

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

July/August 2011

Reverse Trade Mission Set for September 7-10

Nebraska will host international business leaders and trade partners from around the world during the state's second Reverse Trade Mission, set for September 7-10. The State Chamber is a sponsor of this unique event, which will coincide with the Chamber's board meeting on September 9.

According to Governor Dave Heineman, the Reverse Trade Mission presents an opportunity to bring the world to Nebraska and to export more Nebraska products. The governor adds that if global businesses are going to invest in the U.S., then he wants them to do so in Nebraska.

The Reverse Trade Mission is expected to attract several CEOs and company executives with business expertise matched to specific goals and opportunities available with Nebraska-based companies. Nebraska's first Reverse Trade Mission, held in 2008, drew 130 businesses from 10 countries.

As the finale for this year's event, the foreign dignitaries will be taken to the September 10 NU football game. ■

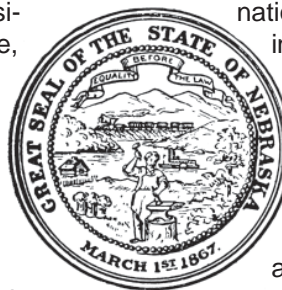
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CNBC Declares Nebraska a Top 10 State for Business

Nebraska has landed in the top 10 of yet another business study. This time, the Cornhusker State finds itself ranked No. 10 in CNBC's 2011 "Top States for Business" survey.

The business television network scored all 50 states using data based on 43 measurements of competitiveness in ten broad categories. The measurements were derived with input from various business groups, including the National Association of Manufacturers, a national affiliate of the State Chamber.

Nebraska improved three spots from CNBC's 2010 study, receiving strong scores in several categories, including quality of life. Nebraska's economy and business friendliness



were both ranked fifth best in the nation; its cost of living – which includes groceries, health care, housing, transportation and utilities – was sixth best. Two areas of weakness were technology and innovation, as well as access to capital, both ranked at No. 35.

Virginia, Texas and North Carolina were named CNBC's top three states for business this year, while Hawaii, Alaska and Rhode Island were cited as the worst states for conducting business. Nebraska trailed Colorado (No. 5) and Iowa (No. 9) in the CNBC study, but was ranked ahead of South Dakota, Kansas, Wyoming and Missouri.

See the rankings at www.cnbc.com/id/41666602. ■

State Chamber's Legislative Forums Begin September 12

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry wants to hear from you this fall. State Chamber staff will visit more than 30 communities statewide as part of the Chamber's annual Legislative Forums. Held in conjunction with local chambers of commerce, the forums begin September 12 and will continue into early November.

This year's program will focus on the Legislature's 2011 session –

including developments regarding economic development, labor law and tourism – while providing a look ahead at next year's top issues. The forums will also include a review of several competitiveness rankings, showing participants how Nebraska compares to other states in categories that impact business growth.

The legislative forums will provide you and your employees an

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State Chamber Views...
Editorial by Barry L. Kennedy, CAE, IOM
President
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

'2011 Legislative Session Produced Pro-Business Results'

In the chamber world, we often get so focused on what needs to be done that we forget to reflect on how much progress has been made. This is especially true in the legislative arena. Let's take a few moments to celebrate the Nebraska Legislature's accomplishments from the 2011 session.

Legislative Accomplishments

The 2011 legislative session was one of the most pro-business sessions in recent memory. This year, state senators introduced nearly 750 new bills and constitutional amendments. Once again, the State Chamber worked diligently to ensure passage of bills that will help ensure economic growth and worked to defeat or amend harmful legislative proposals.

The 90-day session saw numerous pro-business actions on a wide range of issues. Perhaps the most notable development was the passage and signing of the Governor's four-part "Talent and Innovation Initiative," which is summarized elsewhere in this issue of *The Executive*.

LB386, LB387, LB388 and LB389 will help Nebraska keep more of its educated young people, grow its research and development operations, enhance local community development, attract new technology-based businesses, and produce more high-paying jobs. These new initiatives will make Nebraska even more competitive, nationally and globally. The State Chamber was proud to support this important package of forward-looking legislation and help ensure its passage.

