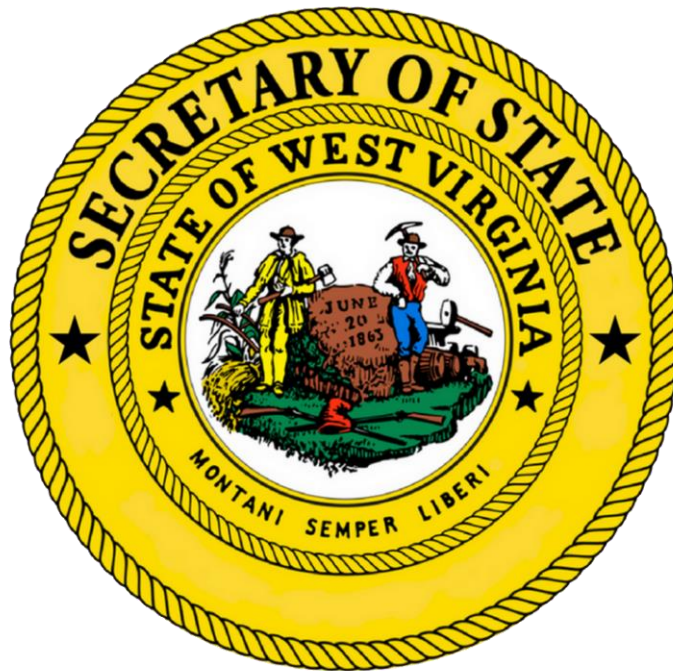


# NASS 2021 IDEAS AWARD

West Virginia Secretary of State's Office



## **Subject Area of Nomination: The WV One Stop Business Center**

Starting a business, applying for a professional license, and renewing current businesses and professional licenses has never been easier, faster, or more efficient in West Virginia thanks to the creation of a single location multi-agency office where registration can take place with "one stop".

*Project lead:*

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## **Background**

The West Virginia Secretary of State's Office plays a unique role in facilitating business development in West Virginia. The Business & Licensing Division is responsible for registering and maintaining annual reports for nearly 117,000 business entities operating in the state. The responsibility of registration also includes the licensure of notaries, private investigators, scrap metal dealers, sports agents and those who perform marriages.

While the Secretary of State's Office is the first point of contact when starting a business, prospective business owners must also visit four other state agencies including the West Virginia State Tax Department, WV Division of Labor and Workforce West Virginia before being able to officially open their doors. The lack of a clear roadmap to navigate the administrative process makes starting a business quite cumbersome for entrepreneurs, especially when each agency has separate physical locations that can sometimes be miles apart.

At the request of the West Virginia state legislature, the Secretary of State's Office was charged with streamlining the process by establishing a web-based portal that acts as a single point-of-entry for prospective business owners. This effort would require years of planning, funding and collaboration between multiple state agencies and their vendors.

## **The WV One Stop Business Center**

The team at the Secretary of State's Office determined the starting block for this extraordinary partnership would be to test its functionality by establishing a multi-agency physical location for in-person business services. In 2018 this concept became the WV One Stop Business Center - the only four-agency single-location business and licensing center in the nation.

The WV One Stop Business Center pilot project has since expanded to five agencies with the inclusion of the West Virginia Small Business Development Center, a branch of the West Virginia Department of Commerce that offers individual business coaching for its clients. Entrepreneurs can now walk into the One Stop location and leave that same day with a registered business and management strategy. Never have small business owners had such readily available business resources at their disposal in West Virginia.

With two of the four state agencies officially onboarded to the electronic portal, the Secretary of State's Office is making headway towards the completion of its mission to facilitate a web-based nexus for all business services in the state of West Virginia. In the meantime, many of our office's registration and licensing services have already been made available online through the Enterprise Registration & Licensing System (ERLS) we released in 2020.

