

# THE EXECUTIVE

## THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
May/June 2011

### State Chamber Goes To D.C.

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry's Fly-In to Washington, D.C., was held May 3-4, 2011. Twenty-five State Chamber members participated in the event, which included policy briefings at the headquarters of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Key topics of discussion included the federal debt and debt ceiling; corporate tax reform proposals; EPA regulations; new rulemaking by the National Labor Relations Board and OSHA; free trade agreements; and federal transportation funding.

Another highlight from this year's D.C. Fly-In was the annual State Chamber Congressional Luncheon sponsored by Nebraska Public Power District. The luncheon afforded attendees the opportunity to speak directly with the members of Nebraska's congressional delegation and meet with their senior staff.

Fly-In participants were also treated to a reception at the Washington offices of Husch Blackwell, LLP. The event featured remarks from former House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (MO), who is now employed

with the firm. In addition, participants attended the traditional Nebraska

Breakfast, held Wednesday mornings on Capitol Hill. ■



Gathering near the White House are Chris Roth of Reinke Manufacturing Co., Deshler, Richard Reiser of Werner Enterprises, Omaha, and Mick Jensen of Great Plains Communications, Blair.



First District Congressman Jeff Fortenberry takes time to meet with several Fly-In participants, including State Chamber Chairman Jeff Scherer and Lori Scherer of Smeal Fire Apparatus, Paul Plofchan of Pfizer, and Mick Jensen of Great Plains Communications.

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](mailto:nechamber@nechamber.com)  
Editor: Jamie Karl



**State Chamber Views...**  
**Guest Editorial by Jeffrey M. Scherer**  
**Chairman of the Board**  
**Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry**

## 'Thoughts On The D.C. Fly-In'

In early May, more than two dozen State Chamber members participated in the annual Washington, D.C. Fly-In. As part of this yearly tradition, we met with policy experts from the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to receive an update on the latest policy developments. The following topics were discussed at length:

- The soaring U.S. debt and the upcoming vote in Congress to raise the debt ceiling;
- Possible tax reform, including lowering the corporate tax rate;
- Ongoing efforts by the EPA to expand and strengthen regulations on the energy sector and agriculture;
- New initiatives at the National Labor Relations Board to strengthen labor unions through new regulations;
- Possible proposals coming from OSHA that would add significant burdens on employers; and
- Reauthorization of the federal transportation law.

While we do not have adequate space here to report a detailed summary of the many issues discussed, State Chamber members should recognize that the business community needs to remain vigilant and in tune with what is taking place in our nation's capital.

The Chamber's D.C. Fly-In included the traditional Nebraska Breakfast, a longstanding tradition in which our senators and congressmen meet with fellow Nebraskans to offer their perspectives on the issues impacting our state. The highlight of our D.C. event was the State Chamber's Congressional Luncheon on Capitol Hill for the congressional delegation and their senior staff members. This

provided an excellent opportunity for State Chamber members to have one-on-one discussions with their senators and congressmen to let them hear directly the concerns facing Nebraska's business community.

### Our Right To Be Heard

Just as voting is a right of the people that needs to be exercised, staying in contact with our representatives must be exercised, as well. They do listen, and it is very important that business leaders convey their concerns, as well as their appreciation for their accomplishments, such as Senator Mike Johanns' recent success in repealing the onerous 1099 reporting legislation contained in the health care reform law.

We are fortunate to live in a state in which our elected representatives make themselves available and are willing to discuss important business-related issues. That kind of relationship does not exist in all states. While we do not always agree on every

---

*"We are fortunate to live in a state in which our elected representatives make themselves available and are willing to discuss important business-related issues."*

---

issue, the open dialogue is important and makes events like the State Chamber's D.C. Fly-In so important.

State Chamber members should note that all five members of Nebraska's federal delegation have been recognized by the U.S. Chamber and the

Manufacturers for their pro-business votes on significant issues. That's another claim that few other states can make.

It has never been easy to be in business, but the current economic environment is especially challenging and uncertain. We need our elected leaders working with us, not against us. You can take comfort in knowing that your State Chamber continues to follow activities at both the state and federal levels and is working with policymakers to ensure the best outcome for the private sector.

### Businesses Must Lead

I am proud that the State Chamber continues to serve as a well-respected source of information for our elected officials. The D.C. Fly-In was a timely reminder that through our association with the U.S. Chamber and the Manufacturers, we have a strong voice in Washington, D.C. By belonging to the Nebraska Chamber, you are doing your part to ensure that lawmakers in Lincoln and in Washington remain aware of the business community's position on the issues that matter most.

