

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

October/November 2011

Baier To Lead State Chamber's 'Forging Nebraska's Future'

In early October, the State Chamber unveiled its most ambitious initiative yet in an effort to address the state's current challenges and to capitalize on new opportunities for Nebraska's citizens.

The State Chamber's "Forging Nebraska's Future" initiative will conduct in-depth research, while analyzing business, economic and community trends. In addition, it will propose specific recommendations for state and local leaders with the aim of enhancing Nebraska's business climate, economic competitiveness and overall quality of life.

The State Chamber has also announced that Richard Baier, who had served as Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, has joined the State Chamber staff to lead this important initiative. Baier serves as Executive Vice President of "Forging Nebraska's Future."

The program will utilize a business-like model to examine and continually review the state's economic foundation and other aspects of Nebraska life, including tax climate, business conditions, demographics, natural resources,

government, workforce, transportation, technology and education. This analysis will be used by the State Chamber and others to devise strategies to ensure the future growth of Nebraska's economy and population.

"Today, Nebraska faces a broad spectrum of advantages and challenges," said Jeff Scherer, CFO of Smeal Fire Apparatus in Snyder and current Chairman of the State Chamber. "State and local leaders must recognize these obstacles and opportunities and meet them head on with a clear and consistent vision. 'Forging Nebraska's Future' will offer a platform for carrying out this difficult mission. I have worked closely with Richard Baier on a variety of issues in the past, and I am grateful that he has agreed to lead this effort."

"Strong economies and prosperous communities do not happen by accident," said Barry Kennedy, President of the State Chamber. "They are the result of bold ideas from leaders who are willing to take risks to implement them. 'Forging Nebraska's Future' – under the leadership of Richard Baier – will help foster the vision and ingenuity needed in the 21st century."

When designing the "Forging Nebraska's Future" initiative, the State Chamber conducted a review of

national and regional data and studies.

This review revealed that Nebraska maintains a high quality of life, a balanced state budget, an ambitious workforce, a strong agricultural foundation, a steady manufacturing base, and a low cost of living. These key factors have helped the state weather the current economic storm.

However, the state has its share of challenges as well. By all accounts, Nebraska is still a high tax state

and continues to be ranked in the bottom half of the 50 states for tax climate. Nebraska's state-and-local tax burden ranks in the bottom 15 of all states. Also, the Chamber's preliminary report found that Nebraska's educational system needs to be revised and that a decades-long trend of rural outmigration must be reversed.

More information on the "Forging Nebraska's Future" initiative will be made available in the coming weeks.

The State Chamber is Nebraska's largest business association, representing employers of all sizes and in every sector, as well as local chambers of commerce and other statewide associations. For 99 years, the State Chamber has proudly served as the voice of Nebraska's business community. ■



Richard Baier

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State Chamber Views...
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'America Needs More Affordable Energy & The Jobs It Creates'

The State Chamber has just concluded our annual legislative forums, which were once again held in conjunction with local chambers of commerce. Our trek across Nebraska and to 31 communities allowed us to have a meaningful dialogue with many of the state's community and business leaders. Thanks to all of you who attended or helped coordinate these important events.

During our forum presentations, it was emphasized that Nebraska has increasingly been recognized nationally as a great place to do business. Much of the reason for Nebraska's pro-business reputation is our affordable cost of doing business.

According to Forbes magazine, Nebraska is now the sixth best state in the nation in the "cost of business" category. This is due in large part to Nebraska's low cost of electricity from our public power suppliers.

According to the 2011 Energy Cost Index – published a few months ago by the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council – only eight states have more affordable electricity rates than Nebraska. This is no surprise; Nebraska has always been home to affordable, abundant electricity, which powers our businesses, schools, health care facilities, and homes.

Unfortunately, Nebraska's electricity producers and public power entities have come under heavy pressure in recent years thanks to new federal regulations. Coal-fired power plants, which supply Nebraska with about 65% of its electricity generation, have been heavily targeted by federal regulators.

If these new regulations are implemented, Nebraskans will pay a heavy price. The Grand Island Independent recently reported that new regulations imposed by the EPA could impact Ne-

braska's energy industry, causing possible power plant closures, employee layoffs and increased power rates.

