

2005 Annual Meeting & Legislative Caucus February 3

Mark your calendars for the State Chamber's Annual Meeting and Legislative Caucus, set for Thursday, February 3, 2005, at the Cornhusker Hotel and Conference Center in Lincoln. A full program will provide Nebraska business people an opportunity to meet with members of the Nebraska Legislature and state policymakers, to salute the achievements of four of Nebraska's business leaders, and to get a first-hand briefing on important legislative issues of concern to the business community.

Late registration will begin in the Atrium of the Cornhusker Hotel at 9:00 a.m., followed by the Board of Directors meeting, scheduled from 10:00-11:45 a.m. The traditional Chamber of Commerce Month kickoff luncheon follows at noon.

The afternoon sessions will feature the traditional Legislative Panel to bring members up to date on key business issues before the 2005 Unicameral. In addition, we are looking at afternoon programs dealing with the "Next Generation" of economic development incentives. The evening banquet will begin at 7:00 p.m., following the social hour in the Cornhusker Atrium. The banquet will feature the traditional passing of the gavel from 2004 Chairman **Rick Russell** to 2005 Chairman **Gary Warren**. The Business Hall of Fame induction ceremony will begin at 8:00 p.m., and the banquet will conclude with closing comments by Chairman Warren.

The registration form is enclosed with this issue of the *Executive*. ■

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Four To Be Inducted Into Business Hall Of Fame

LAWRENCE J. ARTH, LINCOLN, AMERITAS ACACIA – Lawrence J. Arth became president and chief operating officer of Ameritas Life Insurance Corp. in 1988, the same year the firm changed its name from Bankers Life of Nebraska. Under his leadership, the firm has grown to a major diversified financial services company, delivering products and services in life insurance and annuities, retirement plans, group dental and eye care, investments, banking and public finance.

A native of Lincoln, Nebraska, Arth attended UNL and served in the U.S. Navy before starting his career. His past community services and current activities range from the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben to Junior Achievement.

He became chairman and chief executive officer in 1995. Under his direction, Ameritas Life Insurance Corp. converted to a stock life insurance company, wholly owned by Ameritas Mutual Insurance Holding Company. The firm subsequently merged with Acacia Mutual Holding

Corporation of Bethesda, Md., to form Ameritas Acacia Mutual Holding Company.

WILLIAM A. FITZGERALD, OMAHA, COMMERCIAL FEDERAL – In 1887, the forerunner to

Commercial Federal started as a building and loan association. In 1974, Commercial Federal Savings and Loan named William A. "Bill" Fitzgerald as president — the third generation of Fitzgeralds working for the firm. During his tenure, the company began building an interstate network of retail banking

offices with purchases of thrift institutions in Colorado, Oklahoma, and Kansas, bringing its philosophy of outstanding customer service and innovative products to an even broader range of customers.

Fitzgerald is currently chairman of the board for Creighton University, his alma mater, and involved in a host of civic and professional duties.

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LAWRENCE J. ARTH



E.H. "SHOEY" SHOEMAKER



WILLIAM A. FITZGERALD



JAN THAYER



State Chamber Views...

*Editorial by Barry Kennedy,
President,
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry*

"Next Generation!!! - Part 2"

Last month, I wrote about several "core issues" that rank high on the State Chamber priority list - taxation, economic development and the importance of enhancing the commitment that Nebraska makes to assist growing or expanding businesses with training needs. This month, I would like to include additional priority issues that should command serious attention from the business sector as well as the Legislature during the 2005 session.

On labor relation issues, it has always been the focus of the State Chamber to represent its membership in their roles as employers. This year is no exception, for it is expected that there will be many legislative initiatives introduced which will require our close attention and your necessary input. With member involvement, our lobbying efforts on behalf of the employer community are much more effective. Legislators relate to your real life experiences when they make decisions on laws that could ultimately affect your ability to do business or that will affect your organization's bottom line.

Workers' Compensation: Due to several years of double-digit increases in workers' compensation costs, in 1995 the State Chamber played an integral role in a broad-based coalition that sought reform of the workers' compensation laws. The legislative effort being successful, we were able to curb cost increases for several years. Low workers' compensation costs had been a strong selling point for Nebraska, but that edge has slipped away. Now, further reforms are necessary as workers' compensation coverage is experiencing both affordability and availability issues. We expect to see legislation addressing such various issues as social security payment offsets, modification of the physician choice rule, prompt payment for workers' compensation providers,

further utilization of generic drugs, adoption of more recently issued medical guidelines to ascertain levels of permanent impairment and a variety of other legal and procedural issues.