The next few years will bring continued challenges for America's business community. Our economy and our tradition of free enterprise will be further tested. Just as the founders of our country had a great deal of resolve and determination, I believe the business owners across Nebraska and across the nation retain those qualities, along with the focus to move forward in spite of the obstacles in their way.

Bigger government is not the answer to rebuilding the economy. It has been tried in the past and has never met success. That is the job of individuals and the private sector, which can and will restore confidence in entrepreneurship and the American Dream.

The State Chamber will continue to work hard to educate our elected representatives – in the state and inside the beltway – on steps they can take to ensure that America and Nebraska keep moving in the right direction. ■

## Help Us Grow Your State Chamber

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry has successfully represented the state's business community for more than 99 years. Today, the State Chamber is at its strongest level ever, with record member involvement, major legislative accomplishments and a strong record of service to Nebraska's employers and their businesses.

Your State chamber has earned the reputation of being the most effective advocate of the state's business sector. But to expand our activities and compete with opposing interests, we must grow our membership base to make the Chamber's voice even more influential.

Please take a moment and let us know of businesses and individuals you know who would benefit from the services provided by the State Chamber. Enclosed with this issue of *The Executive* is a form to help us identify new member prospects. By providing us with the names of potential new members, you will help us grow your State Chamber and ensure our organization's continued success throughout the 21st century. ■

## Governor Hosts Chamber Cornerstone Members

On April 27, Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman and First Lady Sally Ganem hosted the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry's Cornerstone Dinner at the Governor's Residence in Lincoln. More than 60 attended the event, including Lieutenant Governor Rick Sheehy. The governor spoke personally with State Chamber members at the pre-dinner social and then addressed the gathering later in the evening. He noted some of the highlights of the 2011 legislative session, as well as the state's current challenges and opportunities.

The annual event is held in honor of the State Chamber's "Cornerstone members" – the organization's top financial contributors. The contributions made by Cornerstone members help provide additional funding for the State Chamber, allowing the organization to enhance and expand its services for all members.

Top sponsors for this year's dinner were Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Nebraska, ConAgra Foods, and Nebraska Public Power District. Platinum sponsors were Altria, Archer Daniels Midland, Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Farmers Mutual Insurance, Lincoln Industries, and Nelnet. Gold sponsors were Ameritas, Black Hills Energy, Great Plains Communications, Pinnacle Bank, SourceGas, Wiles Development, and Windstream. ■



Left: Governor Heineman fields questions from Cornerstone members. Right: The governor and first lady have pictures taken with Cornerstone member Nebraska Public Power District's economic development managers Dennis Hall and Rick Nelson.

## Federal Income Taxes: Who Pays What?

U.S. Chamber chief economist Dr. Martin Regalia recently examined tax collections by the U.S. Government. According to Dr. Regalia, individual income taxes are easily the largest source of federal revenue, followed by payroll taxes and corporate taxes.

Data from the Congressional Budget Office show the top 20% of income earners pay 86% of total U.S. income taxes while earning 56% of the nation's total income. Taxpayers in the next quintile pay 12.7% of income taxes while earning 19.3% of income. The middle quintile pay only 4.6% of federal income taxes. The lowest quintiles pay -0.3% and -3%, respectively, meaning they receive money from the government.

Dr. Regalia writes that since 1987 and 2002, the lowest 40% of U.S. income earners have been subsidized by the government through refundable credits and other incentives. Participants with this spring's Nebraska Chamber D.C. Fly-In were informed that the latest reports show 51% of Americans paid no federal income taxes for 2010. ■

# LB386, Nebraska Intern Program, Now In Effect

In mid-May, senators voted 43-0 to give final approval to LB386, a bill to establish a statewide internship program aimed at keeping more educated young adults in Nebraska. Introduced and prioritized by Senator Lavon Heidemann of Elk Creek, the bill was part of Governor Heineman's four-piece Talent and Innovation Initiative.

LB386, which was signed by the governor and took effect June 1, provides \$1.5 million annually using redirected job training funds and a

100% match from companies creating new internships. Qualified companies will be able to hire eligible juniors and seniors who are enrolled in four-year institutions, or students in their second year at a Nebraska community college.

Research shows that nearly 65% of students who intern locally choose to stay in their region after graduation. It is estimated that LB386 could create 700 new internships in Nebraska over the next year, and that nearly

450 students could choose to stay in Nebraska based on similar program results.

