

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

April 2011

Leadership Nebraska Class V is Underway

The first meeting of the State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska Class V was held February 11-13 at the Lied Lodge in Nebraska City. The 20 members participated in an orientation session that featured presentations by members of past classes, an exercise in "emergentics" by alumna Jeannine Falter, personal relationship training, a presentation by Nebraska Historical Society's Director Michael Smith, and the opportunity for Nebraskans of varied backgrounds and locations to bond with other emerging leaders. At the second session, held March 8-10 in Lincoln, the class focused on government and public policy, which included a meeting with Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, sessions on dispute resolution, political campaigns and tips on lobbying at the Unicameral. The session also featured a congressional insight strategies interactive session and a reception with state senators and Leadership Nebraska alumni.

The remaining sessions are the education session in Kearney in late April; the healthcare and human services session in Omaha in mid-June; the agriculture session in O'Neill in

early August, and the economic development tour to Scottsbluff in September. A commencement ceremony will be held in October 2011.

Members of Class V are: Eli Aguilar, AIM Director of Outreach Western Nebraska, Scottsbluff; Michele

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Members of Leadership Nebraska Class V during the government session held in March.

Challenge Grant Funds Needed for Leadership Nebraska

Thanks to State Chamber members and other generous individuals and foundations, the first four years of the State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska has seen very positive results. Leadership Nebraska identifies current and emerging leaders throughout Nebraska, enhances their leadership skills, and deepens their knowledge of the challenges and opportunities facing our state. So far, 92 class members have completed the curricula.

Leadership Nebraska has been awarded another challenge grant from the Peter Kiewit Foundation for \$25,000. Now the program needs your

help to meet the match. To strengthen the program's financial foundation, State Chamber members are asked to consider making a tax-deductible donation to Leadership Nebraska, which is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. You may also wish to underwrite the tuition of some of your key employees or outstanding leaders in your community. However you choose, your support will help develop Nebraska's best and brightest leaders as they prepare to make their mark in our state.

Tax-deductible contributions may be sent to: Leadership Nebraska, P.O. Box 95128, Lincoln NE, 68509

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State Chamber Views...
Editorial by Barry L. Kennedy, CAE, IOM
President
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'RISK and REWARD'

While America has struggled through an economic downturn in recent years, Nebraska has weathered the storm better than most other states.

Our unemployment rate continues to be one of the very lowest in the nation. We are rated as one of the best states for fiscal management and responsibility. Six of America's least economically stressed counties are in Nebraska. Both Forbes and the annual Pollina Report place Nebraska as one of the best 10 states for doing business. We rank quite well in several other economic reports and one study indicates we are one of the "happiest" states in the country.

We have enjoyed a strong agricultural economy the past few years and the agriculture sector continues to be a significant economic factor in Nebraska. Our economy is much more diversified now, however, than it was during previous economic downturns, so there are other factors to consider.

Let's give credit to our elected policymakers, who often have a mostly thankless job. The fact is, risks have been taken and bold legislative proposals have been developed by our Governor and members of the Unicameral. Dating back to 1987, when an economic development strategy was first created to give Nebraska a "level playing field" and a chance at competing in a global economy.

More recently, in 2005, the Nebraska Advantage was adopted. More than five years later, during a time when financial investment and job creation has waned in many states, Nebraska has continued to have positive interest and definable growth. With every new job comes a new taxpayer who helps lessen the burden on others and helps pay for needed government services such as education, infrastructure, health services

and other programs.

More than 17,500 new jobs have been created and over \$5.5 billion in investments have been made since the passage of Nebraska Advantage. There is always considerable risk in doing something innovative, but in

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Nebraska's situation, the reward has been economic growth. Also, it should be noted that Nebraska's incentives have built-in safeguards that minimize those risks and provide greater probabilities of success.

Even in the last few years, as budgets have become tighter, the Legislature and Governor have supported incentives, especially in areas that attract new technology and innovation opportunities, which are the basis of 21st century economic growth.

Now, in 2011, Nebraska must continue to be aggressive in finding new and better ways to generate growth. State senators and the Governor have introduced several legislative proposals that will help keep Nebraska high in America's pro-business rankings.

