

# THE EXECUTIVE

**THE STATE CHAMBER**   
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
July/August 2009

## Meet Your State Chamber Board

**T**he State Chamber's Executive Council is comprised of the chairman, chairman-elect, past chairman, treasurer, president and six district vice chairmen. The vice chairs represent each of the six geographic districts on the Executive Council. These officers are elected for a one-year term by the full Board. In this issue of *The Executive*, we feature the vice chairs from Districts III and VI.

**Matthew H. Williams** is serving his first year as District VI vice chairman. As chairman and president of Gothenburg (Neb.) State Bank, Williams is a fourth-generation banker and has been with the family-owned bank since 1973.

Williams was chairman of the Nebraska Bankers Association (NBA) in 2003-2004 and has served on many NBA committees. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the American Bankers Association (ABA) and also serves on the ABA Government Relations Council and as ABA State Grassroots

Coordinator for Nebraska.

In addition to his professional responsibilities, Williams serves as a trustee of the University of Nebraska Foundation, UNL Ag Builders and the NU President's Advisory Council. He has been very involved with economic development in Gothenburg and Dawson County, formerly serving as chairman of both the Gothenburg Improvement Company and the Gothenburg Area Chamber of Commerce. He is also a state director for the TeamMates program.

Williams received his undergraduate and law degrees from UNL. He



**Matthew H. Williams**



**Jeffrey M. Scherer**

braska. Smeal Fire Apparatus is a full-line manufacturer of fire trucks and aerial devices sold throughout the United States and Canada.

Scherer has been with the Smeal Companies since 1992. Prior to that time, he spent several years in public accounting. In addition to his position with Smeal, Scherer is also the president of Best Point Properties, Inc., doing business as Horizon Inn & Suites of West Point (Neb.) and also the President of Scherer Land & Cattle Co., Inc.

Outside of the business world, Scherer is involved with many other organizations and charities. He is currently the chairman of the board for the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District; second vice president for the Nebraska Diplomats; board member for the West Point Chamber and the Nielsen Community Center; and northeast Nebraska area director for the Dream It, Do It! program. He recently served as co-chair for the UNMC/NECC College of Nursing fundraising campaign.

Scherer is a graduate of the inaugural class of Leadership Nebraska. He and his wife, Lori, live south of Beemer and have four children. ■

and his wife, Sue, have two children and three grandchildren.

**Jeffrey M. Scherer** is in his first year as District III vice chairman. He is the chief financial officer and a shareholder of Smeal Fire Apparatus Co. of Snyder, Nebraska, and Neligh, Ne-

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**State Chamber Views...**  
**Guest Editorial by Marc LeBaron**  
**Chairman**  
**Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry**

## "Reflecting On The Need For A Strong State Chamber"

If my first six months as State Chamber chairman has taught me anything, it is the importance of unity among our state's business leaders. As Nebraskans, we are a largely self-reliant, individualistic group. Yet at the same time, we share a common optimism. We have seen tough times before and understand how to deal with them.

Listening to other members discuss the challenges of our current economy, I have come to better understand the true value of our State Chamber. The State Chamber is one of the most effective tools we have of unifying our efforts to successfully meet the challenges presented by this economy.

### **Lincoln Board Meeting**

Earlier this month, it was my pleasure to host the State Chamber Board of Directors summer meeting in

Lincoln. It was a productive meeting. Most noteworthy was the formation of the State Chamber's Innovation and Technology Council. This is something I believe is extremely important to Nebraska's future. We have seen the significant impact that our other State Chamber councils have had in the past, and I believe this new council will have an equally important impact.

The new council will play a critical role throughout the state by supporting collaboration between the State Chamber, business, and technology centers – such as the Peter Kiewit Institute and UNL's Innovation Campus. In our current, highly-competitive environment, many states are saying that innovation and technology is important. We are doing something about it.

It was also our privilege to have Tom Donohue, President and CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce,

attend our board dinner. In addition, Bob Milligan of Lincoln, who is now the chairman of the U.S. Chamber Board, addressed our group and shared his thoughts on the role our State Chamber must play in a growing business in Nebraska. The gathering also gave us the opportunity to recognize Bob for his many contributions to the state and national boards.

### **Washington, D.C. Visit**

The State Chamber's recent visit to Washington, D.C. provided members with a first-hand understanding of the many changes that have occurred in our nation's capital since last November's election. During our time on Capitol Hill, we were able to speak with both Nebraska's senators and all three of the state's House members regarding the issues that affect us.

