

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

July/August 2013

State Chamber Concludes Successful Legislative Session

The Nebraska Legislature concluded its 2013 session on June 5. This year, 661 bills – in addition to dozens of constitutional amendments and resolutions – were introduced. In total, your Nebraska Chamber monitored or had positions on more than 250 of the measures due to their potential impact on business.

Once again, the State Chamber worked diligently to ensure passage of bills that would be beneficial for our economy and job creation and worked just as hard to defeat or amend harmful legislative proposals.

This year's 90-day session brought numerous actions on a wide range of issues, including key accomplishments in the area of taxation, workforce and economic development.

Among this year's accomplishments were:

- ❖ enactment of State Chamber-supported plans to repeal the state's alternative minimum tax and extend the carry-forward period for net operating losses (LB308 and LB457). Both the AMT repeal and the carry-forward extension were introduced at the request of the Nebraska Chamber



The 2013 legislative session brought the enactment of two important tax-related measures supported by the Nebraska Chamber: repeal of the state's alternative minimum tax (AMT) and extension of the carry-forward period for net operating losses incurred by businesses. These measures were led by Columbus Senator Paul Schumacher, Omaha Senator Bob Krist and Syracuse Senator Dan Watermeier – pictured here with the Chamber's Barry Kennedy and Richard Baier.

to make the state's tax climate friendlier to businesses and individuals. As a result of these initiatives, Nebraska's ranking in national tax comparatives should improve.

- ❖ enactment of renewable energy legislation (LB104), improvements and clarifications to the Nebraska Advantage Act (LB34), enhancement of Nebraska's unique and successful internship program (LB476), and a measure that will provide for friendlier tax treatment of businesses that give employees partial ownership in the company over time (LB573).

- ❖ rejection of legislation (LB405 and LB406) that would have repealed key competitiveness incentives for Nebraska businesses. Although the bills were offered with good intentions – to

lower or eliminate Nebraska's individual and corporate income tax – imposing new taxes on employers, especially sales taxes on business inputs, would have been devastating over the long term. The bills would have terminated competitive advantages for key industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, health care, transportation and technology.

No bills were passed this session that would adversely affect Nebraska's labor law, economic development or tax climate.

The Nebraska Chamber thanks all of its members who were involved and took time to contact their state senators during the session. Your vigilance helped produce some very successful results for Nebraska. ■

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State Chamber Views...

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Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

'State Chamber's D.C. Fly-In'

In May, I was honored to lead 25 State Chamber members in our annual fly-in to Washington, D.C. The event was not only informative and productive, but very enjoyable, as well.

While in the nation's capitol, we met with policy experts from the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, where we received updates on the latest developments on key issues. Topics of discussion included:

- ❖ The Senate and House versions of immigration reform;
- ❖ The Marketplace Fairness Act, which would allow states to collect sales tax from online retailers;
- ❖ Possible tax reform that could be debated this autumn along with the debt-ceiling extension;
- ❖ Ongoing efforts by the EPA and the Department of Labor to expand regulations on businesses;
- ❖ Reauthorization of the farm bill.

During our fly-in, we heard from each member of Nebraska's congressional delegation. The highlight of the visit was the State Chamber's annual luncheon, which provided fly-in participants and our elected officials – along with their senior aides – an opportunity to discuss important issues in a relaxed setting at the Capitol Hill Club. Our group also attended the traditional Nebraska Breakfast, a longstanding tradition in which our U.S. senators and congressmen meet with fellow Nebraskans visiting Capitol Hill.

During our visit, Senator Johanns briefed us on his concerns with the 2013 farm bill. Senator Fischer shared her thoughts on the differences between serving in the U.S. Senate and the Nebraska Legislature. Congressman Fortenberry spoke about the need to reduce the federal

debt. Congressman Terry discussed America's energy policy and his efforts to expedite the Keystone XL Pipeline. And Congressman Smith updated the group on the need for tax reform.

The D.C. Fly-In was another reminder that Nebraska's business community must remain vigilant. Our members need to stay up-to-date on what is taking place in Washington.

I am proud of our association's efforts and the individuals who committed their time and resources to be part of this year's D.C. Fly-In.

Nebraska Is Well Represented

What takes place in Washington has a major impact on the operations and profitability of Nebraska businesses. We are fortunate to live in a state in which our federal representatives are accessible and willing to discuss important issues. We do not take this for granted.

The State Chamber also appreciates the pro-business perspective of our congressional delegation members. During our fly-in, we learned that Nebraska is the only state whose returning federal delegation members

received a 100% score from the U.S. Chamber for their votes in 2012.

We thank our delegation for their service to Nebraska and their concern for our state's business community. They listen – and it is important that business leaders convey their concerns, as well as with appreciation for their accomplishments.

Business Must Lead

It was a special honor to lead the Nebraska Chamber to Washington, D.C. Just over a century ago, the Nebraska Chamber embarked on its mission to represent and defend Nebraska's business community and to protect free enterprise. It can safely be said that a century later, that is still our organization's key focus.

There will always be challenges for the business community and employers. But whether the debate occurs in Washington, D.C., or at the state and local levels, the answers do not lie in bigger government. That has been tried in the past and has never been successful.

Economic growth and job creation are fueled by the private sector, which can and will restore the American Dream.

The State Chamber will continue to educate and communicate with our elected representatives – in the state and in Washington – on steps they can take to ensure that Nebraska and its businesses keep growing. ■

Schedule Announced For Fall Legislative Forums

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry, in cooperation with local chambers across the state, will present its annual legislative forums in September through November. The forums are held every autumn to inform and gather input from the business community on issues of concern, while providing insight on the Legislature's business-related activities.

