

Small Business Day

The Small Business Council, in cooperation with the Nebraska Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB), co-hosted a Small Business Day at the Unicameral on March 30. Participants met at the State Capitol and heard from Governor Dave Heineman, Senators on the latest developments on business issues, and representatives of the Small Business Administration (SBA). Members were also provided information on lobbying their Senators, a guide on how the legislative process works, and complete updates on bills of interest to the business community. Many took the opportunity to visit their Senators and present their views. Our thanks to all who took time to come to Lincoln and participate. Constituent voices are well received by the Senators, and your input goes a long way to promoting the State Chamber's pro-business agenda. ■



Governor Dave Heineman

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: Donald Mihovk

Plan To Attend Washington Briefings

The annual State Chamber Congressional visit to Washington will be on May 9-11, 2005. As in past years, we will hold a luncheon at the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Tuesday, May 10, where members of the Nebraska congressional delegation and their chief staff members will join us. On May 9, we will attend an Issues Briefing at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Headquarters in the morning. A White House Briefing is set for that afternoon. On Tuesday, May 10, there will be a briefing at the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), followed by the Congressional Luncheon. Attendees may attend the Nebraska Breakfast at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, May 11, in the Dirksen Office Building cafeteria.

This year, we have made arrangements with the Holiday Inn On The Hill for lodging. The Holiday Inn is two blocks from the U.S. Capitol and

Union Station, and the Metro. We have a block of rooms with rates of \$205 per night. Please contact Vice President-Public Affairs Don Mihovk at the State Chamber to make your room reservations. The cut-off date will be April 18.

President Bush is promoting a number of issues of concern to business, including making tax cuts permanent, class-action reform, asbestos litigation, energy, trade, and transportation. The Senate make-up is slightly more conservative, and there may be more opportunities for legislation to be passed as opposed to being bottled up as in past sessions. Our representatives need to hear your concerns, and the Washington visit is an excellent opportunity for face-to-face meetings.

Register on the enclosed flyer. For more information, please contact Don Mihovk at the State Chamber office at (402) 474-4422. ■

Business & Industry Recognition Day May 9

The Nebraska Diplomats and the Department of Economic Development (DED) are hosting Nebraska Business & Industry Recognition Day on Monday, May 9, 2005, in Fremont, with registration at the Fremont Golf Club. The event begins with a golf outing at 8:00 a.m.

Lunch will be at the Fremont Golf Club and will feature an address by Governor Dave Heineman, with the presentation of the President's Award for Business Excellence and 2005 Business Innovation Awards. The day concludes with Economic Devel-

opment Panels and a reception on the Fremont Dinner Train.

This annual salute to contributions made by the Nebraska business community will focus on how management, employees, education, and government are teaming up to make our state a leader in today's global economy. Advance registration for the day (or any of the events) is requested. Please RSVP by April 22, 2005. Those wishing more information or a registration form should contact Laurie Shaal at DED (402-471-4592). ■



State Chamber Views...

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

"Call To Action"

As you receive this copy of the *Executive*, we are moving into the last 30 days of the 2005 legislative session. A good portion of time will be consumed by the budget process during the last 20 days. There are also several issues of great importance to employers that will be debated.

The State Chamber lobbying corps has been extremely busy this year and has already enlisted the help of many members and volunteers to present testimony and contact State Senators. For the past three sessions, we spent the vast majority of our time in a defensive mode to fight off excessive tax increases, attacks on Nebraska economic development incentives and onerous labor law issues.

This year, while we continue to fight battles on issues of concern to business, we have also added a number of pro-active efforts to help grow our economy. While it is a pleasant change of pace to be on the offense, it has also added significantly to the level of activity.

It now becomes even more important for all of us to be very effective in delivering our message to both the legislative and the executive branch of government. **Your involvement, as a constituent, is of the greatest importance at this time.** State Senators want to hear "real life" stories of how legislation is going to impact your ability to grow and prosper in Nebraska. **The impact within a legislator's district is of the greatest importance to that State Senator.**

Lobbying, despite all of its negative connotations, is simply an effort by anyone who wishes to exercise their right to "petition the government" – to influence the outcome of government decisions and to achieve his or her aims by providing meaningful information in a productive manner. As

individuals engaged in business, your greatest strength is talking to the very representatives that you and your employees have elected.

There are several issues that I want to encourage you to maintain a continual line of communication with your State Senator during the last 30 working days of the 2005 session.

Unemployment compensation:

Nearly a year of work has been involved in LB739 which is a comprehensive reform bill relating to unemployment compensation in Nebraska. Will your unemployment cost go down with the passage of LB739? Better questions to ask are whether unemployment costs will be less than what it would have been without any action; whether the UI Trust Fund will be more stable with the passage of the bill? The answers to those questions are yes. For a variety of reasons, Nebraska's UI Trust Fund has fallen at an alarming rate. Both business and labor have worked together to find solutions to make sure that those who are unemployed, through no fault of their own, are protected and that businesses, who do pay the entire cost of the program, are not unfairly taxed.

