

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER 
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
May/June 2009

State Chamber Visits Capitol Hill

The State Chamber's annual fly-in to Washington, D.C. was held May 12-13. More than 20 State Chamber members attended the visit, which included the traditional Nebraska Breakfast on Capitol Hill, as well as policy briefings at the headquarters of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). Topics included the "card-check" bill addressing labor union organization; climate change legislation; government-run health care proposals; and possible changes to the Family Medical Leave Act.

Other highlights of this year's visit included a congress-

sional luncheon sponsored by Nebraska Public Power District. The NPPD luncheon afforded attendees the opportunity to hear from – and speak directly to – all five members of Nebraska's congressional delegation and meet their senior staff.

Fly-in participants were also treated to an evening reception at the Washington offices of Husch Blackwell Sanders, LLP. In addition, some attendees attended the U.S. Chamber's Small Business Summit. ■



Above: Rep. Lee Terry discusses legislation in the House Energy and Commerce Committee with Kurt Yost of Lincoln, President/CEO of the Nebraska Independent Community Bankers.



Left: Jeffrey Scherer, CFO of Smeal Fire Apparatus Co. in Snyder, meets with Rep. Adrian Smith in the new Capitol Hill Visitors Center following the traditional Nebraska Breakfast.

Center: State Chamber Chairman Marc LeBaron, Chairman and CEO of Lincoln Industries, meets with Congressman Jeff Fortenberry.



Far left: Senator Ben Nelson addresses the NPPD Congressional Luncheon as Brian Hamilton, President of Beardmore Chevrolet, Inc. in Bellevue, and Loy Todd, President and General Counsel of the Nebraska New Car and Truck Dealers Association, listen.



Members of the State Chamber's delegation met personally with Senator Mike Johanns in his new Capitol Hill office located in the Russell Senate Office Building.

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State Chamber Views...
*Guest Editorial by Chad Denton
Chairman
State Chamber Council of Economic Development*

State Chamber Experience Underscores Value of Collaboration

As a Nebraska business owner who is focused on growing our business nationally, my involvement with the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry has been an eye-opening experience. Every day my focus is on our business, our customers, and our employees. As a result, it can be easy to overlook the various policies that govern how we do business in Nebraska.

With hundreds of legislative bills introduced at the state capitol each year, I'm willing to bet that every year there is a bill – or a number of bills – that will impact each and every business in Nebraska, for better or worse.

Who is keeping tabs on this? Who is looking out for business? What can you do about it?

First, I believe the answer is multifaceted. There are many people and organizations throughout our state who understand the importance of a prosperous businesses environment. One such organization is the State Chamber – one of Nebraska's leading organizations in the promotion of economic development and in providing a voice for our business community.

There is a saying that goes: "None of us is as smart as all of us." The State Chamber, through partnership and collaboration, has carved out a role as a reliable and important element within the Nebraska business community. Regardless of the size or location of the employer, the State Chamber is committed to helping create partnerships that ensure that various business and state policies remain effective, relevant and aligned.

But the organization cannot do this without membership participation; we need our members to get involved by donating their time and industry knowledge. By doing this, the State Chamber becomes stronger – and instead of just helping your business, the state's entire business climate prospers.

Case in point: LB16, also known as the Taxpayer Transparency Bill. Earlier this year, the State Chamber and various businesses became concerned with language in this particular legislation. The original version of the bill would have required the disclosure of "additional" company-specific information for businesses taking part in the various incentive programs under the Nebraska Advantage Act. As a result, the State Chamber opposed LB16 as originally drafted.

Our concern led to a very open dialogue with Senator Tom White of Omaha – the sponsor of LB16 – his staff, and representatives of the Nebraska Department of Revenue. Ultimately, an amendment was offered to continue to protect sensitive financial information of individual businesses.

As chairman of the State Chamber's Economic Development Council, I was able to directly relay our concerns to Senator White and other interested parties. Of course, the outcome may not always be perfect, but it is the willingness to collaborate that is invaluable to the process.

Your involvement in our State Chamber is important. The more involvement we have from our members, the better our organization becomes.

Moreover, my own experience with LB16 makes it clear that the buck does not stop with the State Chamber or our members. The State Chamber acted as a perfect conduit, but we could not have done it alone. Collaboration among all involved parties is extremely important. "None of us is as smart as all of us."

Have a great summer! ■

Chad Denton, President of CFO Services in Omaha, serves as a State Chamber Board member and chair of the organization's Economic Development Council. In addition to his recent efforts to amend LB16, Denton played a key role in the passage of the Nebraska Advantage Act.

