

# EXECUTIVE

Vol. 18-9

October 2001

A  
Publication  
of the  
Nebraska  
Chamber  
of  
Commerce  
& Industry

PO Box 95128  
Lincoln, NE 68509

Tel:  
(402) 474-4422  
Fax:  
(402) 474-5681

<http://www.nechamber.com>

[nechamber@nechamber.com](mailto:nechamber@nechamber.com)

Editor:  
Donald Mihovk

## Special Session Set To Cut Budget

The state of Nebraska continues to experience lower revenue collections than were predicted and will look to trim the current budget (unlike the federal government, the state cannot go into debt and must have a balanced budget). The Nebraska Economic Forecasting Advisory Board will meet on October 19 and decide just how much the state should cut. Governor Johanns asked the Board to meet earlier than scheduled to allow some time to prepare for the Special Session, which will begin either October 25 or 26 and last the required 10 days.

Though there is some talk of addressing tax increases in the Special Session, the Governor sets the agenda for the call, and taxes are not likely to

be addressed. Nebraska's tax revenues have been higher than last year's revenues, but not as high as the Forecasting Board assumed earlier in the year. The budget was passed based on the state collecting the higher revenues.

Nebraska is not alone in its quandary; many other states are experiencing revenue shortfalls and are involved in Special Sessions. The economic fall-out from the terrorist attacks of September 11 is further exacerbating state economies. State budget belt-tightening may only present a short-term solution, and the next legislative session will certainly see some discussion of new revenues, as well as efforts to cut back current economic development incentives. ■

## State Chamber, STAUnited Team Up To Promote Drug-Free Workplace

As another member benefit, the State Chamber and Lincoln-based STAUnited are joining forces to help Nebraska businesses continue or become drug free. A drug-free workplace makes sense financially for employers, and it also reinforces family values, enhances a sense of community and improves the quality of life for all employees by giving workers a safer, more productive environment.

That's why the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce has formed a partnership with STAUnited, a national provider of drug and alcohol testing services, to promote drug-free workplaces within businesses throughout Nebraska. Drug-free workplaces and employment drug testing are becoming more and more commonplace. STAUnited helps companies create and manage successful drug-free workplace programs by

offering convenient, affordable and reliable testing and information services to clients. Currently STAUnited has more than 14,000 satisfied clients nationwide and in Canada.

According to statistics in "The National Drug Control Strategy: 1999," 73 percent of working age Americans who are current drug users are employed. Chances are, you have worked or are working with someone who is currently using illicit drugs or abusing alcohol.

\* Drug users are twice as likely to take unexcused absences from the job; they are nearly twice as likely to switch jobs frequently and three times as likely to get fired. That makes life a little tougher for clean employees who strive for success, and it makes it a lot tougher for employers to reap higher profits with business growth.

\* The high turnover rate alone among employed drug users is costly to a company, not to mention a

(Continued on page 4)

*Chances are, you have worked or are working with someone who is currently using illicit drugs or abusing alcohol.*

# “Back To Work”

**W**e continue to mourn for the victims and their families of the despicable acts of war committed against our country on September 11. We continue to send our prayers along with financial and other types of tangible support to aid in the recovery efforts.

Among the many unsung heroes across this nation and throughout the world, the American business community stands tall. Nebraska companies and their employees began contributing to the humanitarian needs, rescue efforts and recovery assistance immediately. The business response to the needs of Red Cross, Salvation Army and other relief organizations was spontaneous and continues to flow. The words of a country song, “all gave some, some gave all” certainly seem to fit the occasion. Businesses and associations encouraged their employees and members to give blood, to donate to and participate in relief efforts while many employees have been called to duty in the National Guard and Reserves.

The American economy was definitely one of the specific targets of the terrorist attacks. Thousands of key employees lost their lives and many companies were forced to lay off thousands more since the attacks. The terrorists responsible will find though that the American business community is not only ingenious, it is also extremely tough. We did not build the strongest economy in the world by cowering to threats. We will never forget, but we will return to normalcy and rebuild – for the spirit of enterprise that built this country has not been extinguished.