We are in a time of significant legislative change. Never before have so many issues that could have a tremendous impact on business been placed on the agenda with such a short timeline. The roles of strong state and national chambers of commerce have never been more important. It is imperative that we step up to be a guardian for business interests. The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry, as it has in the past, will continue to show great leadership. ■

## **Nebraska Named A 'Best State For Business'**

Nebraska is the fifth-best state for business, according to a well-recognized national publication for corporate executives. The June/July issue of the National Association of Corporate Directors' (NACD) *Directorship* magazine features its first annual Boardroom Guide to the Best States for Business.

The NACD rankings were compiled using eight major indices, including litigation climate; presence of Fortune 500 companies; business tax climate; cost of living; cost of labor; state economic performance; higher education prevalence; and quality of life. The Cornhusker State scored well in the areas of litigation climate, cost of living, and quality of life. Nebraska's

only poor grade came in the category of tax climate, in which the state was ranked eighth worst in the nation. Ranked ahead of Nebraska in the overall poll were Texas (No. 1), Virginia, Utah and South Dakota.

In another prominent study, Nebraska was named number 10 pro-business state by Pollina Corporate Real Estate, an influential brokerage and consulting firm in Chicago. Nebraska was also ranked in the firm's top ten list in 2007, before sliding to No. 15 last year. The Pollina study evaluates states based on 33 factors including taxes; human resources; right-to-work legislation; energy costs; infrastructure spending; workers compensation laws; economic incen-

tive programs; and state economic development efforts.

The Pollina report said the following about Nebraska: "You can't hold Nebraska back! ... Nebraska's low unemployment and low numbers of jobs gained or lost, as well as right-to-work status, low unemployment insurance costs, and low workers' compensation costs combine to provide good human resource conditions."

The Pollina Corporate Top Ten Pro-Business States for 2009 are: (1) Virginia; (2) Utah; (3) North Carolina; (4) Wyoming; (5) South Carolina; (6) South Dakota; (7) Kansas; (8) Georgia; (9) Florida; and (10) Nebraska. ■

# Lincoln Industries Hosts State Chamber Board Meeting

In early June, the State Chamber Board of Directors gathered for its summer meeting in Lincoln. On the evening of June 4, more than 40 board members and their spouses enjoyed dinner at the residence of 2009 State Chamber Chairman Marc LeBaron and his wife, Kathy. Making a special appearance at the event was U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Thomas J. Donohue, along with Robert S. Milligan of M I Industries, Lincoln, who was elected chairman of the U.S. Chamber on June 10.

The June 5 board meeting was held at Lincoln Industries, the nation's leading supplier of products requiring high-performance metal finishing. Before board members acted on official business, they summarized the economic conditions within their respective industries and businesses.

Later, James B. ("J.B.") Milliken, president of the University of Nebraska, briefed the board on university activities, including new leadership at the Peter Kiewit Institute, research growth at UNL, and efforts to capitalize on existing advantages. Milliken noted the recent passage of LB555, which expands the state's research credit, and thanked the State Chamber for its work on the legislation.

In other matters, the board voted to approve the formation of the State

Chamber Innovation and Technology Council. It was also announced that Gary Warren, president of Services Corp., Hamilton Communication, Aurora, will chair the new council.

Following the meeting, several board members toured Lincoln Industries and its production facilities. The company employs more than 400 people in a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week

operation and has 500,000 square feet of production, warehouse and administrative space.

The State Chamber sends its appreciation to Chairman LeBaron and Kathy for their hard work and hospitality. Because of their efforts, the meeting and dinner were a resounding success. ■

**Top: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Chairman Robert Milligan of Lincoln addresses the State Chamber Board members. Also pictured are Kathy and State Chamber Chairman Marc LeBaron, as well as Cynthia Milligan, former dean of UNL's College of Business Administration.**

**Middle: U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Tom Donohue meets with State Chamber President Barry Kennedy at the residence of Marc and Kathy LeBaron prior to the start of the June 4 board dinner.**

**Bottom: State Chamber Board members (from left) Mark Theisen of Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society, Omaha; Kent Wimmer of The Western Sugar Cooperative, Scottsbluff; Dennis Swanson of Sandhill Equipment, Bassett; and Patrick Gorup of Lyman-Richey Corp., Omaha, are given a tour by Lincoln Industries staff.**



## Leadership Nebraska Now Accepting Applications

The State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska program is in its third year of developing a cross-section of local leaders who will use their talents and abilities to foster a new spirit of energy, 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.