Unemployment Compensation:

For years, Nebraska has been in the lowest tier of states for employer taxes that are used to fund the state's unemployment compensation program. Since the last recession, accompanied by three years of higher than average unemployment rates, lower interest rates and indexed benefits, our unemployment insurance trust fund has fallen to a level that is not acceptable to the risk. A variety of solutions are being explored, some of which will likely be introduced as legislation this session in order to "shore up" trust fund solvency while further controlling costs borne by contributory employers. Some ideas include adjusting the taxable wage base, providing for a mechanism to freeze maximum benefit increases when trust fund adequacy is at risk, modifying experience rates, and tightening the law on non-charged benefits, particularly regarding disqualifications for ordinary misconduct and voluntary quits.

Highway Development: The State Chamber is a long-time supporter of protecting the integrity of the Highway Trust Fund. In recent years, other states have diverted needed funds from building and maintaining an effective transportation infrastructure in order to fund other programs. The Highway Trust Fund is always a target for those who want to secure resources for other "favored" programs. Protection of the trust fund will continue to be a high priority this session.

Obviously, the State Chamber has a lot of work on the legislative docket. Now, more than ever before, we must effectively communicate our membership's priorities to both legislative and executive branches of govern-

ment in order to chart a positive path for economic growth in Nebraska. Working together cooperatively, solutions will be forthcoming, for it is never "us v. them" or "all or nothing." We must simply be diligent in our commitment to accomplish the goal of creating a legal and regulatory environment whereby Nebraska business and industry has the opportunity to thrive. Nebraska must be competitive in economic growth and career development, for only through the accomplishment of that goal will we be able to provide careers for future Nebraskans and the resources to deliver the services that Nebraskans need. ■

Plan To Attend Washington Visit

The annual State Chamber Congressional visit to Washington will be on May 10-12, 2005. As in past years, we will hold a luncheon at the Hart Senate Office Building on Wednesday, May 11, where members of the Nebraska Congressional delegation and their chief staff members will join us. Attendees may attend the Nebraska Breakfast at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, May 11, in the Dirksen Office Building cafeteria. On May 10, we are planning an evening reception. Also planned are an Issues Briefing at the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) in the morning on May 12, and a federal issues briefing at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce headquarters in the afternoon on May 11.

We will have further details on lodging in the next Executive, but we are trying to make arrangements with the JW Marriott Hotel. The JW Marriott is two blocks from the White House and is convenient to downtown.

With a new Congress and President Bush's aggressive policies dealing with key issues on trade, energy and the economy, contacts with our delegation will be very important. Please take advantage of this opportunity for face-to-face meetings with your federal delegation. For more information, contact the State Chamber at (402) 474-4422. ■

Straight Talk

Pats On Back

■ A number of State Chamber members were honored at the 2004 Nebraska Diplomats Banquet last month. Diplomat of the Year Award went to **Roger Christianson, CECD**, Economic Development Manager with the Omaha Public Power District in Omaha. Industry of the Year Awards went to **Henningsen Foods, Inc.** and **Mutual of Omaha**. Congratulations to all!

■ The Lincoln Chamber of Commerce honored State Chamber members at its Celebrate Business award ceremony recently. **Lincoln Wholesale Florists** received the Outstanding Women-Owned Business Award. **Alltel Communications** was awarded the Cornerstone Award. **Lincoln Plating Company** was given the Most Environmentally-Friendly Business Award, and former State Chamber Chairman **Alice Dittman of Cornhusker Bank** was awarded the Burnham Yates Citizenship Award. Congratulation to all!

■ A number of State Chamber members were recipients of the 2004 Edgerton Awards for efforts in quality in the workplace and with marketplace customers. The Edgerton Awards program is patterned after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards program. They are named for the late Harold "Doc" Edgerton, a native of Aurora who became a famous scientist at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology. Receiving the Edgerton Award of Excellence were: **Lincoln Plating, Lincoln, and Eaton Corporation Torque Controls Division, Hastings**. Receiving the Edgerton Award of Progress was: **Molex Inc., Lincoln**. Receiving the Edgerton Award of Commitment was: **Alegent Health Orthopaedic Institute Joint Replacement Center Bergan Mercy Medical Center, Omaha**.

Cornerstone Project

The State Chamber has initiated a new membership category — the Cornerstone member. A member paying a minimum of \$5,000 in dues investment, and the company is near the recommended dues schedule, would be eligible to become a Cornerstone member. The immediate Past Chairman of the State Chamber serves as Chairman of the Cornerstone Project for a one-year term.

Benefits to becoming Cornerstone members include costs of seminars covered; all council or Board meeting meals complimentary; two full Annual Meeting registrations at the \$5,000 level; guided tour of Capitol; e-mail legislative reports and newsletters to top people within Cornerstone company.