Federal Fly-Back Set for August 20

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry is partnering with three local chambers to host the first-ever Federal Fly-Back on Thursday, Aug. 20, at the SAC Museum near Ashland. The event will feature U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Thomas Donohue. All five members of the Nebraska congressional delegation have been invited to participate.

The fly-back will begin with comments from the congressional delegation at the Nebraska Congressional Breakfast, followed by briefing sessions on energy, agriculture, federal spending, transportation, and health care issues. The day will conclude with the keynote address by Mr. Donohue.

Cost for this special event is \$95 per person, which includes breakfast and lunch. Corporate tables of 10 may be purchased for \$1,000. **If you are interested in attending, please call (402) 474-4422 or e-mail csibley@nechamber.com.**

The Federal Fly-Back also offers sponsorship opportunities to get your business recognized before a large target audience. Organizations interested in sponsorship should contact James Berringer with the State Chamber at (402) 474-4422 or jberringer@nechamber.com. ■

Governor Signs Key Economic Development Bill

On April 29, Governor Dave Heineman held a ceremonial signing of LB164, the primary economic development bill of the Legislature's 2009 session. Introduced by Senator Abbie Cornett of Bellevue, the law extends the termination date for several Nebraska Advantage programs until December 31, 2015. The new sunset date applies to Tiers 1 and 3 of the Nebraska Advantage Act, as well as the Nebraska Advantage Research and Development Act and the Nebraska Advantage Microenterprise Tax Credit Act. Senators passed LB164 earlier in the session on a 48-0 tally.

According to the Department of Economic Development, the Nebraska

Advantage has thus far encouraged 190 companies to pledge \$5.3 billion in investments that would yield more than 15,800 jobs. The State Chamber was

a strong supporter of LB164, which was a priority bill of the Revenue Committee. ■

Pictured are (from left): Nebraska Economic Development Director Richard Baier, State Chamber President Barry Kennedy, Senator Cornett, Governor Heineman, State Chamber Chairman Marc LeBaron (Chairman and CEO of Lincoln Industries), and Nebraska Tax Commissioner Douglas Ewald.



Behlen Mfg. & Majors Plastics Receive Innovation Award

Majors Plastics, Inc. of Omaha and Behlen Mfg. Co. of Columbus are the recipients of the 2009 Nebraska Innovation in Manufacturing Award. Both companies were honored April 24 at the annual meeting of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry's Manufacturers Council.

Sponsored by the State Chamber and RSM McGladrey – a leading accounting, tax and business consulting firm – the Innovation in Manufacturing Award recognizes manufacturers who are successfully implementing new ways of conducting business through the use of products, processes, technologies and strategies.

Accepting the award on behalf of Majors Plastics was the company's President & CEO Tim McConnell. Majors Plastics – which has four facilities in Omaha and employs approximately 300 workers – has specialized in high volume, custom injection molding and other high quality plastic products for more than 50 years. The company ranks in the top 125 of 3,000 similar type companies throughout the United States.

Majors Plastics was recognized for its innovative methods to strengthen ties with customers. McConnell said his company utilizes a "bear hug approach" when it comes to customer relations, adding that businesses – especially manufacturers – must go "above and

beyond" to ensure repeat business. This can be accomplished by sharing "a customer's computer information platform and managing all their part requirements from Majors," McConnell said.

The innovation award was also presented to Behlen Mfg. Co. and CEO Phil Raimondo. Founded in 1936, Behlen has grown into a global manufacturer exporting to more than 70 countries. The Columbus-based company, which employs nearly 700 Nebraskans, is the nation's leading manufacturer of livestock equipment and a top supplier of grain systems, strip joining presses, and custom fabrication.

Behlen was recognized for its strong employee relations programs. Raimondo noted the company's employee involvement program – called "Awareness Is Money" or AIM – as an example of how Behlen uses new programs to create a positive, more efficient workplace and ensure that employees contribute to the Behlen team. Also noted was the company's efforts to reduce health care costs by offering a semi-monthly, free on-site clinic for employees, as well as free physical therapy to employees four times a month. ■



Above: Accepting the 2009 Nebraska Innovation In Manufacturing Award for Majors Plastics is Tim McConnell (center) from presenters Tony Urban (left), Managing Director of RSM McGladrey, and Chairman of the State Chamber's Manufacturers Council Robert Meaney (right), Valmont Industries, Inc.