If you are creating summer internships for 2011 and would like to be part of a pilot program to receive funding for your internships, go to [www.internNE.com](http://www.internNE.com) or contact Allison Hatch with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development at (402) 471-3368 or [allison.hatch@nebraska.gov](mailto:allison.hatch@nebraska.gov). ■

## SAVE THE DATE:

### Chamber Legislative Summit Set for August 11, 2011

What happens on Capitol Hill and at the State Capitol can dramatically impact your business and its profitability. That is why State Chamber members are invited to take part in the 2011 Chamber Legislative Summit scheduled for Thursday, August 11. This unique event will once again be held at the Strategic Air & Space Museum, located just off Interstate 80 at Exit 426.

The Summit is hosted by the State Chamber, the Lincoln Chamber, the Greater Omaha Chamber, and the

Bellevue Chamber.

All five members of Nebraska's congressional delegation have been invited to provide policy updates from Washington, D.C.

Participants will also hear from keynote speaker Dr. Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of The Gallup Poll in Princeton, New Jersey — the nation's best-known and longest-running continuous monitor of American public opinion. Dr. Newport, who appears regularly on CNBC's "Kudlow and Company" and other news shows, will

provide a political lay of the land as the nation prepares for the 2012 elections.

A young professionals' event will take place in the early afternoon, following the conclusion of the Summit.

More information, including how to register, will be forthcoming. If your business or organization is interested in sponsoring the Legislative Summit, contact James Berringer at (402) 474-4422 or [jberringer@nechamber.com](mailto:jberringer@nechamber.com). ■

## 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.

### BURWELL

Morgan Ranch Beef, Inc.  
Dan Morgan

### COLUMBUS

Heartland Builders Company  
Joe Fehring

### DES MOINES, IA

Waste Management of Nebraska  
Carrie Spencer

### LEXINGTON

Darling International  
Jason Fagot

### LINCOLN

Central Data Storage LLC  
Edward T. Conklin  
*Recommended by: Larry Kopsa, Kopsa Otte + Associates, LLC, CPA's*

Harris Data Storage, Inc.  
Neil Harris

Westfield Gateway  
Chad Becwar

### OMAHA

CM's A Cut Above  
Chuck Monico

*Recommended by: Gary Perkins, Children's Hospital & Medical Center*

Firststar Fiber Inc.  
Dale Gubbels

HDR  
Rex Fisher

Hotsy Equipment Co.  
Doris Klingemann

Norm's Door Service  
Ruth Smith

WEST DES MOINES, IA  
Nebraska Strategy Group  
Jessica Moenning

WEST FARGO, ND  
Titan Machinery  
Jim Lilleberg

WEST POINT  
CharterWest National Bank  
Kevin J. Larson



## More Photo Highlights from the State Chamber D.C. Fly-In

Clockwise from Top Left: Congressman Lee Terry of Nebraska's Second District provides an update on current budget talks.

State Chamber Past Chairman TR Raimondo (left), along with current Chairman Jeff Scherer (middle) and Board member Chris Roth help lead the Nebraska Chamber's policy briefing at NAM.

Nebraska's U.S. Senator Mike Johanns addresses the State Chamber's Congressional Luncheon.

Congressman Adrian Smith speaks with State Chamber Board member Mark Theisen of Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society.

Fly-In participants gather outside the headquarters of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on May 3.

Marc Freedman, Executive Director of Labor Law Policy at the U.S. Chamber, updates the Nebraska Chamber members on the latest developments at the Department of Labor, the National Labor Relations Board, and OSHA.

Nebraska's U.S. Senator Ben Nelson greets State Chamber Chairman Jeff Scherer (left) and State Chamber District Director Chris Roth.





Save  
The  
Date

# 2011 Chamber Legislative Summit

**August 11, 2011**

**Strategic Air & Space Museum ~8:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.**

**W**hat happens on Capitol Hill and at the State Capitol can dramatically impact your business and its profitability. That is why State Chamber members are invited to take part in the 2011 Chamber Legislative Summit scheduled for Thursday, August 11. This unique event will once again be held at the Strategic Air & Space Museum, located just off Interstate 80 at Exit 426.

The Summit is hosted by the State Chamber, the Lincoln Chamber, the Greater Omaha Chamber, and the Bellevue Chamber.

All five members of Nebraska's congressional delegation have been invited to provide policy updates from Washington, D.C. Participants will also hear from keynote speaker Dr. Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of The Gallup Poll in Princeton, New Jersey -- the nation's best-known and longest-running continuous monitor of American public opinion.

A young professionals' event will take place in the early afternoon, following the conclusion of the Summit.

More information, including how to register, will be coming soon. If your business or organization is interested in sponsoring the Legislative Summit, contact James Berringer at (402) 474-4422 or [jberringer@nechamber.com](mailto:jberringer@nechamber.com).