

General Elections UPDATE

The November 2 General Election is fast approaching. In the Unicameral, there are 12 of the 25 races that are contested. The following are the General Election listings and Primary vote results in parentheses: **Dist. 1** Open Seat, Ron Zeiger (41%) and LaVon Heidemann (33%); **Dist. 3** Sen. Ray Mossey (42%) and Gail Kopplin (36%); **Dist. 9** Open Seat, Gwen Howard (43%) and Scott Knudsen (32%); **Dist. 13** Sen. Lowen Kruse (71%) and Anthony Fast Horse (29%); **Dist. 17** Sen. Pat Engel (53%) and Dave Bloomfield (28%); **Dist. 23** Open Seat, Chris Langemeier (50%) and Mark Gustafson (41%); **Dist. 29** Sen. Mike Foley (72%) and Angelika Byorth (28%); **Dist. 31** Open Seat, Rich Pahls (49%) and Ben Thompson (32%); **Dist. 33** Steve Scherr (48%) and Sen. Carroll Burling (47%); **Dist. 37** Sen. Joel Johnson (78%) and Mike McShea (22%); **Dist. 43** Open Seat, Kevin Cooksley (26%) and Deb Fischer (25%); and **Dist. 45** Open Seat, Abbie Cornett (43%) and Jerry Ryan, who petitioned on the ballot after the Primary candidate withdrew.

Districts with only one candidate are: **Dist. 5** Sen. Don Preister; **Dist. 7** Sen. John Synowiecki; **Dist. 11** Sen. Ernie Chambers; **Dist. 15** Sen. Ray Janssen; **Dist. 19** Mike Flood; **Dist. 21** Sen. Carol Hudkins; **Dist. 25** Sen. Ron Raikes; **Dist. 27** Sen. DiAnna

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41 Senators and Candidates Attend Fall Legislative Forums

Nearly 1,300 persons attended the 31 Legislative Fall Forums held through September, with 41 State Senators and legislative candidates participating in the annual State Chamber event. Nebraska's business tax climate was the main focus of the presentations. Despite low labor and energy costs, Nebraska's business tax climate ranks in the bottom five according to a Tax Foundation survey. Establishment of targeted tax incentives to encourage investment and job growth gave Nebraska some advantages over neighboring states, and the state saw extraordinary growth. However, more needs to be done to strengthen current economic development incentive tools to make Nebraska competitive again, especially in attracting high-tech and biotechnology firms.

This year, the Forums presented a program relating to the KPMG Study and asked members what needs to be done to give Nebraska a more competitive business taxation climate. Ranked in the bottom 5 by the Tax

Foundation, Nebraska's business taxation system is shown to be less competitive than most of our surrounding states. The KPMG Study echoes that study, noting that in 5 of 7 model businesses, Nebraska has the highest tax burden. Business incentives, while helping make some projects competitive, only puts Nebraska in the middle of the pack with competing states.

Attendees and all State Chamber members were given the opportunity to respond to a survey identifying their concerns about the business climate in the state and what they would recommend to be done to improve it.

Among the highest number of suggestions that the state of Nebraska could make to help businesses grow and expend were the following: lower the income tax rate; exempt business equipment and machinery from the sales tax; provide more funding for employee training; lower property taxes; provide more funding for community colleges for worker training; provide better rural broadband and telecommunications infrastructure. Other suggestions included: adding

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Below: State Chamber Board Member Arlene Sorensen introduces Barry Kennedy at the record-breaking Lincoln Forum. Right: Senator Roger Wehrbein addresses Forum in Nebraska City.





State Chamber Views...

Editorial by Barry Kennedy,
President,
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

"Welcome to 2006"

No, I have not lost my sense of time! Rather, I continue to be concerned over the very serious problem Nebraska citizens and especially Nebraska employers may be facing in the 2006 elections.

As the State Chamber lobbyists traveled around the state conducting 31 Legislative Forums, we had an excellent number of State Senators and candidates in attendance. The candidates who are running this year are all dedicated individuals, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for making the commitment — not simply run for public office, but to **serve** once elected.

What drew my attention were the many locations where we were introducing a seated State Senator who was not up for election this year. The alarming statistic that really hit home is that there are a minimum of 20 Senators who are term-limited and will not be allowed to run for election in 2006.

With seven open seats this year, and a minimum of 20 open seats in 2006, the reality is that the 2007 legislative session will witness a majority of the Unicameral that will have minimal experience with the legislative process. It is likely that over 30 of the 49 seats will be held by people who will have little or no legislative experience. Even the most dedicated and well-orientated people require a little time to learn the process of evaluating legislative proposals and making the important decisions that are thrust upon them.

