

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER 
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
October-November 2010

State Chamber Holds Annual Legislative Forums Across Nebraska

The State Chamber, in cooperation with local chambers across Nebraska, has concluded its annual legislative forum tour. The fall forums are held every year to gather input from the business community on legislative concerns and key economic issues. Approximately 1,400 people attended 32 forums this autumn, while more than 45 state senators and legislative candidates participated in the presentations. The forums also generated considerable coverage by local news media.

This year's forums, conducted by State Chamber staff, examined Nebraska's competitiveness compared to neighboring states in categories important to business – including taxes, business costs, legal environment and unemployment insurance taxes. The forums also reviewed the Legislature's 2010 session, including developments in the areas of labor law, workers' compensation and economic development.

Forum attendees learned that while Nebraska is still considered a high-tax state, conditions have recently improved for businesses. The forums featured several economic rankings, including one from the non-partisan Tax Foundation that shows Nebraska has become more business-friendly over the past two years. The Foundation's business tax climate index has Nebraska ranked 33rd best, which is an improvement

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(Right) State Senator Kate Sullivan of Cedar Rapids discusses redistricting concerns at the legislative forum in Ord.



Nebraska Makes Top 10 in Forbes 'Best States for Business' List

For the second consecutive year, Nebraska has landed a top-ten ranking in the "Best States for Business and Careers" list published by *Forbes* magazine. The Cornhusker State is ranked No. 9 by the business publication, the same position as last year.

The 2010 "Best States" ranking measures six vital categories for businesses: costs, labor supply, regulatory environment, current eco-

nomie climate, growth prospects and quality of life. *Forbes* factored in 33 points of data to determine the ranks in the six main areas.

The cost of doing business – which includes labor, energy and taxes – were weighted the most heavily. Nebraska scored particularly well in the categories of business costs (No. 6), economic climate (No. 12) and quality of life (No. 14). Utah, Virginia and North Carolina topped this year's *Forbes* list;

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State Chamber Views...

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'Chambers Continue To Impact Nebraska's Future'

From time to time, I try to highlight the impact that local chambers of commerce have on their respective communities. This time of year, as we travel the entire state conducting legislative forums, we at the State Chamber have an excellent opportunity to see first hand just how relevant many chambers are and the impact they are having across our state.

While I cannot possibly relay all of the many accomplishments of Nebraska's local chambers, I do want to recognize some of the impressive chamber efforts made in recent months. We will try to salute others in future columns.

Visiting **Wayne** recently gave me a real feeling that times are only tough if you sit back and let them be. Many communities have an issue with affordable housing. The business leadership in Wayne has developed a workable solution to giving people who want to work an opportunity to live in and eventually own an affordable home. In addition, they have built a facility that will give them a better chance of attracting new business activity as the

economy improves. A new motel and state of the art science labs at Wayne State will also prepare the area for new technology activities.

WOW! How else can you describe the job **Grand Island** did with the Nebraska State Fair? I personally attended, and from the moment you stepped on the grounds, you knew you were welcome and that the experience would be positive. The facilities, the vendors and above all, the attitudes of everyone involved has created a springboard for a great State Fair for years to come.

If anyone had an excuse to give up this past summer, **Norfolk** did. After a devastating flood that took a valued life and lifeline to Norfolk businesses, all parties rose to the occasion. In only about 50 days, a bridge was rebuilt and business activity restored. I have had several opportunities to be in Norfolk recently, and the community attitude and resolve is amazing. The ground has been broken on a new chamber of commerce office complex while other new facilities have already cut ribbons and started adding to the northeast Nebraska economy.

The **Lincoln** Chamber took the lead and made a real difference in passing a ballot initiative that will allow for a new arena to be built. The UNL basketball teams will be tenants of the new facility as well as many other programs, events and activities. This state of the art venue will give Lincoln the ability to host events that it simply could not attract before.

As a baseball fan, I have taken great pleasure in watching the new ball park grow near downtown **Omaha**. It is another state of the art facility that will secure the College World Series in our state for many years to come. The additional business activity that has already started to grow around the park will also add greatly to Nebraska's economy. This is just one of many examples of the Greater Omaha Chamber's impact on economic growth.

A recent news article cited the **Falls City** Chamber of Commerce as a leader in securing a new bridge being built across the Missouri River at Rulo. Public safety is always a major factor in these types of projects, but advancing economic development in that region is also a key factor. Several years of hard work led to the success of this project, which will allow more efficient access to the southeast part of Nebraska.

Thanks to these and many other efforts across Nebraska, our local chambers are making an invaluable difference to their local economies, as well as the entire Cornhusker State. I look forward to sharing other success stories in the future. ■

Nebraska Chamber Wins Award at National Conference

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry was recently awarded the nation's top award for non-dues revenue by a state chamber. The award was presented by the Association of State Chamber Professionals (ASCP), a national organization comprised of membership and marketing executives from state chambers of commerce from around the country. Accepting the ASCP award on behalf of the Nebraska Chamber are Barry L. Kennedy, State Chamber President, and James D. Berringer, Vice President-Membership and Marketing. Also pictured is Lew Ebert of the North Carolina Chamber, President of Council of State Chambers (COSC). Berringer has been on ASCP's board of directors since 2002 and just completed his term as president of the national organization.



