

May Primary Election Ballots Set

After the filing deadline, all four incumbent Senators eligible to run have filed for reelection this year. Twenty Districts will be choosing new Senators this year due to term limits. In addition, Senator Mike Foley (Dist. 29) is running for State Auditor and could resign his legislative seat if he is elected in November. Some 84 candidates will be on the May 9 Primary Election. The top two vote-getters proceed to the November 7 General Election.

While the legislative races are of top concern to the State Chamber, the rest of the ballot will be closely watched as well. Republicans Dave Nabity and Cong. Tom Osborne are challenging Governor Dave Heineman for the right to be on the November ballot. The open Third District Congressional seat has five GOP candidates, and the U.S. Senate seat has three Republicans vying to face incumbent Sen. Ben Nelson.

The State's Constitutional officers are all up for election this year as well. A complete listing of candidates is enclosed.

The State Chamber is again working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to activate and energize business and employees for the elections. It's called VoteForNebraska.com, a web-based employee education program designed to engage you in the 2006 elections. VoteForNebraska.com enables you to easily register to vote, get absentee ballots, and to educate yourself on

state and federal candidates—all from a single website.

Research done after the 2002 election showed that employees, by a 2 to 1 margin, held a NEGATIVE opinion of their employer if they received their first election-related communication late in the cycle. These employees didn't feel intruded upon, but were upset that they didn't get information sooner and thus felt powerless to participate.

On the other hand, by a 3 to 1 margin, employees had a POSITIVE opinion of their employer if they received 4-6 election-related communications throughout the cycle. That positive opinion jumped to 4 to 1 when employees received 7 or more communications. Further research showed that voter turnout increases as well with more "touches" from the employer. The hundreds of thousands of voters employed by you are looking for guidance and leadership when it comes to voting. They are seeking out exactly the type of information

VoteForNebraska.com provides. This program represents, by far, the boldest effort made by the business community to reach this group of important potential voters.

Make sure you and your employees are ready to participate in the Primary and General Elections and log on to VoteForNebraska.com! If you find that you are in a legislative district that is up for election this year (all of the even numbered districts) you may want to take an additional step. Make yourself known to and become acquainted with the people in your district who are running or who are interested in running for the Nebraska Legislature. Invite them to visit your place of business and see, first hand, the economic impact that you are making in your community. ■



Plan to Attend Washington Visit

The annual State Chamber Congressional visit to Washington will be May 2-4, 2006. A last minute change in location will put the annual Congressional luncheon at the Dirksen Senate Office Building (SDG-50) on Wednesday, May 3, 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 3, in the Dirksen Office Building cafeteria. Also planned are an Issues Briefing at the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) on May 2 and a federal

issues briefing at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce headquarters on May 3.

We have made arrangements with the Hilton Garden Inn Downtown, 815 14th Street, NW Washington, D.C. (Phone: 202-783-7800). The Hilton Garden Inn is two blocks from the White House and is convenient to downtown. Please take advantage of this opportunity for face-to-face meetings with your federal delegation.

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



State Chamber Views...

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

"A Fair Legislative Salary Proposal"

Nebraska State Senators are among the lowest compensated legislators in the nation. Our State Senators are paid \$12,000 per year. The national average is \$30,000. Compared to some of our neighboring states, you will find the following salaries: Colorado legislators at \$30,000, Iowa legislators at \$21,380 (but will go to \$25,000 in 2007) and Missouri legislators at \$31,351.

Any salary increase must be approved by the voters of Nebraska. On May 9, 2006, voters will have an opportunity to increase State Senators salaries to \$21,000, offered through constitutional **Amendment One** on the primary ballot. The Amendment also includes an annual adjustment based on the change in the consumer price index, but could not increase more than 4% each year.

State Senator salaries have not been raised since 1988, when voters approved an annual pay hike from

\$4,800 to the current \$12,000. If the annual adjustment had been put into place at that time (never to exceed 4%), legislative salaries today would be \$21,061, or about the same as **Amendment One** calls for.

Please be reminded that State Senators do not receive health insurance or other benefits from the state. Any expenses incurred while the Legislature is not in session or when Senators are in their districts conducting legislative business, are not reimbursed. This restriction will continue if the proposed increase is implemented. Nebraska truly has a "citizen Legislature".

With term limits now coming into play, Nebraska will be looking for more people to accept the responsibility of running for the Unicameral. In order to attract the best possible candidates to run for the Legislature, it is important to compensate them at a level that allows a balanced cross section of Nebraskans

to serve. Although \$21,000 is not a "high wage" position, it will recognize a level of compensation that has kept up with past compensation policy, adjusted for inflation.

Today, many Nebraskans cannot consider running for office due to the fact that they are financially unable to serve, they cannot afford to take a leave of absence from their job, or be away from their business while the Legislature is in session. Even when they are not in session, there are many responsibilities, activities, duties, meetings and other constituent service issues that require the time and attention of State Senators.

Amendment One reinforces the idea of a representative government by dealing fairly with a major financial obstacle many Nebraskans have when they consider running for a seat in the Nebraska Legislature.

On May 9, first and foremost be sure to VOTE. Then, to assure that Nebraska can continue to attract the best possible candidates to serve in the nation's only Unicameral Legislature.....

**VOTE YES FOR
AMENDMENT ONE.** ■

What is FutureForce Nebraska?

FutureForce Nebraska is a coalition of education, business, industry and government representatives that promote career pathways. FutureForce's mission is to educate our state's young people and adults in job transition about the many excellent opportunities for employment, future growth, and career satisfaction that are available to them right here in Nebraska. In addition, FutureForce strives to ensure that the Nebraska workforce is prepared to meet the needs of our targeted growth industries – allowing businesses in Nebraska to thrive and attract citizens who are productive, committed and fulfilled.