Those selected to participate in Leadership Nebraska will be from different regions of the state, with varied backgrounds and diverse talents. But all must have one common characteristic: an abiding interest in our state and its future. Applications for the 2010 Nebraska Leadership class are being accepted now until mid-October. Sessions for the next class will begin in late February 2010.

For more information, call Don Mihovk, executive director, at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail [dmihovk@nechamber.com](mailto:dmihovk@nechamber.com). To download the application form, log onto <http://nebraskaleadership.nechamber.com>.

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# State Chamber's Fall Legislative Forums Announced

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry wants to hear from you this fall as we plan to visit more than 30 communities statewide for our annual Legislative Forums. The forums begin Sept. 2 and continue through October.

This year's program will focus on the Legislature's 2009 session – including developments involving taxes, labor law, workers' compensation and economic development – while providing a look ahead at 2010. The forums will also provide a snapshot at how Nebraska compares to other states in key competitiveness rankings. Finally, attendees will be brought up-to-speed on the latest news regarding the federal Employee Free Choice Act, otherwise known as the "card-check" bill, being advocated by labor union leaders.

These forums are your opportunity to visit with your state senator, who will be invited to forums in his or her district. In addition, State Chamber board members and staff will be present to answer questions regarding the issues impacting Nebraska's business community. The State Chamber Legislative Forums are an

excellent opportunity to give both employers and employees a firsthand look at the legislative process while meeting their elected representatives.

Below is a schedule of forum

locations and dates. For more information, please contact the State Chamber office at (402) 474-4422. ■

2009 STATE CHAMBER LEGISLATIVE FORUMS SCHEDULE			
Wednesday, Sept. 2		Monday, Sept. 28	
Lunch	Bellevue	Lunch	O'Neill
Monday, Sept. 14		Dinner	Norfolk
Lunch	Aurora	Tuesday, Sept. 29	
Tuesday, Sept. 15		Breakfast	West Point
Breakfast	Ogallala	Lunch	South Sioux City
Lunch	Scottsbluff	Wednesday, Sept. 30	
Wednesday, Sept. 16		Breakfast	Omaha
Breakfast	Alliance	Lunch	Omaha
Lunch	Sidney	Thursday, Oct. 1	
Thursday, Sept. 17		Lunch	Fremont
Breakfast	North Platte	*****	
Lunch	York	Monday, Oct. 5	
*****		Breakfast	Columbus
Monday, Sept. 21		Lunch	Broken Bow
Lunch	Lexington	Tuesday, Oct. 6	
Dinner	Hastings	Breakfast	Sarpy County
Tuesday, Sept. 22		Wednesday, Oct. 7	
Lunch	Grand Island	Lunch	Wahoo
Wednesday, Sept. 23		Thursday, Oct. 8	
Breakfast	Kearney	Breakfast	McCook
Lunch	Ord	Lunch	Holdrege
Thursday, Sept. 24		Wednesday, Oct. 14	
Breakfast	Beatrice	Lunch	Nebraska City
Lunch	Blair	Wednesday, Oct. 28	
*****		Breakfast	Lincoln

## 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.

### BLAIR

UGL Unico  
Jim Tiller

### GRAND ISLAND

DTE Rail Services, Inc.  
Robert Marshall

Staab Management  
Company  
Charlotte Waters

### LINCOLN

Belmont Veterinarian  
Center  
Tom L. Haug, D.V.M.

Benefit Management  
Troy J. Shreve  
*Recommended by Jeff  
Scherer, Smeal Fire  
Apparatus Co.*

Kaplan University-Lincoln  
Campus  
Dr. Sandra Muskopf

Westfield Gateway  
Chris Kinerson

OMAHA  
Conventry Health Care of  
Nebraska  
Mike Nelson

Diesel Power Equipment  
Co.  
Dan Wells

DTN, Inc.  
Robert Gordon

Great Western Bank  
Colin D. Anderson

Drs. Gross, Iwersen,  
Kratochvil & Klein, P.C.  
Alta Sharp

The Harry A. Koch Co.  
Bill Unger

Omaha Door & Window  
Company, Inc.  
Tom Murnan

Renze Display Company  
Douglas J. Buchanan

### RALSTON

Maria's Mexican Restaurant  
Michael Sanchez  
*Recommended by Mike  
Baldino, Baldino Enterprises,  
LLC*

### SEWARD

U.S. Corrugated, Inc.  
Alan Koll

### ST. PAUL, MN

Public Affairs Company  
Steve Knuth

### WASHINGTON, DC

B&D Consulting  
Scott B. Shiller