsletter **SBA Solutions**. For a free subscription, go to <http://web.sba.gov/list>, and select New **SBA Solutions Newsletter**.*

###