



News Release

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Office of the National Ombudsman Releases Annual Report

WASHINGTON – The Office of the National Ombudsman at the U.S. Small Business Administration recently released its annual report to the 110th Congress, rating federal agencies' responsiveness to the regulatory enforcement issues small businesses faced during fiscal year 2006.

Created by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA), the Office of the National Ombudsman works with each federal agency that has regulatory authority over small businesses to ensure regulatory issues are handled and enforced fairly.

"The state of America's 25 million small businesses is stronger than ever before," said National Ombudsman and Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Nicholas N. Owens. "However, with opportunities for success there are also compliance and regulatory challenges. Looking forward, there is still much work to be done."

The report summarizes small businesses' experiences with various federal agencies, and assigns each agency a "grade" based on their responsiveness to small business concerns. The rating system evaluates agencies according to the timeliness and quality of response, the presence of a non-retaliation policy, their degree of regulatory enforcement compliance assistance to small businesses, and the level of their participation in Regulatory Fairness hearings. These grades can be found in table II-1 of the report.

Agencies made great progress in 2006, increasingly improving their responsiveness to small businesses. For example, in the last three years federal agencies decreased their response time to comments submitted by the National Ombudsman by 35 days, to an average 30-day turnaround. In addition, the quality of responses has increased significantly, often leading to faster and more effective resolutions.

The report reflects these important developments through real-life success stories of small businesses which worked with the National Ombudsman to overcome excessive enforcement measures, or errors made by the regulatory agency.

"The National Ombudsman helps small businesses navigate the seas of federal regulatory enforcement," Owens said. "It is essential that regulatory enforcement be effective, and not excessive. My office is committed to this important goal."

The National Ombudsman's 2006 Report to Congress is available online at:
http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/ombudsman/ombud_annualreports.html

For more information about the Office of the National Ombudsman, visit the Web site at
www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

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