



Article 191

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Advocacy Office Helps Businesses Break through Roadblocks

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One of the first initiatives of Governor Susana Martinez and Cabinet Secretary-designate Jon Barela was to create the Office of Business Advocacy, a place where business owners and entrepreneurs can get help navigating the state's inherent bureaucracies. The office opened on January 10, 2011, just days after Barela began his job as Secretary of the New Mexico's Economic Development Department.

As a small-business owner, Barela was familiar with barriers – both within government and in the marketplace – that obstruct business development and impede job growth. His goal is to remove roadblocks and create an efficient route to building New Mexico's economy one business at a time. The core mission of the business advocacy office is to advance New Mexico business by resolving regulatory and public policy issues that challenge business growth.

Economic Development Department advocates assigned to the Office of Business Advocacy act as caseworkers to solve issues such as delayed licenses, inspection problems and permit misunderstandings. Advocates check the status of applications and facilitate their movement through the system. Cases are not closed until issues are resolved.

Sometimes resolution is as simple as setting up a meeting with the right person or department. Advocates have decades of experience in state government and are knowledgeable about intergovernmental affairs. They work with regional departments and offices to get to key decision makers.

Advocacy at work

A Deming manufacturing company that was forced to halt production when state inspectors were unsure how to classify one of the company's modular buildings was able to resume operations after an Office of Business Advocacy caseworker intervened. A new plant in Chaparral opened on schedule when a caseworker expedited construction inspections. Delays can be costly, and thousands of dollars in downtime were saved when these businesses were quickly back on track.

Advocacy also results in retained jobs. When a high-tech company was forced to lay off more than a dozen employees due to a delayed tax incentive authorization, a caseworker intervened to quickly qualify the company so that work could resume and employees could be re-hired. When

a construction contractor's public-works bidding permit was revoked due to an application misunderstanding, the Office of Business Advocacy stepped in to clear the confusion, enabling the contractor to get back to business acquiring public works jobs that provided employment for many people.

Beyond problem solving

Assistance outside state government is also provided. Strategic partnerships have been formed with the New Mexico Small Business Development Center network of 20 offices around the state, the U.S. Small Business Administration and other service providers. Tools are available to help businesses get started, grow and add employees. Customized resources, such as research reports to assist with market development, can also be provided.

For more information about the Office of Business Advocacy, visit www.NMforBusiness.com. To initiate a case, call 505-827-2486 or email business.advocacy@state.nm.us.

Finance New Mexico is an initiative of the New Mexico Small Business Investment Corporation (NMSBIC) and its partners to assist individuals and businesses in obtaining skills and funding-resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org.