In addition, this year's session saw the enactment of LB84, the most significant roads funding bill passed by the Legislature in many years. The State Chamber has long recognized

the need to provide adequate funding for maintenance and improvement of our transportation infrastructure, and we supported LB84 to ensure a more predictable way to pay for new roads and infrastructure improvements – without tax increases. We congratulate Senator Deb Fischer of Valentine and other lawmakers, as well as Governor Heineman, for their work to find an acceptable solution to funding road construction throughout our state.

Finally, thanks to the work of several Chamber leaders – including State Chamber Chairman Jeff Scherer, along with board members Tonn Ostergard, Jim Krieger and Rex Fisher – an agreement was reached on LB397 to reform the state's Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) for the first time in four decades. The compromise maintains collective bargaining for public union employees, but also provides local officials with new tools to contain labor costs. With this new agreement, taxpayers across Nebraska will benefit. And if needed, legislators can now more easily make additional improvements in the future.

A More Business-Friendly Legislature

It is worth noting that the Legislature passed and the Governor signed the fiscal 2011-13 budget, a \$7 billion spending plan that includes \$25 million for the University of Nebraska's Innovation Campus, a proposed research park designed to attract new industry and jobs. Despite the state's revenue shortfalls, the new budget contains no tax increases. This speaks well of the Legislature's and Governor's pro-growth approach during tough economic times – especially when considering the sluggish recovery plaguing much of the country.

This year's legislative session also provided further evidence that

the Unicameral has become a more business-friendly place in recent years, at least in terms of how senators vote.

Ten years ago, in 2001, the State Chamber's annual voting record for the Nebraska Legislature showed that only eight senators had a grade of 90% or better that session. Only 12 had cumulative grades of 90% or better.

This year, the State Chamber scored several key votes. (Chamber members should have received their copy of the voting record a few weeks ago.) There were no easy votes – no votes to pad senators' records; each one was of critical importance to the business community. We were pleased to see that 39 senators received a 100% grade for the session, and 32 senators can now claim a cumulative score of 90% or better.

What a difference a decade makes.

A more business-minded body and sound leadership from the Governor have clearly helped produce better results on the floor of the Legislature. But much of this turnaround is also the result of a more involved business community. Your letters, e-mails, phone calls and face-to-face conversations with lawmakers have had a dramatic impact. The same is true for your contributions to the State Chamber-PAC.

We thank all of you who were involved during this busy session, as well as those who took time to follow the issues. Your vigilance helped produce some very successful results for Nebraska.

We look forward to your continued

State Chamber's Forums

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opportunity to visit with your state senator, who will be invited to the forums in your district. In addition, State Chamber board members and staff will be present to answer questions. We hope you will take advantage of this excellent opportunity to review the important issues being discussed at the State Capitol, while also voicing your concerns and suggestions.

For more information, contact the State Chamber office at (402) 474-4422 or call your local chamber staff. ■

Economic Development Bills Highlight Legislature's 2011 Session

Near the conclusion of the Nebraska Legislature's 2011 regular session, Governor Dave Heineman signed the remaining measures of his four-part economic development proposal, called the "Talent and Innovation Initiative." The plan addresses challenges identified in last year's Battelle study, which examined the state economy and industry sectors. The plan includes the following bills, which are now state law:

■ **LB386**, offered by Elk Creek Senator Lavon Heidemann, creates the Nebraska Internship Program to provide more career opportunities for Nebraska's skilled young people and recent college graduates.

■ **LB387**, introduced by Kearney Senator Galen Hadley, establishes the Business Innovation Act to provide competitive grants for research at Nebraska institutions and new product development, while expanding small business and entrepreneur outreach efforts.

■ **LB388**, offered by Lexington Senator John Wightman, creates the Site & Building Development Fund to help increase the number of readily available industrial and commercial sites.

■ **LB389**, the Angel Investment Tax Credit, introduced by Bellevue Senator Abbie Cornett, encourages investment in high-tech and other startup businesses in Nebraska. ■



Pictured above is Governor Heineman at a recent signing ceremony, along with key senators and chamber of commerce representatives who helped ensure passage of the Talent and Innovation Initiative.

Leadership Nebraska Now Accepting Applications

The State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska program is in its fifth year of developing a cross-section of leaders who are using their talents and abilities to foster a new spirit of enthusiasm and vitality throughout the state. Each year, a class of up to thirty Nebraska leaders – in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s – is selected to participate in the program. Applications are now being accepted for the 2012 Nebraska Leadership class, which will begin next February. For more information, call Don Mihovk, the program's executive director, at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail dmihovk@nechamber.com. Or download an application form by visiting <http://nebraskaleadership.nechamber.com/>. ■

Governor Meets With Chamber Leaders

During the State Chamber's summer board meeting and retreat, held in Cuming County's Beemer and West Point, Governor Heineman hosted a June 9 roundtable with some of the state's leading business leaders. This marked the second such meeting held this year.

