



WIPP Works In Washington – January 2012
By Ann Sullivan

“We Could All Use a Little More Simplification”

Have you ever tried to have a question answered by a government agency and haven't been able to get one? Maybe you've tried to navigate a government website trying to track down information and found you could spend weeks trying to find it. Or maybe you thought you'd go ahead and call the 1-800 number only to face an incomprehensible, overly complex menu of options. God help you if you needed to find the answer from more than one agency.

If any of these statements ring true, take a look at the “spaghetti” chart that the White House put out on Friday: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/businessusa>. This chart identifies over 80 places to access government resources – and they're just resources for business-related inquiries.

Last Friday, President Obama unveiled a new White House initiative to strengthen and streamline how small businesses can access government resources, but more importantly, how government provides those resources. After a year of listening to small businesses, including inviting WIPP to attend meetings with the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness, the President has proposed combining six federal agencies that focus on business and trade into one department. The agencies are: the Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Export-Import Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency.

While the streamlining requires Congressional approval, the President used his executive authority to elevate the Small Business Administration to a Cabinet-level agency. That means that SBA Administrator Karen Mills is now a Cabinet member. Senators Landrieu and Snowe have been calling for this since the day President Obama was elected because it gives small business a seat at the government decision-making table like never before.

Under the slogan of “making it easier to do business in America,” the White House launched BusinessUSA.gov, a single, central location for business-owners to access information, get questions answered, and navigate government regulations.

Of course the devil is in the details, but consolidation of critical resources and the cross pollination that occurs when programs are under the same umbrella is cause for applause. In fact, this is such a good idea, Obama and the Congress should consider doing this across the entire government.

This is a wonderful start to the New Year. Perhaps 2012 will be the year of simplification. Dare we suggest this could be a bipartisan effort.