Below: Accepting the 2009 Nebraska Innovation In Manufacturing Award for Behlen Mfg. Co. are Heather Macholan, Phil Raimondo, and A.F. "TR" Raimondo.



State Chamber Welcomes Mossman as Environmental Council Chair

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry recently welcomed a new council chairman to its Board of Directors. The appointment of **Stephen D. Mossman** of Lincoln as chair of the State Chamber's Environmental Council was approved by the organization's Executive Council at its April 17 meeting. Mossman replaces Timothy J. Burke, Vice President for Employee & Customer Relations for Omaha Public Power District, following Burke's years of service to the State Chamber.

Mossman is a partner in the

Mattson-Ricketts Law Firm in Lincoln. He specializes in natural resources, water, environmental, zoning, agricultural, solid and hazardous waste law. In addition, he has an active administrative, litigation, and appellate practice, with substantial experience in state and federal constitutional cases and election law.

One of the highlights of Mossman's legal career was being part of the legal team which successfully challenged Nebraska's corporate farming ban, Initiative 300. He tells *The Executive* that he appreciated the

support of the State Chamber as a Friend of the Court before the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals in that case.

Mossman has served as the chair of the American Bar Association's Waste Management Committee and as chair of the State Bar Association's Natural Resources and Environmental Law Section. He has also served on the City of Lincoln's Board of Zoning Appeals and as president of the Nebraska Agribusiness Club. He and his wife, Jennie, have three daughters. ■

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

**Eugene R. Caspers
Construction**

Deanne Caspers-Moon
Recommended by Dennis Boesiger, Midwest Livestock Systems, Inc.

New Victorian Inn & Suites

Vincent Hoehne
Recommended by J. Paul McIntosh

BELLEVUE

**Bellevue Medical Center
Cynthia Arbaugh**

**VanderWal Agency
(Benefit Consultants)
Laurie VanderWal**

COLUMBUS

**Industrial Systems & Supply Inc.
Duane Ohlrich**

ELKHORN

**J.D. Heiskell Holdings
LLC
Charles Tsatsos**

FONTANELLE

**Nebraska Irrigated
Seeds
Dave Monke**

GRETNA

**Malibu Sunrooms &
Outdoor Living
Terri Petersen**

HASTINGS

**Gilbraltar Packaging
Group, Inc. - Nebraska
Facility
Mark Lessor**

**Innovative Prosthetics &
Orthotics
Rakesh Srivastava, M.S.,
CPO**

Recommended by Jack Schreiner, Bruckman Rubber Co.

**Mary Lanning Memorial
Hospital
W. Michael Kearney**

KEARNEY

**Heartland Hospitality
Paul Younes**

LINCOLN

**William Fred Bailey,
CITRMS**

William Fred Bailey
Recommended by Bob Obst, Qwest Communications

**Bishop Marketing Group
Jamie Bishop**

New Victorian Suites

Vincent Hoehne
Recommended by J. Paul McIntosh

**Palmer & Sons Refuse, Inc.
Michael Palmer**

**TCW Construction, Inc.
Joseph Delgado**

**Thought District
Eric Dinger**
Recommended by Phil Mullin, Garner Industries

**Zimmer Insurance Group
William T. Zimmer**

McCOOK

**Community Hospital
James P. Ulrich, Jr.**
Recommended by Laura Redoutey, Nebraska Hospital Association and Pamela Harsh, McCook Area Chamber of Commerce

MEAD

**Insulfoam
Cody Reid**

NORFOLK

**Liberty Centre Services, Inc.
Bev Ferguson**

OMAHA

**JACKSON LEWIS LLP
Chad Richter**

**McGrath North Mullin & Kratz,
PC LLO
Dean G. Kratz**

**Mi Mama's Tortilla, LLC
Pat Sharrar**

**Remcon, Inc.
Shelly Jochim**
Recommended by Bill Harding, Harding & Schultz P.C., L.L.O.

**UnitedHealthcare
Matthew W. Milam**

**University of Phoenix - Omaha
Campus
Jason Pfaff**
Recommended by Natalie Peetz, Peetz & Co.

O'NEILL

**Garden Fresh Vegetables
Marv Fritz**
Recommended by Pat Fritz, O'Neill Area Chamber of Commerce

ORLEANS

**Orleans Chamber of Commerce
Tom Arnett**

PAPILLION

**Peel's Salon Services
William C. Peel**
Recommended by Larry Kopsa, Kopsa Otte + Associates, LLC, CPA's