Nebraska loses too many young people to other states, including a significant number of graduates from our State's colleges and universities. State support for targeted career education, beginning in the elementary grades all the way through graduate school and adult retraining, is crucial in addressing these issues and moving the state forward economically, in civic engagement and in quality of life.

One of the key challenges facing Nebraska is developing a workforce with the knowledge and skills needed by our growth industries, which must compete in a global economy. FutureForce is supporting career

pathways in health care sciences, transportation, entrepreneurship, industrial manufacturing and construction.

FutureForce works closely with business and industry, the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Education, and the Department of Labor in determining viable pathways through targeted growth study and labor needs.

For more information on FutureForce, please check the new website: www.nde.state.ne.us/entreped/futureforce.html. ■

Leadership Nebraska Update

Shortly after the board of directors authorized the State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska Council, chairman Rich Bailey named Robert Harris as the council's Chairman. Harris is a former State Chamber Chairman and an inductee into the Nebraska Business Hall of Fame. He has retired from MDS Pharma Services and currently runs a consulting business.

The Council has met to begin establishing the curricula, develop a timeline, and establish a selection process. The State Chamber has initiated the process to "trade name" the program, and "The State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska," has been filed with the Secretary of State's office. In addition, efforts to seek funding via the grant process are underway. To that end, the State Chamber has formed a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization with the Nebraska Community Foundation.

"We have an outstanding core of leaders serving the State Chamber who are helping develop the State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska into a first-class program that will benefit our state and its citizens for years to come," Harris noted.

State Chamber members who are interested in serving on the Council should contact Chairman Harris or State Chamber Vice President-Public Affairs Don Mihovk. ■



**Leadership Nebraska Chairman
Robert Harris**



Small Business Day At The Capitol

The Small Business Council, in cooperation with the Nebraska Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) and Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, co-hosted a Small Business Day at the Unicameral on February 23. Participants met at the State Capitol and heard updates from members of the Legislature and Governor Dave Heineman.

Pay and Benefit Survey Underway

In 2005, 95% of Nebraska and Iowa employers reported they were actively recruiting personnel. Attracting and retaining a quality workforce is crucial to the success of every business. The State Chamber recognizes the need for reliable compensation information and offers a resource to help employers get an accurate

assessment of their market.

The *Compensation Data* pay and benefits survey data collection is underway, and hundreds of businesses across Nebraska will participate. The survey is designed to provide a comprehensive picture of compensation practices for businesses of all sizes. Information is collected on 532 job titles ranging from entry-level positions to top execu-

tives. Pay information is reported by company size, industry, and region of the state, and multiple state data is given for all management and key professional positions. With complete coverage of benefits and pay practices also included, employers can see how their compensation programs measure up to the competition.

Some data collection began in February, and results are released in June. The price for Chamber members who participate in the survey is only \$299. The price for non-member participants is \$319, and non-participants pay \$729. For further information, or to find out what *Compensation Data* can do for your business, contact Compdata Surveys at 1-800-300-9570 or visit www.compdatasurveys.com. Be sure to mention your member status, or enter promo code 'NCCI' when using the website. ■

Nebraska Congressional Delegation - Good For Business!

It is always a pleasure to report that Nebraska's congressional delegation gets high marks for their pro-business voting. So far in the 109th Congress, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) Award for Manufacturing Legislative Excellence voting shows each member of Nebraska's federal delegation would qualify for the award. Sen. Chuck Hagel (100%), Sen. Ben Nelson (80%), Rep. Lee Terry (86%), Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (95%), and Rep. Tom Osborne (95%) had voting records above the 70% needed for recognition.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has 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 percent of key votes receive the Spirit of Enterprise Award. So far this session, Nebraska's delegation are likely to win the award. For the current 109th Congress, the delegation scores are: Sen. Chuck Hagel (94%), Sen. Ben Nelson (94%), Rep. Lee Terry (89%), Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (93%), and Rep. Tom Osborne (93%).

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!

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.

BEATRICE

Gerdes and Goldsmith,
CPA's
Nancy Gerdes

BLAIR

Woodhouse Ford, Inc.
Bob Woodhouse
*Sponsor: S. Michael
Jensen, Great Plains
Communications, Inc.*

COZAD

Cozad Services, Inc.
Jay Halligan

DECATUR, IL

Archer Daniels Midland
Company
Greg Webb

FREMONT

Nye Square Retirement
Russell V. Peterson

GERING

R & C Welding &
Fabrication, Inc.
Craig Carlson
*Sponsor: Lee Glenn,
Kelley Bean Co.*

GRAND ISLAND

Builders Supply
Jeff Doose

LINCOLN

General Excavating
Scott Fitzgerald

Smith Hayes Financial

Services Corporation
Jamie Gavin
*Sponsor: G. Richard
Russell, Millard Lumber
Inc.*

TSTech, Tri-Con

Industries, LTD
John Holt

MITCHELL

Brown Sheep Com-
pany, Inc.
Harlan Brown

NORFOLK

Advance Services, Inc.
Jennifer Meier

OMAHA

Anderson Ford
Mike Anderson

Central States Health & Life Co. of Omaha

Jerry Thurber
*Sponsor: Richard
McGinnis, Home Federal
Savings & Loan Associa-
tion of Nebraska*

Express Messenger Systems

Robert E. Humphrey, Jr.

Federal Home Loan

Bank of Topeka
Mark Woita

Omaha Royals

Doug Stewart
*Sponsor: Natalie Peetz,
Peetz & Co.*

Resiliency Solutions

Dave Fulton

Schenck Brothers

Construction, Inc.
Dave Schenck

Slusky Law, LLC

Susan Smith

WAUKESHA, WI

General Electric Company
Suzanne Kelley