

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

May/June 2015

State Chamber Visits Military Posts To Promote 'Good Life for Veterans'

In the early months of 2015, staff members from the Nebraska Chamber – along with the Nebraska Department of Labor and partners like First Data – have traveled to military installations such as Fort Riley, Kansas, Tinker Air Force Base and the Army's Fort Sill, both in Oklahoma, to be part of career fairs for veterans, separating military personnel and their dependents.

Over the past year, the Nebraska Chamber has participated in half a dozen out-of-state military jobs fairs. These visits have been part of the State Chamber's "Good Life for Veterans" initiative.

At the career fairs, State Chamber staff and staff from the Department of Labor collect the names of military personnel and veterans who express interest in working and residing in Nebraska. Private employers in Nebraska currently have more than 40,000 job openings on the Depart-

ment of Labor website alone. The contact information is then shared with employers, as well as local chambers of commerce.

"Nebraska's economy and related job growth are outpacing population growth," said Jim Ristow, who oversees the State Chamber's Vision Nebraska initiative. "To keep our state competitive, it is important that the Chamber spreads the news about Nebraska's career opportunities and quality of life to a highly trained, disciplined workforce. Employers across the state are seeing the value of hiring veterans and this initiative is a direct conduit to attract quality individuals to Nebraska".

If your business or organization wishes to participate in an upcoming military jobs fair, or you want more information about "The Good Life for Veterans" campaign, contact the State Chamber's Jim Ristow at jristow@nechamber.com or (402) 474-4422. ■



Pictured above is the Nebraska Chamber's Jim Ristow speaking with job-seeking military personnel at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma.

Oltjenbruns Joins Chamber Staff

Last fall, Makayla Oltjenbruns joined the staff of the Nebraska Chamber as the association's new assistant office manager. She replaces longtime staff member Cleo Hoback, who retired at the end of 2014.

A native of O'Neill and a 2011 graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln,

Oltjenbruns returned to her hometown after college to serve as director of the O'Neill Chamber of Commerce. Working for a local chamber of commerce introduced Oltjenbruns to the chamber world and the complex array of issues that businesses face.

"At the O'Neill Chamber, I strived to show others the community's desirability and to encourage growth, events and attractions," Oltjenbruns said.

When Oltjenbruns husband, Taylor, was hired by a Lincoln business, the open position at the Nebraska Chamber presented an opportunity for her to continue working in the chamber arena. At the Nebraska Chamber, Oltjenbruns helps oversee the office's administration and day-to-day op-



erations. She also assists with the State Chamber's communications efforts and its work with local chamber of commerce executives.

In her spare time, Oltjenbruns likes to spend time with her family and friends, reading, crafting, and on the river. ■

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
PO Box 95128, Lincoln, NE 68509-5128
Tel: (402) 474-4422 Fax: (402) 474-5681
<http://www.nechamber.com>
nechamber@nechamber.com
Editor: Jamie Karl



State Chamber Views...

Editorial by Barry L. Kennedy, CAE, IOM

President

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Amid Leadership Changes, Nebraska Still On Right Track

During the past few months, there has been a considerable amount of change within Nebraska's governmental leadership. So much change, in fact, that some have likened it to "rearranging the deck chairs." The problem with that phrase is that it often implies there's something wrong with the system.

The truth is, Nebraska is on the right track as new individuals bring fresh ideas and creative energy to their positions of leadership.

It's true that Nebraska this year has rearranged its leadership chairs at an unprecedented pace. We have a new governor for the first time in 10 years, in addition to 18 new state senators and other new constitutional officers. The Legislature has more than a dozen new committee chairs, as well as a new speaker. And there are new directors at most of our state agencies.

Through all of this, Nebraska remains one of the best managed states in the country. Previous leaders in the legislative and executive branches of government did an excellent job of managing the affairs of state. The State of Nebraska does not have excessive debt. In fact, the state has a record cash reserve to carry us through any unexpected downturns in the economy. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country and have more people working than ever before.

In the private sector, Nebraska manufacturers continue to grow and add to their share of gross state product – accounting for almost 13% of the total output in the state and employing more than 100,000 Nebraskans. Our financial institutions are on solid ground, and our banks rank in the top 10% of best managed in the country. With Nebraska's favorable insurance regulatory and taxing laws, we continue to be an attractive state for growth in the financial services sector.