Economic Development:

In 1987, Nebraska moved itself to the forefront by creating economic development incentives that allowed us to compete for jobs and investment on a national level. Times have changed, and some ideas that were very effective in 1987 have lost their luster or competitive edge.

For Nebraska to be competitive in growing its economy over the next 20 years, we need to develop creative and effective incentives to retain the existing business base while also attracting new business ventures to Nebraska. There are several bills pending that would create new incentives, generate a better tax climate and add emphases to the

research and development and training needs of businesses and educational institutions.

Tax Climate: In the continual discussion of tax climate versus tax incentives, there is little doubt that if we could just "wave a magic wand" and be among the most competitive states in all forms of taxation, regulation and other costs of doing business, that would have happened long ago. Since there is no wand, we must continually work to keep Nebraska competitive. LB695 is one measure that goes a long way toward making our tax climate more attractive. As one of the few remaining states that still applies the sales tax to new equipment and machinery, the current state tax policy has made it extremely difficult for existing businesses to be competitive with even "sister" plants located in other states, let alone the business' competitors in the marketplace. LB695 will repeal the sales tax on equipment and machinery and allow Nebraska plants to be more competitive.

Workers' Compensation: In 1995, the Legislature passed workers' compensation reform that reversed several years of accelerated increases in workers' compensation cost to Nebraska's employers. We now need to consider a variety of legislative proposals and support those that will help hold the line on workers' compensation cost.

If all of this is not enough, there are numerous other proposals in the areas of environmental legislation, agri-business issues, education issues, health care cost containment, as well as opposing many proposals that would be onerous to business growth. Employers certainly do have a "full plate" of legislative issues this year.

Understanding the system in which you are working and maintaining good lines of communication with your elected officials is of the greatest importance right now. Our success will come with repeated efforts by many employers in building relationships and mutual respect with our elected representatives. ■

FBLA Shadow

Five officers of the Nebraska Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) spent the morning of February 22 "shadowing" State Chamber executives. They met staff members at the regularly scheduled Public Affairs Council Meeting on Tuesday morning and accompanied State Chamber President Barry Kennedy through a typical morning.

The "shadowing" project is part of the State Chamber and the FBLA's Partnership Program. Part of that program is to encourage local businesses and local chambers of commerce to work with their local FBLA chapters. The work done through the FBLA program is a great help to the future of Nebraska's business climate, and we are proud to participate.

For more information on the FBLA program, contact Vice President-Public Affairs Don Mihovk at the State Chamber.

Sarah Rogers, Darech Gaskill, Nate Skaggs, Taylor Seeman, and Brandon Matulka posed with Senator Deb Fischer and Barry Kennedy at the State Capitol.



Nebraska Congressional Delegation - Good For Business!

We previously reported that the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) Award for Manufacturing Legislative Excellence was given to each member of Nebraska's federal delegation for the past congressional session. Sen. Chuck Hagel (95%), Sen. Ben Nelson (73%), Rep. Lee Terry (95%), and Rep. Tom Osborne (91%) were honored for their support of the NAM business agenda. Last month, Behlen Mfg. of Columbus invited Congressman Osborne to receive his award.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce also announced recipients of its Spirit of Enterprise award based on rankings it gives members of Congress for key business votes. Votes are Chamber-designated "key votes," recorded floor votes on issues established as priorities by the Chamber's board of directors on which the Chamber communicates its position prior to the vote. Members of Congress who support the Chamber's position on at least 70% of key votes receive the Spirit of Enterprise Award. Once again, Nebraska's

delegation were each presented the award. For the past 108th Congress, the delegation scored as follows: Sen. Chuck Hagel (97%), Sen. Ben Nelson (75%), Rep. Lee Terry (93%), and Rep. Tom Osborne (94%).

State Chamber members should be proud of the efforts made on behalf of business by our delegation and should thank each member whenever the opportunity comes up! ■



Columbus Mayor Mike Maser, Congressman Tom Osborne, and Behlen Mfg. Chairman & CEO Tony Raimondo at award ceremony.

Edgerton Award

The name "Edgerton" is becoming synonymous with "excellence in performance" among Nebraska's manufacturing and service industries. Since the program's creation 11 years ago, The Edgerton Quality Awards have been bestowed on 42 businesses, but only eight have earned the highest Edgerton Award of Excellence. Two leading Nebraska manufacturers—Lincoln Plating in Lincoln, Neb., and The Eaton Corporation, Torque Control Division in Hastings, Neb.—earned this honor in 2004. "While winning the award is important, we feel it is the journey that got us to this point which is most significant," said Marc LeBaron, Chairman & CEO, Lincoln Plating.

