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EDITORIALS

(A lot less of) your state tax dollars at real work

A 97 percent increase in efficiency.

A 71 percent decrease in cost.

Welcome to the new and much-improved New Mexico Corporations Bureau. What a difference a little effective oversight can make.

When the bureau was moved via constitutional amendment from the Public Regulation Commission to the Secretary of State's Office earlier this year, it was a poster child for bureaucratic bloat and inefficiency. It had a 110-day waiting period to process documents and register corporations. It offered slightly expedited service for a surcharge. It used a Byzantine registration system that stymied would-be business owners and an online system that was perpetually off-line. The public price tag for running things this badly? A whopping \$3.8 million a year.

If that didn't amount to an SOS for someone to get the state open for business, it's hard to imagine what would. But since July, an SOS of another sort, the Secretary of State's Business Services Division under the steady hand of administrator Ken Ortiz, has systematically removed the ridiculous government delays and incompetence that put up roadblocks to private-sector economic drivers and job creators.

According to a report this month to the Legislative Finance Committee, it now takes an average of three days to process documents and register corporations. The online system has been fully developed and has streamlined operations. Yet the annual budget has been slashed to \$1.1 million, putting a lie to the conventional New Mexico wisdom that if we would just spend enough money it would fix everything.

It's a job well done by Secretary of State Dianna Duran, who was savvy enough to put Ortiz — who cut wait times at Motor Vehicle Division field offices and established a call-back system at Workforce Solutions — in charge of restoring credibility to the bureau.

And it begs the question what else could this kind of thinking improve for New Mexicans and how much more money could it save?