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## FBLA Members Shadow State Chamber Staff

**F**our officers of the Nebraska Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) spent the morning of February 20 shadowing State Chamber executives. Matt Bogard, State FBLA President (Omaha Roncalli); Tyrel Christensen, State Vice President (Columbus Lakeview); Brandon Mueller, State Secretary (Columbus Lakeview); and Kristin McLaughlin, State Reporter (Elmwood-Murdock) met staff members at the regularly scheduled Public Affairs Council Meeting on Tuesday morning. They accompanied State Chamber President Barry Kennedy, Vice President-General Counsel Ron Sedlacek, and Vice President-Public Affairs Don Mihovk as they proceeded through a typical day.

"We thought it would be a good opportunity for these young citizens to meet a broad representation of the business community and see the interplay involved in working within the legislative process," noted Kennedy.

Later the FBLA members and staff visited the Legislature, met their state Senators, and were introduced at the Unicameral. Each member conferred with his or her State Chamber counterpart to gain knowledge of some of the daily tasks performed at the State Chamber and the general

scope of the State Chamber's activities. The shadowing project is part of the State Chamber and the FBLA's Partnership Program. Part of that program is to encourage local businesses and local chambers of commerce to work with their local FBLA chapters. The work done through the FBLA program is a great help to the future of Nebraska's business climate, and we are proud to participate.

For more information on the FBLA program, contact Vice President-Public Affairs Don Mihovk at the State Chamber. ■

(r) Senator Deb Suttle explains legislative process to constituent Matt Bogard. (b) FBLA members Tyrel Christensen, Brandon Mueller, Kristen McLaughlin, Barry Kennedy, Matt Bogard and Senator Roger Wehrbein in the Rotunda.



## President Bush's Tax Cut

**T**he first of several tax cut bills are on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and contains the centerpiece of the President's plan - lower marginal tax rates for every American who pays personal income taxes. Clearly, this one affects us all. The cuts would be largest in percentage terms for low and middle income families and largest in dollar terms for those with higher incomes - but everyone would benefit.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, tax relief is long overdue. We pay more of our income to the federal government than at any time since 1944, a time of great national emergency.

Now, high tax rates and our enormously productive private economy are pumping hundreds of billions of surplus dollars into government coffers - \$5.6 trillion over the next ten years. If we leave it in Washington we know what will happen; it will be spent.

The President's tax relief package fits within his overall budget plan. That plan would fully protect the portion of the surplus created by Social Security and Medicare payroll taxes and set aside still more to reform these programs and ensure their long-term solvency. It would allow for increased spending on vital national priorities like education and

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# "Unintended Consequences"

The Nebraska Legislature has now passed the half way mark for the 2001 legislative session. Typically by this time, the issues that are being debated are those that are well known by one segment of society or another...issues that are "headline grabbers" and need little or no explanation. Most people have already lined up on one side or the other and through debate and compromise try to reach a consensus on the topic.



**Vice President-General Counsel Ron Sedlacek during one of his many appearances before a legislative committee this year.**

Some of the emotional issues this year will include concealed carry handguns, fetal tissue research, and DUI convictions. Ag-land valuations and surcharges on wireless phones will also draw considerable debate. In addition, the budget and re-districting will command a fair amount of legislative time and news coverage toward the end of the session.

On the business front, the high profile issues will include LB620, the Invest Nebraska Act. This act will both enhance and simplify the Quality Jobs Act that sunset last year and create a valuable tool for Nebraska to grow its economy. Economic development is very competitive today, and LB620 is extremely important to attract investment and job creation to our state. The venture capital forum and child care tax credits, if passed, will also be welcome additions to Nebraska's business climate.

The bills that I want to draw some attention to in this article, though, are those that the general public rarely notice. Or perhaps I should say nobody would notice if they were not paying close attention and maintaining constant vigilance over every bill and amendment that is brought forward. Many of these concepts seem to have little or no "consequence" at first sight. Some of them actually appear to be good ideas on the surface.