These proposals include providing assistance for internships to train the next generation of Nebraska's workforce; resources to boost small, high-tech companies; a program to increase the number of industrial and commercial sites ready for business development; and a new angel investment credit to encourage Nebraska startup companies. All of these concepts have risks, but they will also keep Nebraska's workforce growing

with possibilities of even greater success, including economic and population growth.

Another risky idea currently being considered is the "Build Nebraska Act" - the most significant roads funding plan in a generation. Economic growth depends on a reliable, safe infrastructure to transport products and people. Just like the economic development incentives of 1987, the real benefit of the "Build Nebraska Act" will be felt 20 or more years from now, when Nebraska has the ability to accommodate more jobs and activity all across our state.

Strong economies do not happen by accident. They occur when leaders come forward with bold, creative ideas and are willing to take the risk necessary to implement them.

We need to commend and support the Governor and a strong majority of the Unicameral for being willing to take the risk necessary to keep Nebraska's economy growing and to ensure good jobs for generations to come. ■

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Ehresman, Holdrege Chamber of Commerce; Jennifer Epting, Nucor Steel, Norfolk; Roger Foster, Windstream/Mayor of Crete; Tari Hendrickson, Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, Lincoln; Dennis Houston, Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce; Sarah Johnson, Greater Omaha Chamber; Marc Kaschke, Mayor of North Platte; Max Kathol, Plattsmouth Chamber of Commerce; Jeanne McClure, Alegent, Lincoln; Rick Nelsen, NPPD, Minden; Jane Nielsen, Sarpy Co. Chamber; Papillion; Justine Petsch, Mutual of Omaha Bank, Omaha; Roberta Pinkerton, OPPD, Beatrice; Dave Rasmussen, Attorney, Wolfe Snowden, Lincoln; Liz Ring Carlson, State Farm, Lincoln; George Schuler, Coreslab Structures, LaPlatte; Tom Shoemaker, Cambridge Telephone, Cambridge; Maria Valentin, ConAgra Foods, Omaha; and Andrew Williams, Central National Bank, Kearney. ■

Nebraska FBLA Officers Visit State Chamber, Meet With Senators

On March 1, the state officers of Nebraska Future Business Leaders of America spent the morning with State Chamber staff as part of the Chamber's "FBLA Shadow Day," a project of the State Chamber's and FBLA's Partnership Program. The student leaders joined more than 60 business/organization representatives at the State Chamber's weekly Public Affairs Council meeting, where they heard Speaker of the Legislature Mike Flood address state issues such as the budget, redistricting, roads and CIR reform. Later in the morning, the students visited the headquarters of the State Chamber and were briefed on the legislative matters important to the business community. They then visited the State Capitol to meet with their state senators and observe legislative activity. ■



(From left) State Chamber President Barry Kennedy, Senator Scott Price of Bellevue, state FBLA Vice President Josiah Hood of Bellevue West High School, FBLA Parliamentarian Jenna Woitaszewski of Wood River, Senator Dennis Utter of Hastings, FBLA President Tyler Wellman of Syracuse, FBLA Secretary Jessica Hansen of Dorchester, FBLA State Reporter Curtis Reynolds of Tri-County, and Senator Russ Karpisek of Wilber.

Governor Visits Chamber Roundtable



Governor Heineman, with State Chamber Chairman-Elect Steve Ford, CEO at Pepsi-Cola Bottling in Lincoln (left), and State Chamber board member Jim Krieger of the Gallup Organization in Omaha.

On March 22, Governor Dave Heineman spent the morning with some of the state's key business leaders at the Executive Leadership Policy Roundtable, hosted by the State Chamber in partnership with the Omaha and Lincoln Chambers of Commerce. During the meeting, the Governor addressed urgent issues facing Nebraska and state lawmakers, including the projected budget shortfall, economic development, and reform of the Commission on Industrial Relations – a state agency designed to address public sector labor controversies. Governor Heineman also mentioned his concern about activities planned by the Humane Society of the United States, which he said pose a threat to Nebraska agriculture. ■



Valentine Senator Deb Fischer briefs more than 75 Small Business Day participants on LB84, her bill to modernize the state's road funding formula.