Agriculture, despite the recent dip in commodity prices, continues to be a strong sector of Nebraska's economy and we

are constantly creating ideas to add value to the abundant products produced in our state.

The education community is offering new, innovative ideas to keep our brightest young people here in our state, while working to attract more people with highly employable skill sets. Career academies and similar efforts to focus on employable skills are becoming more accessible to a broader range of young people, who being exposed to the needs of the employer community and well-paying careers that are available today.

With such a solid foundation, what can we anticipate in this new era of leadership in Nebraska?

All indications are the future is bright – and Nebraska will continue to be poised to take advantage of a growing global economy in the coming years. Governor Ricketts has brought a new business-like approach to hiring professionals to lead the state's agencies that businesses have the most interaction with.

State agencies like the Departments of Economic Development, Revenue, Labor, Insurance, Banking and others were all filled following an intensive recruitment and interview process. The same process was used in other state agencies that use a large share of tax dollars, including HHS and Corrections, to help ensure that their services are delivered in an effective, cost-efficient manner.

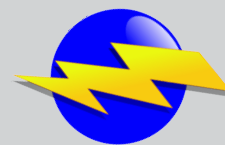
The new leaders of the current Legislature are also distinguishing themselves. Senators who are proven and effective leaders now find themselves leading committees, keeping positive ideas and proposals moving through the legislative process. The 18 new senators have brought with them fresh perspectives and new ideas of what their constituents want to see happen in our state.

The global community is growing. The demand for products produced and manufactured in Nebraska will see significant growth in the coming years.

While the names and faces of our state's leadership have changed, the staff of the State Chamber is confident that Nebraska and its future are in good hands, and that the business sector will continue to grow without excessive interference from state government.

A famous quote in Nebraska mentions the "watchfulness of the citizens." That watchfulness will continue to guide our future.

Give Nebraskans a tolerable tax climate and reasonable regulatory environment, and our state will far surpass expectations. ■



U.S. Chamber Compares Electricity Prices In All 50 States

The U.S. Chamber's Institute for 21st Century Energy recently analyzed electricity prices around the nation and created a map showing the wide variances between the states. The map shows five tiers of electricity prices. Nebraska, which is ranked 13th lowest for its retail electricity prices, is in the map's second-lowest priced tier.

Iowa (No. 9) and Wyoming (No. 3) had less expensive electricity in 2014, according to the analysis, while Colorado (No. 31) and Kansas (No. 31) had significantly higher rates. South Dakota and Missouri were tied for the 18th lowest rate.

Nebraska's 2014 average electricity retail price was 8.80 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh), which was only 0.70 cent per kWh or less when compared to the states ranked from No. 6 through No. 12 (Oklahoma, Louisiana, Kentucky, Iowa, Utah, North Dakota and Montana).

The U.S. Chamber notes that "with the federal government on a march to impose costly new regulations on the power sector," the trend of rising electrical rates "is likely to continue for many years to come." The Chamber also points out that states experiencing the biggest rate increases have "turned their back on one of our most reliable and affordable sources of electricity, coal" or have adopted "a carbon cap-and-trade scheme." Meanwhile, "the ten lowest-priced states enjoy low rates predominately due to their use of coal to generate electricity." ■

Small Business Day At The Capitol



Small businesses are a vital part of Nebraska's economy. Nebraska's small businesses – those with fewer than 500 employees – employ around 400,000 workers, according to the latest figures.

Small businesses are significantly impacted by state laws and regulations. That is why the Nebraska Chamber helped sponsor Small Business Day at the State Capitol on March 31, so small business leaders could learn more about legislative issues impacting the state's business community.

The 2015 Small Business Day featured visits from Governor Pete Ricketts and several leaders of the Legislature, including Speaker of the Legislature Galen Hadley, Business and Labor Committee Chair Burke Harr, and Revenue Committee Chair Mike Gloor.

The event was sponsored by the Nebraska Chamber, the National Federation of Independent Business, the Lincoln and Omaha Chambers, Nebraskans for Workers' Compensation Equity and Fairness, and the Lincoln Independent Business Association. ■

Pictured left is Governor Pete Ricketts addressing participants at Small Business Day at the Capitol on March 31.