All of us involved in the business community know that Nebraska's economic future and global competitiveness are tied directly to the nation's energy policy. High energy costs put businesses – large and small – at a competitive disadvantage and steal resources needed for new hiring, wage increases, business expansion and new investments.

Unfortunately, nearly 40 years after the 1970's energy crisis, the United States has failed to implement a long-term, comprehensive plan to create more reliable, affordable energy supplies – for both electricity and transportation fuel.

Simply put, continued inaction will yield disastrous results.

Every sector of business feels the sting of energy inflation. According to economists, each time oil prices go up 10%, the U.S. economy loses as much as \$142 billion and an average of 150,000 jobs are cut by U.S. employers.

In America today, roughly 23 million are either receiving unemployment benefits or have given up looking for work. Instead of focusing on more government spending, Washington needs to take significant steps to encourage more domestic energy production, while providing more certainty for the energy markets. This would certainly help jolt our economy and job market back to life.

Earlier this fall, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce released its jobs plan. A major part of that plan calls for more energy production. According to the U.S. Chamber, opening more offshore oil resources would create roughly 245,000 new American jobs. Expanding access to federal lands for oil and gas exploration would add another

530,000 new jobs. Approval of the Keystone XL pipeline project would create or support another 250,000 jobs.

More than ever, Nebraskans and all Americans need a market-based energy strategy that will produce a wider, deeper domestic energy portfolio, while also creating new jobs and spurring economic growth. The State Chamber is working with national partners, like the U.S. Chamber's Institute for 21st Century Energy, to ensure that neither federal agencies nor Congress places further restrictions on domestic energy production or supplies.

At this critical juncture, when America needs new jobs and more affordable energy, it is time for Washington leaders to provide real leadership and address our energy challenge. ■

State Chamber's 2012 Annual Meeting Set For February 2

The State Chamber's Annual Meeting and Legislative Caucus will be Thursday, February 2, 2012, at The Cornhusker Marriott in Lincoln. This is one of Nebraska's most recognized and well-attended Chamber events of the year.

Those attending will have an opportunity to hear from state lawmakers and other leaders, as well as attend briefings on several important issues of concern to the business community. The evening's banquet will feature the traditional passing of the gavel to the new State Chamber chairman and a tribute to Nebraska's newest Business Hall of Fame inductees.

It should be noted that 2012 will mark the 100th anniversary of the State Chamber. Those attending the annual meeting and banquet can expect special events to commemorate the occasion.

For more information see the enclosed registration form, call Carol Sibley at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail csibley@nechamber.com.

The Annual Meeting also presents sponsorship opportunities to get your business recognized before a large target audience. Those interested in sponsoring should contact James Berringer, Senior Vice President-Membership & Marketing, at (402) 474-4422 or jberringer@nechamber.com. ■

Nebraska Manufacturing Award Goes To Kawasaki Motors

Kawasaki Motors Manufacturing Corp., USA is this year's recipient of the Nebraska Innovation in Manufacturing Award. The company was honored in September at the CenturyLink Center in Omaha during the annual meeting of the State Chamber's Manufacturers Council.

The Innovation in Manufacturing Award is sponsored by the State Chamber and RSM McGladrey, a leading provider of accounting, tax and business consulting services to the manufacturing and wholesale distribution industry. The award, which was established in 2008, is presented annually to a Nebraska manufacturer who successfully implements new ways of conducting business through the use of products, processes, technologies and strategies.

With approximately 1,500 employees in Lincoln, Kawasaki recently completed a \$30 million expansion of its rail car operations. With this expansion, Kawasaki is now the only manufacturer of subway and commuter rail cars in North America that can fabricate, assemble and test cars in one location.

Mike Boyle, vice president and plant manager at Kawasaki, accepted the award on behalf of Kawasaki and

its employees. Boyle said Kawasaki is "constantly changing our plant and our product offerings." He added: "Product and process innovation are the basis for our longevity and growth throughout our 37 years in Lincoln."