That spirit was demonstrated by State Chamber Chairman Dick Campbell about 48 hours after the attacks when asked if we should go ahead with the State Chamber Board of Directors meeting scheduled for September 14. Without hesitation, Dick responded, “We will not let this type of action prevent us from doing our job and upholding our responsibilities.” Over 50 members of the Board from all across our state attended the meeting and after a respectful moment of silence to honor the victims, proceeded to conduct the business of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Meanwhile, the Nebraska economy is also

driving a different sort of political action. A special session of the Legislature has been called to make budget cuts and lessen the impact of revenues not meeting expectations. Prior to the attacks, our economy was still growing, but just not at the rate of growth that had been earlier projected when the budget was initially developed. All governmental agencies and political sub-divisions are still spending more than in previous years. In fact, we may be slightly better off than many neighboring states who are facing similar economic predicaments.

One thing we cannot do at this time is relax our efforts to grow existing businesses and work to attract new business opportunities to Nebraska. Companies typically close plants that have worn out or have obsolete equipment. Thanks to our economic development incentives and the growth they have generated in the past 10 years, some of Nebraska’s key employers have retooled their enterprises and are operating in modern well-equipped facilities. These investments and commitments make it ever more difficult to simply close the door and walk

away from Nebraska.

State revenues are derived from business activity that the business and its employees pay. It will be tempting for some to want to weaken the economic development incentives that are earned by companies for either investment or employment growth or to increase the tax burden on business to cover the shortfall in projected growth.

For a variety of reasons, not the least of which is work ethic, Nebraska continues to be an attractive location for either business growth or new business opportunities. This would not be the time to weaken development tools or heap additional taxes on either businesses or the individuals that make those businesses successful. The long-term effect would almost certainly be much more detrimental than any short-term accommodation. To change the rules now would certainly send the wrong message to those looking to expand.

Belts may have to be tightened, programs may have to be evaluated, but we must restore confidence and stability and assure the rest of the world that Nebraska is still “open for business.” ■

*Among the many  
unsung heroes  
across this nation  
and throughout  
the world, the  
American  
business  
community stands  
tall.*

## State Chamber Views...

Editorial by  
**Barry  
Kennedy,  
State  
Chamber  
President**

*The American  
economy  
was  
definitely  
one of the  
specific  
targets of  
the terrorist  
attack.*



Sen. Jim Cudaback (upper left) makes a point in Cozad. Ron Sedlacek opens Forum in Alliance (center) and Sen. Don Pederson discusses a Special Session in North Platte (upper right). Dick Campbell presides at Lincoln Forum (bottom left) where Sen. Mike Foley calls for budget cuts. Sen. Bob Wickersham explains his views in Alliance (bottom right).

## Fall Legislative Forums In Your Area

**T**he Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry heard from you, the members, during our annual Legislative Forums during the weeks of October 1-4 and October 8-10. A Special Session of the Unicameral to cut the current state budget is slated to begin in late October as a response to lower than expected revenue collections. Some 35 State Senators were in attendance at the Forums. We'll have results of the Opinionnaire in next month's issue of the *Executive*. ■

## Thanks Donna and Deb

**A**s the Fall Forums got underway this year, two longtime local chamber of commerce executives won't be helping us in Aurora or Gothenburg. Donna Rasmussen of Aurora retired this summer after some 35 years as exec. Deb Bacon resigned in Gothenburg after 11 years due to health reasons. Both women exemplified local chamber of commerce leadership, and their communities have both grown and prospered thanks to their efforts. Donna was recently awarded life membership in the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce Executives organization. We'll miss working with you both! ■

## HR Solutions Center Available On Website

**HR** Comply, the State Chamber's human resources compliance partner, has developed a new option that allows members to obtain over \$1,000 of valuable human resource compliance and employment law information for FREE with a click of a mouse. When you visit the State Chamber's website ([www.nechamber.com](http://www.nechamber.com)), go to the HR Solutions Center link under the Member Benefit Program links. Among the many practical HR solutions you will find are: *HR Comply's* weekly E-mail Newsletter Abstracts, required posters and forms, sample policies and procedures, model job descriptions, and much more.

