

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER 
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
January/February 2008

Plan to Attend State Chamber's D.C. Visit

The annual State Chamber congressional visit to Washington, D.C. will be April 22-23, 2008. As in past years, there will be a luncheon for the Nebraska congressional delegation and senior staff members in the Dirksen Senate Office Building (Room G-11) on Wednesday, April 23, sponsored by the Nebraska Public Power District. Attendees may go to the traditional Nebraska Breakfast on April 23. A newly-added agenda item is an evening reception for attendees that will be held at the Washington offices of Husch Blackwell Sanders, LLP at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 22.

To stay abreast of the latest issues and developments, those attending will receive issue briefings at the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the headquarters of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In this presidential election year, it is important that State Chamber members maintain contact with their congressional representatives. See the enclosed flier for more details, or contact Don Mihovk at (402) 474-4422. ■

2008 Annual Meeting Highlights

On January 24, the State Chamber held its Annual Meeting and Legislative Caucus at The Cornhusker Marriott in Lincoln. Speaker of the Legislature Mike Flood addressed the Chamber Board during its morning meeting. Speaker Flood told Board members that highway funding, the state's cash reserve fund, immigration, and economic development issues would likely command much attention during the Legislature's 60-day session.

Governor Dave Heineman spoke at the Chamber luncheon, which honored local chambers of commerce from across the state. The Governor issued a proclamation declaring February "Nebraska Chamber of Commerce Month." He also reported on successes of the Nebraska Advantage and highlighted his Nebraska Super Advantage plan, which aims to attract higher paying jobs to the state. Marion Kroeker, 2008 president of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce Executives, recognized local chamber representatives attending the Annual Meeting.

The afternoon featured the traditional Legislative Leaders panel, where state Senators Abbie Cornett, Philip Erdman, Deb Fischer, Lavon Heidemann, and Chris Langemeier addressed some of the top issues facing the 2008 Legislature. The afternoon also featured lively discus-

sions on the state's demographic and economic outlook, as well as presentations from senior staff of all of Nebraska's Congressional delegation members.

In the evening, more than 30 senators joined nearly 500 Chamber members and the Governor for the Annual Banquet and Nebraska Business Hall of Fame induction ceremony. The banquet featured the traditional passing of the gavel from 2007 Chairman Tom L. Whalen of Omaha to 2008 Chairman G. Lee Glenn of Scottsbluff.

The banquet featured a special tribute to members of the state's business community for their contributions to Operation Airlift – a fundraising drive that reimbursed the Nebraska National Guard soldiers of the 110th Medical Battalion for their airline tickets home for Christmas. The unit, which had been training in Washington state prior to their deployment overseas, would have been forced to pay all their holiday travel expenses if not for the help of private donors. General Timothy Kadavy, commander of the Nebraska

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Speaker of the Legislature Mike Flood of Norfolk addresses the Chamber Board during its morning meeting.



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State Chamber Views...
Editorial by Barry L. Kennedy
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"Nebraska's Mission: To Be More Competitive"

Tax policy and economic development go hand in hand. States that have the most competitive and fair tax structure by comparative analysis typically enjoy the most economic growth.

The State Chamber Taxation Council's mission statement says that we should "work for legislation that establishes a fair, equitable and competitive tax structure" and ask that we "develop policies and programs that will stimulate new, improved and expanded business opportunities and jobs for Nebraska citizens."

Although this year is the short legislative session, there are some real opportunities to make Nebraska more competitive in attracting both people and economic growth to our state. This growth can come from existing employers or from new businesses that are looking for a good place to expand. It can also come from individuals who have special skill sets to help alleviate workforce shortages.

In 2005, the Nebraska Legislature passed the Nebraska Advantage Act, and it has surpassed our expectations. To date, 138 companies have filed to expand or locate in our state, making pledges to invest \$4.6 billion and create more than 12,000 new jobs in the years to come.

We now need to move to a higher level. To compete in the new 21st century economy, we need to find creative ways to attract even higher paying jobs. These are jobs that can be filled by Nebraskans or by attracting highly-skilled people to Nebraska who will help grow our state.

A major initiative in that process is a plan introduced by Senator Ray Janssen in the form of LB895. This bill provides additional incentives to companies that create jobs paying well above the state or county average wage where the business is located, whichever is greater.

When higher paying jobs are created, the residual effect of

purchases of products and services within our economy is dynamic, both spreading and lessening the overall tax burden on all taxpayers.

Two other bills have been introduced by Senator Carroll Burling that will also make Nebraska more competitive with neighboring states. LB887 and LB888 would adjust the bracket threshold at which Nebraska corporations must pay the highest rate. The \$50,000 rate trigger has not been adjusted since 1975. The effect of inflation makes these proposals especially beneficial to small or medium-size businesses.

These are just two examples of what may be accomplished, even in a short legislative session, to make Nebraska more competitive and attractive for both business and individual growth.

These bills are consistent with the Chamber's mission statement. Our support of these and other legislative initiatives will place Nebraska in a competitive position for the development of both existing and new business and industry.

Rest assured, your State Chamber will continue to engage with our policy-makers, advocate and support legislation that offers Nebraska a competitive edge and a better chance at keeping young people in our state and working within a growing economy.