The key to this program is the recognition of key State Chamber members, doing their fair share, and even more than their fair share (if a smaller company) to help provide additional funding for the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry to enhance and expand its services to all State Chamber members. Current Cornerstone members are:

AFLAC

Alltel

Altria Group

Ameritas Acacia Companies

Becton Dickinson

Blue Cross & Blue Shield

Burlington Northern Santa Fe

Cabela's

Chief Industries

ConAgra Foods

Connectivity Solutions Manufacturing

Cornerstone Bank

Douglas Manufacturing

First Data

First National Bank

Kellogg Company

Kinder Morgan

Lincoln Benefit Life

Mutual of Omaha

Nebraska Cable

Nebraska Public Power District

Novartis

Paypal, Inc.

Pinnacle Bank

TierOne Bank

Tyson/IBP Foods

Union Pacific

Vetter Health Services

Werner Enterprises

For more information on this program, please contact James Berringer, Vice President Membership & Marketing at the State Chamber.

The State Chamber extends its sympathy to the family of past Chairman Virgil R. Eihusen, who passed away on November 25. He was chairman of the board of Global Industries Inc., a maker of grain-storage and handling products, and owner of Indianhead Golf Club. Eihusen founded Chief Industries in 1954. Eihusen was a charter member of the Nebraska Business Hall of Fame and the board of directors of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Eihusen also made a number of financial contributions including the largest cash donation - \$1.6 million - to Grand Island's Heartland Events Center. It recently was renamed the Eihusen Arena.

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Under his leadership, Commercial Federal provides corporate support to a wide range of nonprofit organizations that relate to the company's major areas of concern: social services, education, arts and community development. They provide support in a number of ways, including operating fund support, capital drive donations, event sponsorships and in-kind donations.

E.H. "SHOEY" SHOEMAKER, NORTH PLATTE, MILLDALE RANCH – Born in New York, "Shoey" Shoemaker returned from World War II service thinking he might work for an insurance firm in Chicago. His wife's father, though, asked him to run the Milldale Ranch, north of North Platte. Marie Shoemaker's grandfather established the ranch in 1884. In fact, the first brand recorded under the new Nebraska law was the joined 7HL by Milldale Land and Cattle Co. of Gandy.

"Shoey" Shoemaker's Milldale Ranch still uses the brand today. Of the 1,590 brands registered in 1899, Milldale's is one of a few traceable to original owners through family names. The graduate of the University of Pennsylvania still has a hand in the operations of the ranch, which covers about 55 square miles in Logan County on the southern edge of the Sandhills.

Shoemaker has been president of the North Platte Chamber of Commerce as well as vice president of the American National Cattlemen's Association. He was a popular and enthusiastic spokesman for ranching and the beef industry. He was inducted into the Nebraska Cattlemen's Hall of Fame in 2002.

JAN THAYER, GRAND ISLAND, EXCEL DEVELOPMENT GROUP – A registered dietician, Jan Thayer is an owner, chairman and chief executive officer of EXCEL Development Group, a developer of retirement housing alternatives and long-term care for the elderly. Since her graduation from the University of Nebraska, Jan has been involved in health care as a dietetic counselor of her own firm and as an instructor at the post-secondary and adult education level.

However, her knowledge and experience in working with nursing care facilities as an owner and administrator has made EXCEL a leading developer of retirement housing alternatives. She has served on civic and community boards as well as on national and state offices with the American Dietetic Association and the Nebraska Health Care Association. She has done extensive speaking to many health and allied groups at local, state, and national meetings and conventions. ■

**What is the cost of doing
business in Nebraska?
Help determine the answer.**

The Bureau of Business Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will be conducting a survey of 1,000 Nebraska businesses in February and May 2005. Questions on the survey will address taxes, public policy, education, and workforce development.

Help determine the answer by participating in the survey when you receive it.

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.

COLUMBUS

**Northwest Electric, Inc.
Larry Fritz**

GENEVA

**Bioiberica Nebraska,
Inc.
Mark B. Briggs**

HARVARD

**Harvard State Bank
Steven L. Voorhees**

*Sponsor: C.G. "Kelly"
Holthus, Cornerstone
Bank*

LINCOLN

**Eagle Printing
Gary W. Ashmore**

TMCO Inc.

Roland A. Temme

MARQUETTE

**First National Bank of
Marquette
J.D. Ferguson**

*Sponsor: C.G. "Kelly"
Holthus, Cornerstone Bank*

OMAHA

**AmeriFirst Home
Improvement Finance
Co.
Don Kluthe**