The Legislative Forum locations that most bothered me were those locations where I was introducing a State Senator who has an excellent voting record with the State Chamber. All 20 of the term-limited Senators combined have an average voting record of 75.4% on State Chamber issues. The top 15 average 85.6% and five have

cumulative averages of over 90%. Of the seven retiring Senators this year, five have an average over 90% on business issues. **We will be saying good-bye to a lot of business friendly Senators.**

As I talk to my counterparts in other states who have dealt with term limits, there is always one significant difference with Nebraska. They all have two houses of legislative government. In most states, Senate members can run for the House and House members can run for the Senate, which allows some retention of institutional knowledge to remain in the legislative branch. With the Unicameral form of government, we do not have the luxury of retaining such institutional memory or experience.

IT IS NOT TOO EARLY TO BE THINKING ABOUT 2006.

In the groups that I spoke to, I encouraged attendees to be thinking about either running for the Legislature themselves or to encourage someone who understands issues facing employers to consider running for the Legislature in 2006, should that district be an open seat district. We really need to ramp up the recruitment and support process of potentially viable candidates.

The issue is complicated further by one of the lowest levels of legislative compensation in the United States. If a person still needs to make a living — as most of us do — it is often not even realistic to seriously consider serving in the Unicameral.

There are obviously several items to which we need to devote some level of attention:

1. Repeal term limits, or at least change term limits to something more suitable for Nebraska's form of legislative government;

2. Increase legislative pay to allow more qualified individuals to consider the opportunity of serving in the Legislature; and

3. Work hard and actively recruit business-friendly candidates for legislative service.

In returning to present time, I would request that you take the opportunity to thank those who have offered themselves for public office in 2004 - - it is truly a sacrifice and a commitment that should be recognized and rewarded. Next, start thinking seriously about who will fill the considerable number of open seats in the future. **We at the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry will stand ready to meet with anyone who is considering a possible run for Nebraska's Legislature.** We need to meet potential candidates early, and if they have a working knowledge of what allows employers to survive and prosper, we need to encourage and support their efforts to be elected. ■

General Elections Update

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Schimek; **Dist. 35** Sen. Ray Aguilar; **Dist. 39** Sen. Dwite Pedersen; **Dist. 41** Sen. Vickie McDonald; **Dist. 47** Sen. Philip Erdman; and **Dist. 49** Sen. LeRoy Loudon.

On the federal side, the open First District Congressional seat has former Lincoln Councilman Jeff Fortenberry (R) facing State Senator Matt Connealy (D). State Senator Nancy Thompson (D) is running against incumbent Lee Terry (R) in the Second Congressional District. Third District Congressman Tom Osborne (R) has token opposition.

The State Chamber encourages all members to look at the VoteForBusiness.com link on our website. The dismal 21% voter turnout in this year's Primary speaks volumes about the importance of employers and employees voting and knowing the candidates and where they stand. ■



Legislative Forums
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more rural-based economic development incentives; lowering unemployment insurance rates; lowering workers' compensation costs; repealing Initiative-300; and regulatory reform.

As far as issues of importance to businesses, those surveyed put taxes (income, real property, personal property and sales taxes) as their major concerns, followed by workforce education and training, and state regulatory authority and environmental regulations. ■



Above left: Senator Pat Engel answers questions at the Wayne Forum. Above right: Candidate Ron Zeiger speaks at the Tecumseh Forum. Below left: Senator Doug Cunningham updates the O'Neill audience. Below right: State Chamber President Barry Kennedy begins the Lincoln Forum presentation.

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce Executives Bruce Bohrer (Lincoln), Megan Lucas (Bellevue), Natalie Peetz (Omaha), Karen Anderson and spouse Larry (Scottsbluff/Gering), and Dan Mauk (Norfolk) participated at the U.S. Chamber's Government Relations Meeting in Chicago last month.



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry Partners With Department of Labor for 5th Annual Governor's Summit on Workforce Development

Efforts are underway to coordinate Nebraska's 5th Annual Governor's Summit on Workforce Development, being held November 9-10, 2004, at The Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln. Once again, the Nebraska Chamber has formed a solid partnership with the Department of Labor and the SilverStone Group to develop the Summit agenda.

The one-and-a-half day conference will bring Nebraska's current workforce development challenges to the forefront, promoting prosperity and growth in our state and local workforces. This year's Summit will host nearly 500 professionals from across the state who represent the

business, economic development, education, government and health care communities. Titled *Navigating the New Workforce Frontier*, the 2004 Governor's Summit will devote much of the agenda to employer issues. Keynote speakers from across the nation and results-driven breakout sessions will challenge and engage attendees.