In only four years, the Secretary of State's Office has fostered the inter-agency communication needed to create a business environment that lets West Virginians know that our office is investing in them as much as they are investing in the mountain state. While we continue to work on an online portal, business owners can rest assured knowing that any region in the state is two hours or less from either the One Stop location or one of our remote offices where they can receive free parking and quality service from one of our licensing professionals. Through this effort, the Secretary of State's Office is confident that West Virginia can continue to grow its job market to where all entrepreneurs can feel comfortable to come and start a business.

## **The WV One Stop Business Center Achievements**

### **Innovation**

The WV One Stop Business Center is now the only five-agency location in the nation that offers comprehensive business services with no additional cost in taxpayer funding. All additional

responsibilities were absorbed by existing staff members and any expenses are offset by the profits made from expedited service fees.

The WV One Stop houses representatives from the West Virginia Secretary of State's Office, West Virginia Division of Labor, West Virginia State Tax Department, Workforce West Virginia, and the West Virginia Small Business and Development Center. This was a first-of-its kind initiative that has been growing ever since its inception.

While completing the WV One Stop electronic portal, the Secretary of State's Office has already made most of its licensing services completely accessible online through the Enterprise Registration & Licensing System. This allows customers access 24/7 to complete most registrations and filings including Notaries, Charitable Organizations, Professional Fundraisers, Private Investigators, Marriage Celebrants, Athlete Agents, Scrap Metal Dealers, Trademarks and Apostilles.

Living by the motto of "*Moving at the Speed of Business*", the WV Secretary of State's Business & Licensing Division understands that time is money in the realm of entrepreneurship. What used to take weeks in some cases can now take only days thanks to all four state agencies being housed in one location. For additional fees, business owners or startups can have their filings expedited from one day to even one hour. These expedited fees made up \$221,500 of revenue in the year 2020 alone with most of the fees coming from the 24-hour expedited service fee of only \$50.

### **Customer Service**

The West Virginia Secretary of State's Office has been dedicated to bringing a customer service approach to state government since Secretary Warner's tenure began in 2017. In a survey conducted in 2019 that received 311 responses from new customers who had recently registered their businesses, 96.29% indicated that the One Stop staff members were friendly and helpful. Not only were survey respondents extremely satisfied with the quality of assistance we were giving them, but 74.5% indicated that it was easy to complete the registration process itself.

Thanks to the tremendous work the Secretary of State's Office has done with the legislature, we now have two fee waiver programs for our most important customer bases in West Virginia. Veterans re-entering the workforce and those who are under the age of 30 qualify for their initial registration fees to be waived, with veterans also being eligible for no-cost annual report filings for the first four years of owning a business. Between the incentives in these two waiver programs combined with the resources One Stop offers in partnership with the Small Business Development Center, there have never been more assets available to those who serve or those who choose to stay in West Virginia.

### **Results**

Since the WV One Stop Business Center was opened on January 17, 2018 none of the state's 55 counties have experienced a decline in business growth with 36 out of 55 recording at least 20% growth according to our Business Statistics Database. These figures include a 17.20% growth in out-of-state business.

Even through the COVID-19 pandemic, West Virginia saw more businesses register than years prior. The calendar year of 2020 saw 13,295 businesses register as opposed to 13,052 in the calendar year 2019. This number is up from 10,084 businesses registered in 2017, the year before the One Stop business center was conceived.

Revenue in the WV One Stop Business Center's expedited service fees is up from \$48,100 in 2017 to \$221,500 in 2020. This demonstrates the business community's responsiveness to the initiative with no decline in sight as we continue to receive more registrations each year in the mountain state.

## Supporting Documents

### Press Releases:

- [WVSOS Business & Licensing Division Continues to Assist Customers without Interruption](#)
- [It has Never Been Easier to Start a New Business in West Virginia](#)
- [“Business Startup Wizard” Helps Entrepreneurs Determine Legal Status](#)
- [Warner announces results of WV Business Registration Survey](#)
- [Secretary of State Announces Agreement to Expand Services for WV Businesses](#)

### Video: One Stop Business Center- We Mean Business!



## One Stop Rack Card



### WV ONE STOP BUSINESS CENTER

**Start a Business in Just One Day and in One Stop!**

The West Virginia One Stop Business Center is a cooperative multi-agency effort to encourage business growth in the Mountain State.