HR Comply is a leading publisher of electronic compliance tools and comprehensive workforce-training courseware. Combined with the 18 years experience of American Chambers of Commerce Publishers, HR Comply is able to bring small businesses nationwide a variety of human resources products and services. As a State Chamber member, all you need to do is log on and click the links.

As a member of the State Chamber, you are also eligible, at a discounted price, for HR Comply's Employment Guide reference system, employment manuals, and employment-related training programs. The system is Internet-based to provide fast, easy access to information that will help HR professionals manage proactively and ensure compliance with changing federal and state employment laws. ■

*HR Comply is a leading publisher of electronic compliance tools and comprehensive workforce-training courseware.*

## Maurstad Resigns; Johanns Appoints Heineman

Gov. Mike Johanns named State Treasurer Dave Heineman to succeed Lt. Gov. Dave Maurstad, who's taking a job as a regional director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Governor appointed Lorelee Byrd as State Treasurer to succeed Heineman. Byrd was Heineman's chief deputy in the treasurer's office. Heineman will be the Governor's running mate for 2002, as the voters amended the Constitution in 2000 to eliminate the need to elect a Lieutenant Governor in the primary elections. Heineman will serve as Nebraska's liaison to the federal government, as Maurstad did, and will take on a new assignment — Johanns' coordinator for security issues. The Governor wants a top state official overseeing security matters in light of the terrorist attacks. It could be construed that the new Lieutenant Governor would have a leg up in running for Governor in 2006, as Gov. Johanns will be precluded by term limits from running for a third term.

Byrd said she didn't know whether she'd seek election as treasurer. Two candidates are already seeking the GOP nomination for treasurer: Rene Dreiling and Brad Kuiper. In any event, Governor Johanns will not endorse anyone on the GOP Primary race. ■

## State Chamber, STA United Team Up To Promote Drug-Free Workplace (Continued from page 1)

lower quality of productivity from such an employee. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) estimates that the cost to American businesses due to employees' drug abuse was \$69.4 billion in 1992.

These statistics and more illustrate how establishing and maintaining a drug-free workplace (DFWP) can benefit both employers and employees. The advantages are clear. When clients enroll with STAUnited, they are entitled to many benefits. New clients receive a comprehensive drug testing package, and they also have access to STA's toll-free number for consultation and operational advice, a nationwide referral network of Substance Abuse Professionals (SAPs), Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), collection sites for drug and alcohol testing, and 24-hour post-accident testing services.

If you are interested in more information about STAUnited, please call their toll-free number at (800) 288-8504, or visit their web site at [www.staunited.com](http://www.staunited.com). ■

*The NIDA and the NIAAA estimates that the cost to American businesses due to employees' drug abuse was \$69.4 billion in 1992.*



## 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.

### **BERTRAND**

**Bank of Bertrand**  
**Robert Dahlgren**  
*Sponsor: Roger Allmand, Allmand Bros., Inc.*

### **NORFOLK**

**Norfolk Livestock Market, Inc.**  
**Marilyn Emrich**  
*Sponsor: Jerry Worth, SilverStone Group*

### **Omaha Print**

**Steve Hayes**  
*Sponsor: David Williams, Drake-Williams Steel, Inc.*

### **LINCOLN**

**Cornhusker Printing Company, Inc.**  
**Bonnie Bradley**

### **OGALLALA**

**Lumber 1 Inc.**  
Brad Perry  
*Sponsor: Roger Allmand, Allmand Bros., Inc.*

### **Pitney Bowes**

**Dennis McCool**

**UNO/Nebraska Business Development Center**  
**Robert E. Bernier**

### **Metalogic, Inc.**

**Sara Moshman**  
*Sponsor: Jerry Worth, SilverStone Group*

### **OMAHA**

**Jerry's Basement Waterproofing, Inc.**  
**Beverly A. Witthuhn**

### **SCOTTSBLUFF**

**High Plains Orthotics & Prosthetics**  
**Mark Parrell**