The Edgerton process starts with a company submitting a detailed application form. Patterned after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards program, the Edgerton program evaluates applicants in the areas of leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, measurement and analysis, human resources, process management, and business results. A team of Edgerton examiners rates each company's strengths and opportunities for improvement, and generates a final feedback report.

"I think that the greatest benefit of the program is the feedback report," said Jenne Rodriguez, Edgerton coordinator, "which gives company officials an unbiased, outside perspective on their performance and recommends concrete ways in which they might improve."

Registration information is available at: http://assist.neded.org/edgerton/registration_wkshop05.htm. Sponsors of The Edgerton Awards program are the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, the Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership, The Nebraska Diplomats, and the Nebraska Section of the American Society for Quality. ■

VoterVOICE Update

This legislative session, we have activated our VoterVOICE grassroots program on issues dealing with mortgage interest deductions and the unemployment compensation reform bill. We are very pleased that so many members have participated and communicated their feelings on these issues to their state senators. One of the pleasant surprises we found is that some members have taken the VoterVOICE e-mail alert and forwarded it to employees and friends. We appreciate your efforts in passing the word, especially to employees and peers, about issues of concern to business. The more citizens participate and voice their feelings about state, local and federal issues and how those issues affect their business and lives, our elected representatives will be able to make reasoned and informed decisions. Now, more than ever, we need the participation of our members to communicate with their senators as the current session begins to wind down (see Barry Kennedy's column on page 2).

As you have seen, some of you will receive a call to action when we need to generate grassroots pressure.

With our new targeting software, we will try to be very specific, as well as selective, in asking for your help. Since we have the ability to target specific legislators through this system, please know that if you are contacted, we need your help to persuade your legislator. We will do our best to make this as easy and as painless for you as possible. Please follow through when you receive such a notice from us. All you have to do is click the web address at the bottom of the e-mail message we send you; or in the case of a fax message from us, you can type into your browser the web address you will find on the fax.

The first time you go to the Grassroots Action Center, you will have to register. On subsequent visits, your login will be quicker. You will also be able to view our Active Issues and send messages through our website at www.nechamber.com by clicking on our Grassroots Action Center. We hope you enjoy using our new VoterVOICE.net system. With it you can see how quick and easy it will be for you to make your investment in the State Chamber pay off even more. ■

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.

ARAPAHOE

Arapahoe Telephone Company

John E. Koller

Sponsor: S. Michael Jensen, Great Plains Communications, Inc.

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge Telephone Company

Dick Shoemaker

Sponsor: S. Michael Jensen, Great Plains Communications, Inc.

CHAPMAN

Preferred Popcorn, L.L.C.
Norm Krug

COLUMBUS

Tooley Drug and Home Care
Richard C. Tooley

GRAND ISLAND

Equitable Federal Savings Bank

Richard Harbaugh

Sponsor: Richard McGinnis, Home Federal Savings & Loan Association of Nebraska

Southern Public Power District

Gary Hedman

Sponsors: William J. Fehrman, Nebraska Public Power District, Gary Warren, Hamilton Telecommunications & Tim White, Rinder Printing Company

Subway

Todd Carpenter

Sponsor: Brian C. Hamilton, Beardmore Chevrolet, Inc.

GRANT

Perkins County Chamber of Commerce
Rod Cornelius

KIMBALL

Kimball Co-op Food Store
John Morrison

LINCOLN

Cada and Associates
James A. Cada

Claritus

David Herbert

Husker Auto Group
Marty deBoer

Lincoln Nephrology & Hypertension, P.C.

Arlene Schultze

H. Jack Moors & Associates

H. Jack Moors

Perry, Guthery, Haase & Gessford, P.C., L.L.O.

Riko Bishop

Tabitha Health Care Services, Inc.

Keith Fickenscher

LYNCH

Three River Telco
Neil Classen

Sponsor: S. Michael Jensen, Great Plains Communications, Inc.

NELIGH

Blackburn Manufacturing Company

J.M. Blackburn

Sponsor: Dennis Swanson, Sandhill Equipment, Inc.

OLATHE, KS

Compdata Surveys

Theresa M. Worman

OMAHA

Cornerstone Energy, Inc.
Bill Rickabaugh

DRI Title & Escrow

Robert Ortman

InterSystems

Rod Cooper

PALMER

Performance Plus Liquids, Inc.

Jerry Heidelk

PLAINVIEW

Husker Ag LLC

Allen H. Sievertsen

WAHOO

Edstrom, Bromm, Lindahl,

Sohl & Freeman-Caddy

Curt Bromm

WEST POINT

West Point Implement, Inc.

Erv Eisenmenger