Members of the State Chamber, as well as members of local chambers of commerce and the news media, are invited to participate. All state senators will also be invited to the forums in his/her respective district.

Enclosed in this issue of The Executive is a detailed schedule of the Nebraska Chamber's fall forum tour. ■

Nebraska Chamber Descends Upon Capitol Hill

On May 21-22, more than two dozen Nebraskans took part in the State Chamber's annual Washington, D.C. Fly-In. The event was sponsored by the Nebraska Public Power District, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, and TransCanada.

The highlight of the Chamber's D.C. visit was the State Chamber Congressional Luncheon on Capitol Hill, which featured remarks from Nebraska's U.S. senators and congressmen. The luncheon afforded Chamber members the opportunity

to speak directly with the members of Nebraska's congressional delegation and their senior aides.

The fly-in also included policy briefings at the headquarters of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Key topics of discussion included:

- ❖ The Senate and House versions of immigration reform;
- ❖ Possible tax reform that could be debated this fall with the debt-ceiling extension;

❖ Ongoing efforts by the EPA and the DOL to expand regulations;

❖ The Marketplace Fairness Act, which would allow states to collect sales tax from online purchases; and

❖ Reauthorization of the farm bill.

Other activities included the traditional Nebraska Breakfast and a reception at the Washington offices of Husch Blackwell, LLP, where participants heard from Nebraska native Kyle Gilster, who is with the firm and a leader of the Nebraska Society of Washington, D.C. ■



Clockwise from top (1) Nebraska Chamber Chairman Brian Hamilton presents the U.S. Chamber's Spirit of Free Enterprise Award to Representative Jeff Fortenberry. Nebraska is the only state whose returning federal delegation members received a 100% score from the U.S. Chamber for their votes in 2012. (2) Senator Mike Johanns greets State Chamber members at the Nebraska Breakfast. (3) Congressman Adrian Smith updates NPPD's John McClure on the activities of the House Ways and Means Committee. (4) Chamber members learn about the latest policy developments in the U.S. Chamber's briefing room. (5) Fly-in participants gather outside the White House. (6) Congressman Lee Terry addresses the State Chamber's Congressional Luncheon held at the Capitol Hill Club. (7) Senator Deb Fischer speaks to Chamber members and others at the Nebraska Breakfast on Capitol Hill.



State Chamber's Legislative Summit is August 8, 2013

What happens in D.C. and Lincoln can dramatically impact your business and bottom line. Plan to attend Nebraska's 2013 Legislative Summit set for Thursday, August 8, and get up to speed on the latest developments.

All the members of the Nebraska's congressional delegation have been invited, along with key state senators who sit on the new Nebraska Tax Modernization Committee.

This unique event is hosted by the Nebraska Chamber, as well as the Lincoln Chamber. The Summit will again

be held at the Strategic Air & Space Museum, located near the Ashland (Exit 426) just off I-80. Doors will open at 8 a.m., and the event will conclude by 1 p.m.

Attendees will be treated to the following:

- ❖ A congressional update on developing federal issues;
- ❖ Insight from state lawmakers regarding Nebraska's tax structure and spending trends;
- ❖ Remarks by Governor Dave Heineman; and

❖ A special presentation presented by Dr. Martin Regalia, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

For members of the Nebraska Chamber or local chambers, the cost is \$95 per person, which includes lunch. Cost for non-chamber members is \$125.

To register, go online at <http://www.nechamber.net/dnn/Registration/Summit.aspx>. If you need assistance registering, call the State Chamber at (402) 474-4422. ■

Carol Sibley Retires From State Chamber



On June 28, Carol Sibley retired from the Nebraska Chamber after working 45 years for Nebraska's largest statewide business association.

Sibley served as the State Chamber's longtime office manager. She started at the Chamber in July 1968, when the association was headquartered at a former hotel building near 10th and P Streets in Lincoln. During her tenure, Sibley saw the organization grow from a couple hundred members to well over 1,500.

Sibley was recognized by the Nebraska Chamber Board of Directors at its summer meeting in early June. A reception for colleagues, friends and family was held in her honor the evening of June 25.

Our best wishes to Carol as she begins her well-deserved retirement. ■

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.

ALLIANCE

Countrywide Potato
Lisa Hickman

FREMONT

D & D Investments Co.,
Inc.
Don Hinds

LA VISTA

PayPal, Inc.
Linda Dugan

LINCOLN

Cheever Construction Co.
Wes Oestreich

Pickering Creative Group
Trent Wilcox

NEBRASKA CITY

Allied Recycling & Refuse
Services
Kim Luick

NORFOLK

Major Refrigeration Co.,
Inc.
Wilma Johnson

OMAHA

Bemis Paper Packaging
Division
Joe Eisenbacher

First Edition Printing
John Pinkerton

OXFORD

Merrick's of Nebraska,
LLC
Rich Carpenter

PAPILLION

Advantage Team/Keller
Williams
Brad & Kari Witt

SCHUYLER

Land Mark Management &
Realty, Inc.
Chris Langemeier

SCOTTSBLUFF

Northwest Pipe Fittings,
Inc. of Scottsbluff
Jim Vance

VALENTINE

Valentine Chamber of
Commerce
Dean Jacobs

WAVERLY

Tecumseh Poultry, LLC
Kevin Siebert

WESTLAKE, TX

Fidelity Investments
Scott Orr