Small Business Day at the Capitol

More than 75 small business owners and other Nebraskans with small business interests spent March 31 at the State Capitol to learn about legislative issues likely to impact the state's business climate. The 2011 Small Business Day at the Capitol provided key information on bills pending in the Unicameral, while allowing participants the opportunity to learn more about the latest developments on issues such as roads funding, collective bargaining reform for public unions, regulations on businesses, and economic development legislation.

Highlights included a visit from Governor Dave Heineman, as well as Senators Deb Fischer of Valentine, Lavon Heidemann of Elk Creek and Dennis Utter of Hastings. The event was presented by the NFIB/Nebraska, the State Chamber, the Lincoln and Omaha Chambers of Commerce, and the Lincoln Independent Business Association. ■

Nebraska Claims Sixth Lowest Cost of Living



In the fourth quarter of 2010, Nebraska had the sixth lowest cost of living in the United States, according to the Council for Community and Economic Research. In general, the most expensive areas to live are New England, Alaska, Hawaii and the West Coast. The least expensive areas continue to be the Midwest and Southern States – and Nebraska remains a leader in this category.

The only neighboring states in the study's top 10 of least expensive states were Kansas (No. 7) and Missouri (No. 8). The cost factors considered by the study include groceries, housing, utilities, transportation and health care. Nebraska scored particularly well in housing, health care and utilities. Kentucky claimed lowest cost of living, while Hawaii had the highest. ■

U.S. Chamber: Nebraska Gets Fair Grade for Labor Relations

A new study the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Workforce Freedom Initiative reveals is that states with the largest burden of labor and employment regulation are sacrificing opportunities to reduce their unemployment rate and generate new business. The study gives Nebraska a grade of "fair" for its overall regulatory environment. According to the report, the Cornhusker State has the nation's 14th best climate for regulatory impact on the unemployment rate – and the eleventh best climate for regulatory impact on new business formation. South Dakota is No. 1 in both categories, while California is ranked last at No. 50.

Nebraska was given high grades in several of the study's 34 policy areas, including treatment of employment-at-will doctrine and right-to-work laws. The state scored poorly in three areas of "employment relationship," as well as in unemployment benefits for striking workers and protection for employers providing references. The report shows that if all 50 states improved their regulatory climates to the level discussed in the report, the effect would be equivalent to a one-time boost of 746,462 net new jobs nationwide. ■

Last Chance to Register for State Chamber's Annual D.C. Visit

The State Chamber's annual visit to Washington, D.C. is set for May 3-4, 2011. This year's fly-in will feature lunch with Nebraska's U.S. senators and congressmen and their senior aides at the State Chamber Congressional Luncheon, sponsored by Nebraska Public Power District. The State Chamber's D.C. fly-in is the perfect opportunity to make your voice heard. Participants are responsible for planning and paying their own travel and lodging. A limited block of hotel rooms has been reserved by the State Chamber. For more details or to reserve your spot for this important event, call (402) 474-4422 or e-mail jkarl@nechamber.com as soon as possible. ■

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.

BASSETT

Promiseland Livestock
L.L.C.

Tony Zeman

Recommended by Dennis Swanson, Sandhill Equipment, Inc.

BEATRICE

Beatrice Machine
John R. Lampe

COLUMBUS

Mid-State Engineering & Testing, Inc.
Jim Musilek

CRETE

Nohavec Farms
Michael K. Nohavec

HEMINGFORD

The Hemingford Co-Operative Telephone Co.
Joni Jespersen

KEARNEY

Xpanxion, LLC
Eric Trettel

LINCOLN

Deonne L. Bruning, P.C.,
L.L.O.
Deonne L. Bruning

Cather & Sons Construction Inc.
Thomas Petsch

Green Furnace & Plumbing Co., Inc.
Peggy L. Green

Kenexa
Tim Geisert

NUtech Ventures
David Conrad

LOUISVILLE
Copples Chevrolet, G.M.C., Inc.
Bob Copples

NILES, IL

Coca-Cola Refreshments, USA
Kevin P. Morris

OMAHA

Control Services, Inc.
Ron Brasel

Flatwater Strategies LLC
Tom Janssen

SIoux CITY, IA

DeWild, Grant, Reckert & Associates Company
Brian Mastbergen