One Stop gives businesses - from new start-ups to established businesses - tools and access they would normally only get separately. **Starting or growing a business has never been easier in West Virginia.**

The WV One Stop Business Center can have you on the way to conducting business in as little as one hour. If you're thinking about starting a new business or if you're ready to expand, contact us or stop by to see how One Stop can help you!

**FREE PARKING**      **EASY ACCESS**

West Virginia  
One Stop Business Center  
1615 East Washington Street  
Charleston, WV 25311  
business4.wv.gov



**ONE STOP BUSINESS CENTER**  
*Moving at the Speed of Business!*



**Secretary of State**  
(304) 558-8000

- Business Registration
- Expedited Services
- Business Start-Up Advice
- Filings



**State Tax Department**  
(304) 558-3333

- Tax Issues
- Filings
- Payments
- Quick Business Regulation Approvals



**Division of Labor**  
(304) 558-7890

- Contractor Compliance
- Payments
- Licensing Approvals
- Status Letters




**WorkForce West Virginia**  
(304) 558-2657

- Unemployment Issues
- Calculation of Payments
- "No Liability Letters"
- Compliance Letters



## Young Entrepreneur Waiver



### YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR WAIVER

**BUSINESS & LICENSING DIVISION  
WV ONE STOP BUSINESS CENTER**

The Young Entrepreneur Reinvestment Act, states any incorporator of an incorporation, member of a limited liability company, or partner of a partnership who is a West Virginia resident under the age of 30 may have their initial registration filing fee waived.

For more information, visit [go.wv.gov/YEW](http://go.wv.gov/YEW)

**WAIVER REQUIREMENTS**

- 1) Must be a WV Resident with Proof of Residency
- 2) Must be Under the Age of 30
- 3) Business Must be Formed 7/1/2016 or Thereafter
- 4) Must be Incorporator of an Incorporation, Member of a LLC, or Partner of a Partnership

**FILING YOUR WAIVER**

- 1) Complete the Young Entrepreneur Act Fee Waiver Request
- 2) Include Copies of Your Proof of Age and Proof of Residency Documents
- 3) Complete the Application for Your Business Type

**One Stop Business Center:**  
1615 East Washington Street  
Charleston, WV 25311-2126


**North Central Business Hub:**  
200 West Main St.  
Clarksburg, WV 26301

**Eastern Panhandle Business Hub:**  
229 East Martin St.  
Martinsburg, WV 25401

(304) 558-8000  
Toll Free: (866) 767-8683  
business@wvsos.gov

**For More Information & Registration Visit:**  
onestop.wv.gov  
sos.wv.gov

## Boots to Business Fee Waiver



### BOOTS TO BUSINESS

**BUSINESS & LICENSING DIVISION  
WV ONE STOP BUSINESS CENTER**

**The Boots to Business Waiver Encourages Veterans to Open Businesses in West Virginia**

When it comes to serving veterans, West Virginia means business! West Virginia takes great pride in honoring military veterans and their families. In a bipartisan effort to promote economic growth and to facilitate veterans transitioning from serving our country to re-entering the work force, the WV Legislature passed the veteran-owned Boots to Business Senate Bill 316 which waives the initial business registration fee and the annual report filing fee for the first four years for new business registrations.

The **Boots to Business** Waiver was Endorsed by the West Virginia Veteran Coalition

**REQUIREMENTS**

- 1) Meet WV Code Requirements of Veteran
- 2) Must be Honorable Discharge or Under Honorable Conditions
- 3) Veteran(e) Must Own at Least 51 Percent of Stock

**AVAILABLE FOR:**

- Corporations
- LLC's
- Non-Profits
- Professional LLC's
- Limited Liability Partnerships
- Business Trust
- Voluntary Association

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