Study: EPA's Ozone Regulations Would Harm Nebraska

The EPA's new ozone regulations could be the agency's most expensive regulations ever, costing the nation \$140 billion annually, according to a new analysis. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) reports that the proposed regulations would have the following effects on Nebraska:

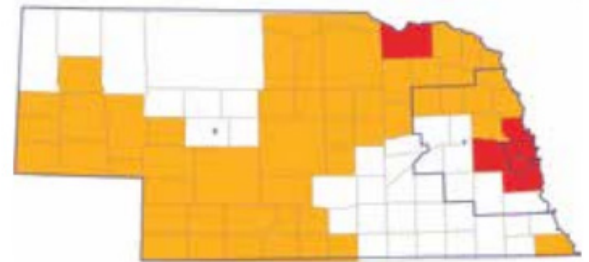
- \$5 billion gross state product loss from 2017 to 2040;
- 4,456 lost jobs or job equivalents annually; and
- \$470 drop in average household consumption a year.

The EPA's ozone rules would make it harder to get the necessary permits to manufacture goods and build critical infrastructure like roads and highways in Nebraska, while increasing the cost of energy for every business and household in the state. The situation would be even worse for the Nebraska counties in red and orange on the map shown. In these areas, manufacturers and others would not be able to expand without a reduction of emissions or shutdown of operations from other plants in the area, according to NAM. Plans for new plants and expansion at existing plants would be shelved, and federal highway funds could freeze and economic growth would grind to a halt. Learn more the EPA's ozone rules by visiting:

www.nam.org/ozone/ ■

Figure 1: Projected Nonattainment with a 65 Parts Per Billion (ppb) Ozone Standard

- Areas with monitors
- Unmonitored but likely to exceed 65 ppb



Projected Nonattainment in Nebraska (65 ppb)

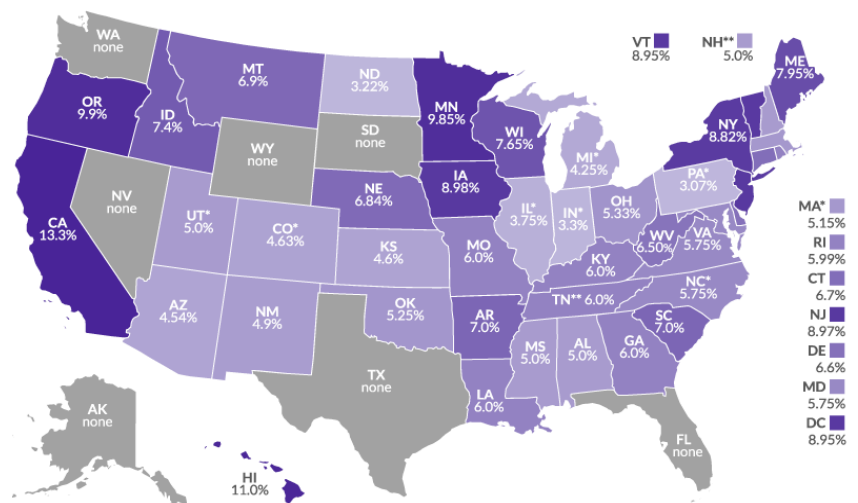
A Look At Income Tax Rates Of The States

Income taxes are a major – and often complicated – component of state revenues. Income taxes are structured in different ways throughout the states; some are flat systems with one rate for all incomes, while other states use progressive systems that tax different levels of income at different rates, and some states have no income tax at all.

The Tax Foundation recently published a map that compares the top marginal rates of all 43 states that levy an individual income tax. With its 6.84% top rate that kicks in on income above \$29,460 (for an individual payer), Nebraska has one of the highest top marginal rates in the western half of the nation -- trailing only California, Hawaii, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. ■

How High Are Income Tax Rates in Your State?

Top State Marginal Individual Income Tax Rates in 2015 (as of Apr 15, 2015)



State Chamber's 2015 Human Resources Library Is Now Available

Keeping up with employment regulations is complex work for any sized business, but good human resources guidance can help employers steer clear of costly lawsuits and legal fees. Fortunately, the 2015 Nebraska Human Resources Library, your solution to this problem, is now available.

