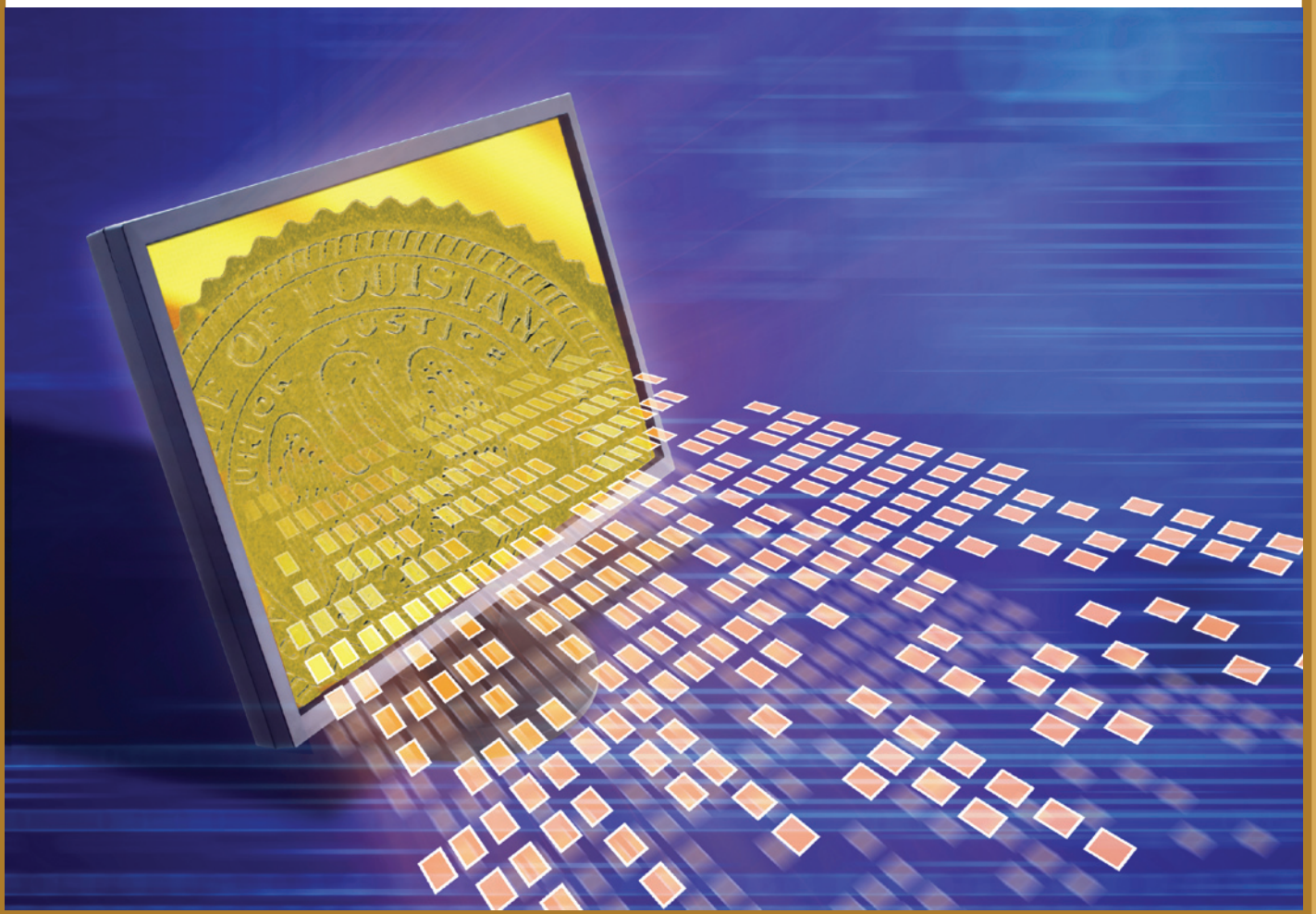


Secretary of State's Office Offering New Services to Aid Entrepreneurs, Businesses

By Jay Dardenne
Louisiana Secretary of State



With an early November target date set for the availability of online filing for registration and renewal documents for your local businesses, our Commercial Division in the Secretary of State's Office is taking a mighty leap into the future.