Richard Hartnett, Director of Global Staffing for The Boeing Company, will discuss factors employers look for when locating to a particular state. **Tony Raimondo**, President and CEO of Behlen Mfg. Co., will address global manufacturing, and **Ray Weinberg**, a Principal with the

SilverStone Group, will speak on recruitment and retention of top talent in our state. In addition, **Congressman Tom Osborne** and University of Nebraska President **J.B. Milliken** will give remarks as Governor Johanns' distinguished guests of honor. The Summit will feature many more speakers and presenters as well.

Seats are filling quickly so register today! For more information and to register online, visit www.NebraskaWorkforce.com and click on the 2004 Governor's Summit icon. ■

2005 Annual Meeting & Legislative Caucus February 3

Mark your calendars for the State Chamber's Annual Meeting and Legislative Caucus, set for Thursday, February 3, 2005, at the Cornhusker Hotel and Conference Center in Lincoln. A full program will provide Nebraska business people an opportunity to meet with members of the Nebraska Legislature and state policymakers, to salute the achievements of four of Nebraska's business leaders, and to get a first-hand briefing on important legislative issues of concern to the business community.

Late registration will begin in the Atrium of the Cornhusker Hotel at 9:00 a.m., followed by the Board of Directors meeting, scheduled from 10:00-11:45 a.m. The traditional Chamber of Commerce Month kickoff luncheon follows at noon.

The afternoon sessions will feature the traditional Legislative Panel to bring members up to date on key business issues before the 2005 Unicameral. In addition, we are looking at afternoon programs dealing with economic development incentives. The evening banquet will begin at 7:00 p.m., following the social hour in the Cornhusker Atrium. The banquet will feature the traditional passing of the gavel from 2004 Chairman **Rick Russell** to 2005 Chairman **Gary Warren**. The Business Hall of Fame induction ceremony will begin at 8:00 p.m., and the banquet will conclude with closing comments by Chairman Warren.

Straight Talk

Pats On Back

■ The National Association of Manufacturers announced the recipients of its NAM Award for Manufacturing Legislative Excellence. Both Senators **Chuck Hagel** and **Ben Nelson**, and Congressmen **Lee Terry** and **Tom Osborne** received the award, based on key pro-growth and pro-manufacturing votes during the 108th Congress. Please thank each of these gentlemen for their support of business!

Major Tax Bill Passed

Just before press time, the Senate invoked cloture and passed a compromise FSC/ETI bill (H.R. 4520), which will cut taxes for manufacturers and others, including construction companies, engineering and architectural firms, film and music companies, and the oil and gas industry. The measure is a major victory for the business community. We initiated a Call to Action to urge Senator Nelson to vote for the cloture motion and the bill, and he and Senator Hagel did vote in support. Our thanks to all who made contacts and to our Nebraska Congressional delegation who supported this key bill! ■

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

Getzschman/Service Experts
Scott Getzschman

*Sponsor: S. Michael Jensen,
Great Plains Communications*

GRANT

Turtle Island Business
Development Centers
Ted Tietjen

LINCOLN

The Clark Enersen Partners,
Inc.

Lowell S. Berg

*Sponsor: Philip Mullin, Garner
Industries*

T.O. Haas Tire Co., Inc.
George Hoellen

Lincoln Radiology Group, P.C.

Chris McCoy

NC+ Hybrids

Larry Schuett

McCOOK

McPherron, Skiles, Joel & Loop
P.C.

Douglas W. Skiles

NORFOLK

Humphrey Hospitality Trust
Don Heimes

OMAHA

Designer Blinds of Omaha
Lloyd Woodworth

*Sponsor: Tom L. Whalen,
SilverStone Group*

Heartland Automotive Services,
Inc.
Steve Werner

The Westroads Club

Jere M. Knoles

O'NEILL

Holt County 21st Century Growers
Marv Fritz

*Sponsor: Dennis Swanson, Sandhill
Equipment, Inc.*

RALSTON

Interstate Business Equipment,
Inc.

Michael D. Cronin

SCOTTSDLUFF

Oregon Trail Plumbing,
Heating & Cooling, Inc.
Kirby Case

SPENCER

Nolan Transportation L.L.C.
Glada Nolan

*Sponsor: Jerry Elfring,
Cyclonaire Corporation*

ST. EDWARD

American Society For Quality
- Section 1302
Dave Stuhlmiller

YORK

Upper Big Blue Natural
Resources District
Nancy Brisk