Since 2008, the Nebraska Chamber Human Resources Library has helped business owners and HR personnel find answers quickly. When a federal or state labor law or regulation changes, the Human Resources Library will be updated – and you'll receive an email notice so you can easily determine what, if any, changes you need to make. For more information visit hrrsimple.com/NE

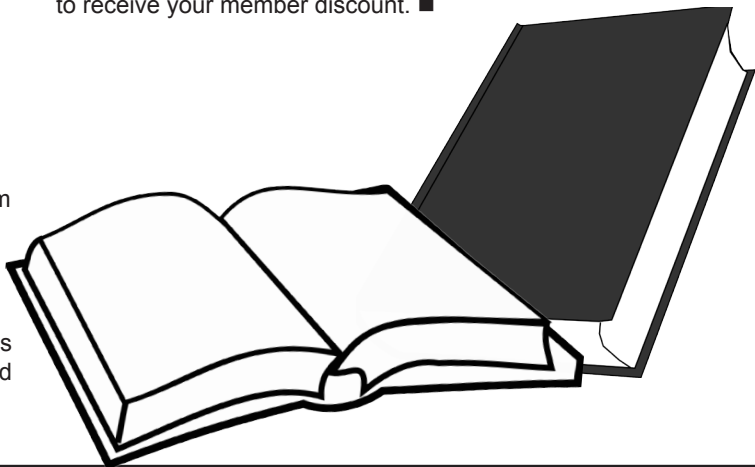
Written by authors you know and trust – the Knudsen Law Firm – the Nebraska Human Resources Library features:

- A hard copy book and online subscription to the Nebraska Human Resources Manual, which covers everything from pre-hire through post-termination. Use this as your go-to guide when you need a quick answer on any HR topic.
- An online subscription to Model Policies and Forms for Nebraska Employers, a collection of over 350 Human Resources forms, checklists and sample policies that you can download and customize in Microsoft Word. Use it to build and maintain your employee handbook.

- A subscription to HR Update, a weekly e-newsletter that lets you know what's new in the HR world every week.

With hrrsimple.com, you can effectively manage your most important resource – your employees. As a member of the Nebraska Chamber, you will save 20% off any publication on hrrsimple.com/NE.

Add these valuable HR tools to your business! Visit hrrsimple.com/NE or call (866) 439-2227 to. Use coupon code: NENEWS15 to receive your member discount. ■



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. We encourage you to consider doing business with fellow Chamber members.

BENNINGTON
LMC Insurance
Allan Hall

COLUMBUS
Mid-State Engineering & Testing, Inc.
Jim Musilek

FREMONT
The Oilgear Company
Thomas A. Birmingham

KEARNEY
Beacon Insurance
Michael Wilken

Builders Warehouse, Inc.
Bob Derr

Kearney Regional Medical Center
Travis Gregg
Recommended by: Kim Russel, Bryan Health

LA VISTA
Bank of Nebraska
Michael J. Hogan

LINCOLN
GIS Workshop, LLC
Joseph Heieck

Nebraska Recycles
Jack Doerr
Recommended by: Larry Paulsen Paulsen, Inc.

White Electric Supply Co.
Bryce Nielson

NORFOLK
Nebraska Central Railroad
Michael Koile
Recommended by: Dirk Petersen, NUCOR Steel, Div. of NUCOR Corp.

Vulcraft Nebraska/Nucor
Cold Finish Nebraska/Nucor
Detailing Center
Troy Brooks
Recommended by: Dirk Petersen, NUCOR Steel, Div. of NUCOR Corp.

OMAHA
Access Bank
Patrick J. Corrigan
Recommended by: Gary Perkins, FACHE, Children's Hospital & Medical Center

Green Plains Renewable Energy
Jim Stark

ISM Nebraska, Inc.
Allan Howick

Metropolitan Omaha Builders Association
Jaylene Eilenstine

Outlook Nebraska, Inc.
Patrick MacBride

PLATTSMOUTH
Cass County Bank
Dennis Ochsner

SEWARD
Tenneco, Inc.
Ken Bohuslavsky

ST. LOUIS, MO
Anheuser-Busch Cos., Inc.
Ted Powers

YORK
UTC Aerospace Systems
Briant Kadavy