



News Release

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Office of the National Ombudsman Releases 2005 Annual Report

WASHINGTON – The Office of the National Ombudsman at the U.S. Small Business Administration recently released its annual report to the 109th Congress, rating the responsiveness of federal agencies to the regulatory enforcement issues faced by small businesses during fiscal year 2005.

The Office of the National Ombudsman, created by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA), produces an annual report to Congress on federal regulatory enforcement activities involving small businesses. The National Ombudsman also works with each federal agency that has regulatory authority over small businesses to ensure that regulatory issues are handled and enforced fairly.

“The state of America’s 25 million small businesses is stronger than ever before,” said National Ombudsman Nicholas N. Owens. “However, with opportunities of success there are also challenges – compliance and regulatory challenges. The Office of the National Ombudsman helps navigate small businesses through concerns of unfair or excessive federal regulatory enforcement.”

The National Ombudsman’s report provides a voice for small businesses in the complex and confusing federal regulatory process. Moving forward, the National Ombudsman intends to closely evaluate the responsiveness of agencies to small businesses with respect to compliance assistance in the rulemaking process.

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.

“Small businesses need to feel comfortable in telling their government both the good and the bad. This office provides a means for them to provide that input without fear of retaliation,” National Ombudsman Owens said. “An agency’s non-retaliation policy is a vital element in ensuring a fair and transparent process.”

National Ombudsman Owens said he looks forward to “working with Congress and federal agencies to identify excessive regulatory barriers for the nation’s small businesses, and to foster a more small business-friendly regulatory enforcement environment.”

The National Ombudsman’s 2005 Report to Congress is available online at:

<http://www.sba.gov/ombudsman/reports/docs/ono2005report.pdf>

For more information about the Office of the National Ombudsman, visit the Web site at

www.sba.gov/ombudsman.