This latest development makes registering businesses and maintaining current information easier for our customers by providing an Internet portal that can be accessed from anywhere in the world.

The Commercial Division is the registration agency that all entrepreneurs and businesses wishing to conduct operations in Louisiana must contact for authority. Currently, registrants must complete and submit the required paperwork by one of three methods: mail, fax or personal appearance. Our new online filing system will give them the fourth option of filing via the Internet.

The first phase of this online filing option will be available for original filings of profit and non-profit corporations, both domestic (Louisiana) and foreign (out-of-state), and domestic and foreign limited liability companies.

Also included in this phase is a particularly exciting feature — online filing of annual reports. Existing businesses will be able to make necessary changes to information on file with our office directly on their computers. Previously, this was achieved only by submitting an annual report form through the mail.

The next phase will involve expansion of the type of entities and other services that will be available online. These services will be available 24/7, with no increase in any of our registration fees. In fact, most registrants will actually save money due to elimination of the need for any type of expedited service, for which we previously charged \$30 or \$50.

Here is a sample filing that will apply

to all initial registrations for corporations and limited liability companies that will illustrate the mechanics of the process. First, the applicant will go to our Web site, www.sos.louisiana.gov, and click on the "Commercial Online Filing" button. Here, the individual will be directed to a list of entity types for selection. Upon selection, a blank form looking very similar to the current paper application will appear on the applicant's terminal. After completing the form by supplying standard information, as well as supplying credit card payment information, the applicant will click "submit." The filer will then be given an opportunity to review the document as it is to be submitted.

Behind the scenes, the submission will be routed in two directions. One will go to the e-mail address of the registered agent, *i.e.*, person of record for contact related to legal matters, who will confirm acceptance as the agent. Simultaneously, the other will go directly to our office for verification of name availability. Once the agent acceptance is confirmed, it will be routed to our office as part of the filing, our staff will confirm the name availability as the registration is listed in the work queue and the filer's credit card will be charged. This name confirmation will be a very quick process due to enhanced searching capabilities within our new platform.

After these steps occur, the applicant will receive an e-mail advising that the registration is complete and will then be able to print a black-and-white certificate of registration.

Our annual report process will also be changing. An annual report renewal card will be mailed to the business. This card will provide a specific Web site, where the charter number and a unique user ID, provided on the face of the renewal card, may be entered for accessing current information held

by our office.

Upon reviewing the existing information, the user will have the choice of accepting as presented or editing the information. After any edits, the user will be able to preview the information and accept as presented. In the case of changes to the registered agent of the business, a similar acceptance process used for initial filings will be initiated. Finally, users satisfied with the updates will click a submit button, be taken to a credit card payment window and will be processed after successfully paying the document.

We are also making other changes indirectly related to online filing. The Commercial Database will have a new look, or "skin," as it moves to a Web-based interface. The process for ordering Good Standing Certificates will have the same skin. We implemented these changes in early September when we made the internal switch to online filing. Since that point, certified copies have been stamped with our seal, instead of having the gold seal sticker. Certified copies will still be bluebacked, but we will bring legislation in the 2010 session seeking to amend the Code of Evidence to recognize a black-and-white copy without a blueback or gold seal to still be considered "under seal."

This online filing platform is designed with the user in mind. The result will be increased efficiency for both new and existing businesses by decreasing any lag time that can occur between the actual completion of the documents and final registration with our office. There is no increase in registration fees.

It is our vision to make things easier for entrepreneurs and businesses and to make our internal process more efficient.

Direct any questions about commercial online filing to Deputy Secretary Steve Windham at (225)362-5105.