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from last year's ranking of No. 42. Another ranking presented during the forums showed Nebraska is listed as a top ten state for business.

"From Omaha to Scottsbluff, the economy continues to be the top issue facing our business community and employers," said State Chamber President Barry Kennedy. "The legislative forums once again provided a timely opportunity for business leaders to weigh in on the important issues."

The legislative forum tour concluded in Lincoln on October 27. ■

(Top right) At the forum in Kearney, Senator Galen Hadley responds to a question from State Chamber board member Ray Ward.

(Middle right) During the State Chamber's stop in Sarpy County, attendees heard from District 14 legislative candidates Teresa Whitehead and Jim Smith.

(Bottom right) In Auburn, Senator Lavon Heidemann discusses issues with Leadership Nebraska Class III alumnus Scott Kudrna.



Nebraska Ranked Number 9 in Forbes

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Maine, Mississippi and Rhode Island were ranked as the worst three states.

To see the complete list, as well as the rankings on the individual categories for business, go to **Forbes.com**.

Forbes 'Best States for Business'

1. Utah
2. Virginia
3. North Carolina
4. Colorado
5. Washington
6. Oregon
7. Texas
8. Georgia
- 9. Nebraska**
10. Kansas. ■



2011 Annual Meeting Set for February 3

Mark your calendars for the State Chamber's 2011 Annual Meeting and Legislative Caucus, set for Thursday, Feb. 3, at The Cornhusker Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Lincoln.

This is the State Chamber's largest event of the year. Those attending will learn about key legislative issues impacting the business community. Attendees will also get the chance to meet with Nebraska lawmakers, state officials and policy experts, as well as pay tribute to some of the state's top business leaders.

Late registration will begin in the atrium of The Cornhusker Marriott at 9 a.m. CT. The Board of Directors meeting will start at 10 a.m. Governor Dave Heineman will address the noon luncheon, which will be open to all State Chamber members. The afternoon will commence with the annual business meeting, followed by panel discussions led by key experts and lawmakers. Panel topics will cover Nebraska's economic competitiveness, federal issues, and the current state

challenges facing the Legislature's leaders.

The evening will include a 6 p.m. reception and the annual banquet at 7 p.m. The traditional passing of the gavel will feature 2010 State Chamber Chairman Richard S. Reiser of Werner Enterprises, Omaha, and 2011 Chairman Jeffrey M. Scherer. The Business

Hall of Fame induction ceremony will begin at 8 p.m., with closing comments by Chairman Scherer of Smeal Fire Apparatus.

A registration form for the Annual Meeting and Legislative Caucus is enclosed with this issue of *The Executive*. ■

Applications Due For 2011 Leadership Nebraska Class

The State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska program is set to enter its fifth year of developing and motivating a cross-section of leaders who will use their talents to inspire others and foster a new spirit of enthusiasm and vitality throughout the state. Now is your chance to apply or nominate a deserving candidate to be part of the next Leadership Nebraska class.

Each year, several Nebraska leaders – in their 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s – are selected to participate in the program. Participants will come from different regions of the state, have varied professional backgrounds and possess diverse talents. And all must display an abiding interest in Nebraska and its future.

For more information, call Don Mihovk, the program's executive director, at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail dmihovk@nechamber.com. Applications for the 2011 class should be sent as soon as possible. Sessions begin in late February. For application forms or more information, log onto <http://nebraskaleadership.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.

ALLIANCE

Box Butte General Hospital
Daniel W. Griess

Thermo King Corp./
Ingersoll Rand
Lycinda D. McDaniel

MINDEN

Wardcraft Homes, Inc.
Mark Weller

FDI Consulting, Inc.
Michael Irwin

COLUMBUS

D.C. Hirschbrunner
Consulting LLC
Dennis C. Hirschbrunner

LINCOLN

Midwest Floor Covering,
Inc.
Brad Larsen

OGALLALA

Cobb Realty, Inc.
Diane England

Jet Linx Aviation, LLC
Mark Matthes

Recommended by: Don
Heimes, Management
Advisory Services, LLC

Nebraska Center for
Entrepreneurship
Kathleen Thornton

OMAHA

E & A Consulting Group,
Inc.
Jeff Elliott

Kellogg Co.
Peter Moait

Peak Performance
Coaching
Allan Hale

GRANDISLAND

Heartland Ag, Inc.
Tim D. White

NebraskaLink, LLC
Paul Ludwick

Ethos Group
Lance Graves

Recommended by: Brian
Hamilton, Beardmore
Chevrolet, Inc. and
Loy Todd, Nebraska New
Car & Truck Dealers
Association

SOUTH SIOUX CITY
C & H Heavy Duty
Specialists, Inc.
Charles Schram

HASTINGS

Krieger Electric Co.
Scott Krieger