Site Selection Magazine Ranks Nebraska No. 17 For Business Climate

According to a prominent nationwide site selection publication, Nebraska rates better than average when it comes to the state's business climate. Senior executives charged with finding the best location for their company's upcoming facility expansion have an obligation to examine closely the impact that state and local politicians have on the region's business climate, writes Bill King, chief editor for *Expansion Management Magazine*. The magazine's 12th annual study of how the 50 State Legislatures impact local business climates ranks Nebraska as having the 17th best business climate.

The study looked at six key categories: general tax burden; five-year tax improvement; infrastructure spending; state debt management; state spending; and right to work. Nebraska scored well in debt management (No. 3) and spending (No. 11).

Nebraska also garnered positive points for its right-to-work constitutional guarantee. Currently, there are 22 states with the right-to-work guarantee. John Warden, a senior executive with The Walker Companies, said: "Union membership levels are lower in right-to-work states, which means management can be more responsive to fast-

changing market conditions and enjoy the kind of flexibility and freedom from union work rules required to be successful."

Nebraska received much lower scores for its general tax burden (No. 31); five-year tax improvement (No. 24); and infrastructure spending (No. 25). Nearby states varied in their overall rankings. Wyoming (No. 2), South Dakota (No. 8) and Iowa (No. 12) fared better than Nebraska, while Kansas (No. 19) Missouri (No. 21) and Colorado (No. 29) fared worse. ■

Annual Meeting Highlights (Continued from page 1)

National Guard, presented the State Chamber and President Barry L. Kennedy with the Homeland Defense Service ribbon for "their patriotic commitment to the warriors" of the Nebraska National Guard and their families.

Later in the evening, the 2008 Business Hall of Fame class was inducted. New Hall of Fame members are: **James P. Abel** of Lincoln, NEBCO; the late **Fred Bosselman** of Grand Island, Bosselman Family of Companies; and **Jack Vetter** of Omaha, Vetter Health Services.

Five \$2,000 scholarships were awarded. The Jack Swartz Scholarship was awarded to Ryan Bouckaert of Creighton University, while the Virgil Eihusen Scholarship went to Nathan Ritz of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry Scholarships were awarded to Samantha Mosier of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln,

Jennifer Oerman of Dana College, and Sara Reimnitz of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Sponsors of this year's Annual Meeting include the following Platinum-level sponsors: Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Nebraska; ConAgra Foods; Farmland Foods; and Nebraska Public Power District. Gold-level sponsors: Ameritas Life Insurance; Aquila; Blackwell Sanders; Cargill; Chief Industries; Children's Hospital; Cox Communications; First National Bank; Lincoln Industries; Mutual of Omaha; NEBCO; Nelnet; PayPal; Pinnacle Bank; University of Nebraska; and Vetter Health Services. Silver-level sponsors: Archer Daniels Midland; Affiliated Foods; Aflac; Behlen Mfg.; Federal Home Loan Bank; Gallup Organizations; Gottsch Enterprises; Knudsen Law Firm; Linweld; MDS Pharma Services; Omaha Chamber of Commerce; Omaha Public Power District; Pepsi; Pfizer; Qwest Communications; SourceGas; U.S. Bank; Valmont Industries; and Wells Fargo.

Business Hall of Fame Nominations Due March 10

March 10, 2008, is the deadline for nominating the next class of inductees to the Nebraska Business Hall of Fame. Nominations of outstanding Nebraska business leaders should be sent to the State Chamber office. Please use the enclosed form. Nominees may be living or deceased individuals who have added to the prestige and growth of business in Nebraska. In addition, a recipient can be from a large or small business. The main criterion is that the individual has made a significant contribution to the private enterprise system.

This year, the Nebraska Business Hall of Fame inducted three new members: James P. Abel of Lincoln, NEBCO; the late Fred Bosselman of Grand Island, Bosselman Family of Companies; and Jack Vetter of Omaha, Vetter Health Services. ■

Annual Meeting Highlights



Left: Board of Directors member Patrick Gorup of Omaha asks a question of Senator Mike Flood, as fellow Board member Richard Reiser looks on.

Middle Left: Marion Kroeker (Executive Director of the Ogallala/Keith County Chamber of Commerce), Governor Dave Heineman and Dan Mauk (President of the Norfolk Area Chamber) celebrate Chamber of Commerce Month.



Bottom Left: General Timothy Kadavy, commander of the Nebraska National Guard, presents State Chamber President Barry Kennedy with the Homeland Defense Service ribbon and recognizes Chamber members for their contributions to Operation Airlift.

Middle Bottom: Appropriations Committee chairman Lavon Heidemann answers questions from State Chamber members, as Agriculture Committee Chairman Phil Erdman looks on. Five influential state lawmakers participated in the Legislative Leaders discussion panel during the afternoon.

Bottom Right: Lee Glenn, 2008 Nebraska Chamber Board Chairman, accepts the gavel from 2007 Chairman Tom Whalen.



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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.

ADAMS

E Energy Adams, LLC
Carl Sitzmann

Sponsor: Dennis Boesiger, Midwest Livestock Systems, Inc.

KEARNEY

Buffalo County Economic Development Council
Jonathan Krebs

LINCOLN

Bar-None Housing, LLC
Bob Peterson

Husker Auto Group
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Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education
Dr. Marshall Hill

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