During the roundtable, the Governor reviewed some of the accomplishments of the legislative session, including the passage of LB397, leg-

islation to reform the Commission on Industrial Relations for the first time in 40 years. He praised the involvement of business leaders like State Chamber Chairman Jeff Scherer and board members Tonn Ostergard, Rex Fisher, and Jim Krieger.

"Without the chambers, we would not have had those improvements" made to LB397 late in the session, the Governor said. ■



State Chamber board member and Reinke Manufacturing CEO Chris Roth (far left) tells Governor Heineman how the slower economy has impacted his workplace and employees. Also pictured are Tonn Ostergard and Jeff Scherer.

State Chamber Voices Support for Livestock Industry

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry has reiterated its support for the state's animal agriculture. At its June meeting in West Point, the State Chamber board unanimously approved a resolution that "opposes any and all activities, conducted by any organization, to counter the interests of Nebraska's livestock industry and the overall agriculture sector."

The action comes following reports that extremist animal rights groups are exploring ways to amend

the state constitution to hinder livestock production, which generates roughly half of Nebraska's annual \$15 billion in agriculture cash receipts.

Nebraska ranks first nationally in several areas of livestock production, including first in red meat production and second in cattle on feed.

The resolution states that the Nebraska Chamber "will continue to encourage all Nebraska residents to support the state's agricultural producers and oppose organizations and interest groups whose activities would

inflict financial and other harm on Nebraska agriculture."

The State Chamber Board of Directors is comprised of more than 60 business leaders from across Nebraska. The State Chamber has longstanding policy in support of the continued development of the state's livestock industry and efforts to educate the public regarding the positive economic impact of animal agriculture. ■

Workshops on Labor Law, Lobbying Updates

State Chamber members are encouraged to attend two important upcoming workshops.

On Friday, September 16, the State Chamber will present valuable instruction on state and federal employment and labor law. The course will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at The Cornhusker Marriott in Lincoln, and will be presented by five attorneys from highly respected Nebraska law firms that have represented both public and private sector employees in labor relations and employment matters. This event is highly recommended for senior executives, supervisors, HR managers and other business

professionals who work in the realm of employment policy. **Those attending will receive five credit hours for Continuing Legal Education (CLE), including one hour of ethics.** Cost to attend is \$129 for Chamber members and \$149 for non-members.

On Thursday, Nov. 10, the State Chamber will host a workshop addressing Nebraska's lobbying and campaign finance regulations. It will be held from 9 a.m. to noon at The Cornhusker Marriott in Lincoln. This outstanding presentation serves as either a first-time instructional course or a refresher course. The event

features Frank J. Daley, executive director of the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission, who will review state laws impacting campaigns and campaign contributions, as well as necessary legal information for lobbying at the state level.

Those attending will receive two credit hours of CLE. Cost to attend is \$75 for State Chamber members and \$100 for non-members.

To register for either workshop or for more information, please call the State Chamber at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail nechamber@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.

ELGIN, IL

VillageProfile.com
Alan Zahringer

MADISON

Vireo Resources
Mark Faulkner

Dyna-Tech Aviation Services, Inc.
Mark A. Spadaro

U.S. Cellular
Michael Adams

LINCOLN

Barton Development, Inc.
Steve Barton

NORTH PLATTE

The North Platte Telegraph
Peter Rogers

Metropolitan Omaha Builders Association
J.J. Morris

SOUTH SIOUX CITY

Pepsi-Cola of Siouxland, Inc.
Jim Bauerly

Nebraska Air Quality Specialties, LLC
Piyush Srivastav

OMAHA

Corporate Ventures
Mark Denniston Huber

Midwest Surgical Hospital LLC
Jessy Larsen

The Nebraska Club
Phillip Bekker

Dolphins Inc.
Marie Bonella

P & L Capital Corp., Inc.
Phil Lieber

L.P. Stewart & Sons, Inc.
Jim Stewart

J.W. Smith & Co.
Mark Smith