As we move toward the end of the session, it will appear that there are only a dozen or so bills that required our attention this year. In fact, your State Chamber has actually testified, monitored and/or worked nearly 200 legislative bills throughout this session. Fortunately, many of those bills have been killed, continue to lay in committee or at least have not been prioritized. This means they

probably won't move this year, but we will keep a close eye on them to make sure someone does not try to amend them into another bill that is moving.

In this article, I will only use a couple of examples to emphasize the point I am trying to convey. There are numerous others that could be mentioned, and over the years, stopping low profile bills that would be onerous to your business may be some of the most important work we do.

This year, and each of the last several years, there have been several bills introduced that would mandate some additional coverage to group health insurance plans. Individually, they all sound like good ideas because they obviously affect people. Some-

body, perhaps a family member, a friend or a valued employee, is affected by the primary subject of the bill. The State Chamber opposes such mandates contained in these bills as all exceed federal ERISA requirements and would mean higher costs for health care insurance.

Each one may only raise health insurance costs one or two percent, but remember, I mentioned earlier that we have seen five or six of these bills each year for the past several years. If they would all pass, Nebraska would have raised health insurance costs by 12 to 15% above the cost of living increases already incurred. Studies have proven that with each percentage increase, some companies simply quit providing such health insurance coverage altogether.

As legislation is being introduced, State Chamber lobbyists analyze each bill to identify any problems or other issues that may impact business and industry. At times, knowing the introducer of a bill may indicate who is behind the legislation being proposed and why or what other organizations may be involved in the proposal (e.g., labor, governmental unit, trade association or other professional organization). A visit with the legislator, legislative staff or interested organizations also gives our lobbyists additional information on the intent of the legislation. But there is no substitute for a thorough reading of each bill with two questions in mind: first, what may be the unintended consequences of

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**State Chamber Views...**  
by **Barry Kennedy, State Chamber President**

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passing the proposal into law; and second, how do any definitions change current law?

Here is another case in point. A bill was introduced this session proposing to amend the Nebraska Environmental Audit law which the Legislature had passed in 1998 after extensive legislative debate. A plain reading of the bill indicated that it would amend the law by deleting the words "federal law" from the definition of an "environmental requirement." The proposed change in definition, which would dramatically restrict its application, created quite a stir among proponents of the law, including the State Chamber. Upon further analysis and discussions with interested parties, it was found that the bill was introduced in response to a very specific federal compliance issue that could potentially be resolved without passing the bill.

The point I wish to make is this: the State Chamber's attention is not only directed toward a handful of high profile bills that you may read or hear about in the media, but on every bill that could potentially have an adverse impact on its membership. Although the State Chamber may not take a position on each and every legislative proposal, you can be assured that our lobbyists have reviewed each and every bill. Often, we share our analysis or information collected with other business groups or lobbyists. We are also receptive to any input from our members to ascertain the intent of legislation, including any "unintended consequences" or "definitional changes." ■

## Washington Trip Set; Good Time To Ask For Tax Cut!

The annual State Chamber congressional visit to Washington will be on April 30 and May 1, 2001. With President Bush's tax cut proposal (see story on page 1) likely to be on the agenda, it's a great opportunity to visit our delegation and make your views known! As in past trips, we will host a luncheon on Tuesday, May 1, in the Russell Senate Office Building for Nebraska's congressional delegation and their chief staff members. On Monday, April 30, we will attend an Issue Briefing at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Headquarters. In addition, members can also attend the traditional "Nebraska Breakfast" at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, May 1, at the Dirksen office Building cafeteria. There is a \$6.25 charge and reservations should be made through the State Chamber office at (402) 474-4422, or FAX at (402) 474-5681.

Members are encouraged to make their own flight arrangements, and there are a number of flights out of Omaha and Lincoln. Again, we have made arrangements with the University Club for lodging. The University Club is convenient to downtown, and rates are \$130 per person per night. Contact the University Club at (202) 862-8800. The group number is 1980. ■

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## President Bush's Tax Cut

(Continued from page 1)

national defense. And it would pay down \$2 trillion of the publicly-held national debt over the next ten years. Here is a brief outline of the President's plan:

- ▲ Gives a tax cut to every family that pays income taxes.
- ▲ Replaces the current five-rate tax structure of 15, 28, 31, 36, and 39.6 percent with four lower rates — 10, 15, 25, and 33 percent.
- ▲ Doubles the child tax credit to \$1,000.
- ▲ Reduces the marriage penalty.
- ▲ Eliminates the death tax.
- ▲ Expands the charitable tax deduction.
- ▲ Makes the research and development tax credit permanent.

Reducing marginal tax rates will do more than lighten our individual tax burdens. It will give our entire economy a much-needed lift, boosting our

companies and our communities. It will provide stronger incentives for work, savings and investment. And it will head off a federal spending spree that would become part of the budget baseline, perpetuating itself for years to come.

The key to enactment will be the Senate, where the 50-50 split means the bill will need bipartisan support. When President Bush visited Omaha last month, everyone knew he was looking for support from Senator Ben Nelson. Your efforts to contact Senator Nelson and ask for his support of this tremendous opportunity to cut taxes and hold the line on spending are critical! All of the rest of the Nebraska delegation are ready to support the President. **Write Senator Nelson at 720 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. His phone number is (202) 224-6551, and the fax number is (202) 228-0012.** ■

## 2001 State Chamber Schedule

Apr. 6	Hall of Fame Committee Meeting, Executive Council Meeting	Aug. 5-8	Conference of State Manufacturers Associations, Wisconsin
Apr. 25	NCCE Spring Board Meeting	Sept. 14	Nominating Council Meeting
April 30 – May 1	Congressional Reception, Washington, D.C.	Sept. 14	Fall Board Meeting
June 7-8	Spring Board Meeting, Lincoln	Sept. 16-19	Council of State Chambers, New Orleans, LA
June 12	Staff Retreat	Oct. 1-3	Legislative Forums
July 15-20	U.S. Chamber Institute for Organizational Management	Oct. 8-10	Legislative Forums
July 22-25	U.S. Chamber Executives Leadership Forum, Aspen, CO	Oct. 17	Executive Council Meeting
		Dec. 4	Public Affairs Council
		Dec. 7	Winter Board Meeting

## State Chamber Planning Workshops For 2001

Six additional workshops for employers are planned for the remainder of this year. According to Charlie Volnek, State Chamber Vice President-Operations, the schedule will cover a number of subjects to aid employers. All are half-day programs to be held in the mornings. The schedule so far is:

April 19 - **Building Your Team For Success**

May 17 - **Hiring For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

June 20 - **Leading People Through Change**

Sept. 19 - **Performance Reviews That Work**

Oct. 24 - **Resolving Conflict and Diffusing Anger Effectively**

Nov. 8 - **New Employee Orientation**

A brochure is enclosed on the above workshops. All of the workshops will be held at Mahoney State Park, which can be reached by taking Exit 426 on I-80, Ashland exit. ■

## Straight Talk

### ■ Pat On The Back

Congratulations to **Roper & Sons Funeral Services**, Lincoln. They are celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the business throughout the year, including monthly breakfast workshops and a Memorial Day flag dedication to honor veterans.



**Past State Chamber Chairman Dick Cabela and his wife, Mary, were given the Distinguished Nebraskalander Award by Governor Johanns at the March 3 Nebraskaland Foundation Statehood Dinner.**

Nebraska Chamber  
of Commerce & Industry

## State Chamber Welcomes New "Investors"

Membership in the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry is an investment in Nebraska's economic well-being. This month, the State Chamber welcomes the following new members and encourages members to consider doing business with fellow Chamber members.

### ALBION

Sentinel Building Systems  
Stephanie Landauer

### FREMONT

R.L. Fauss Builders, Inc.  
Rick Fauss

*Sponsor: Allan F. Hale, Fremont Area  
Chamber*

### BROKEN BOW

The Grocery Kart #439  
David Green

### LINCOLN

Compensation Programs, Inc.  
Brian McPike

*Sponsor: Jerry Worth, SilverStone Group*

### NORTH PLATTE

Employers Unity, Inc.  
Tom Thomason

### Pathology Services, P.C.

Delane A. Wycoff, M.D.

### SCOTTSBLUFF

Nebraska Transport Co., Inc.  
Brent Holliday

### SEWARD

Longview Fibre Company  
Mike Vorse  
*Sponsor: Arlo Bower*