Barry Kennedy, president of the

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry, said that "Kawasaki's spirit of innovation gives us another reason to be proud of our manufacturing base in Nebraska, and it illustrates how manufacturers are helping pave the path to economic recovery." ■



Mike Boyle (right), vice president and plant manager at Kawasaki in Lincoln, accepts the 2011 Nebraska Innovation in Manufacturing Award on behalf of Kawasaki and its employees. Also pictured are State Chamber Chairman Jeff Scherer of Smeal Fire Apparatus Co. in Snyder; State Chamber Manufacturers Council Chairman Bob Meaney of Valmont Industries in Omaha; and Tony Urban, managing director of McGladrey's Omaha office.

State Chamber Holds 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 1,250 people attended 31 forums this autumn, while more than 40 state senators participated in the presentations. The forums also generated considerable coverage by local news media.

This year's forums, conducted by

State Chamber staff, highlighted key accomplishments from the Nebraska Legislature's 2011 session, including new legislation in the areas of economic development, roads funding, and collective bargaining by public employees.

State Chamber staff also reviewed the latest competitiveness rankings to show how Nebraska fares compared to neighboring states in the areas important to business – including tax burden, business costs, and legal climate. ■

State Senator Kate Sullivan addresses forum participants in O'Neill.

At the forum in Fremont, state Senator Charlie Janssen discusses the upcoming legislative session with State Chamber President Barry Kennedy.

In Hastings, state Senator Dennis Utter highlights Nebraska's budget and tax concerns.



NAM President Visits State Chamber Board

National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) President & CEO Jay Timmons spoke to approximately 55 State Chamber board members during the Chamber's September board meeting held in Lincoln. NAM is one of the State Chamber's two national affiliates.

Timmons provided State Chamber board members with NAM's analysis of President Obama's jobs plan, as well as ideas that NAM supports to boost the U.S. economy and create jobs. Timmons also announced that NAM had crafted a comprehensive response to the National Labor Relations Board's (NLRB) recent actions against employers, including the launch of a series of ads calling on members of Congress to support the "Protecting Jobs from Government Interference Act"

(H.R. 2587). NAM has taken legal action against the NLRB in an effort to stop a new mandate that forces almost all private employers to post notices regarding the union rights.

During his visit to Lincoln, Timmons also spoke to approximately 100 foreign business representatives who participated in Governor Dave Heineman's reverse trade mission. ■



Deadline for Leadership Nebraska Applications

Now is the time to act if you or someone you know wants to be part of one of Nebraska's most recognized leadership programs. The State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska is now in its fifth year of developing a cross section of leaders who want to use their talents and abilities to foster a new spirit of energy, enthusiasm and vitality throughout the state.

Participants – who can be in their 20s, 30s, 40s or 50s – will come from different regions of the state, have varied professional backgrounds, possess diverse talents, and display an abiding interest in Nebraska and its future.

Applications for the 2012 Leadership Nebraska class are due now. For more information, call Don Mihovk, Executive Director, at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail dmihovk@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.

AUBURN

Engles Agency, Inc.
Bob Engles

BEATRICE

Carlson, Schafer & Davis, PC, LLO
Robert M. Schafer
Recommended by: Dennis Boesiger, Midwest Livestock Systems, Inc.

COLUMBUS

Copper Care Wood Preservatives
William Abbott

ELBA

Windmill Feeders/ILS
James Olsen
Recommended by: Steve Mossman, Mattson-Ricketts Law Firm

FREMONT

TEK Services
Bill Loughman
Recommended by: Robert Meaney, Valmont Industries, Inc.

LINCOLN

Americans For Prosperity
Mike Friend

Channel Bio
Mark Pieper

First Five Nebraska
Becky Veak

Grohs, Keller & Associates
Donald L. Grohs & David E. Keller

Sensory Effects Cereal Systems
Dean Hinz

Universal Mfg. Co.
Donald L. Dunn

Waste Connections of NE

Randy Rogers
Recommended by: Steve Mossman, Mattson-Ricketts Law Firm

NORTH PLATTE

Sandhills Distributing, LLC
Tom Condon

OMAHA

AAA Bank Nebraska
Bart Qualsett
Recommended by: Rose White, AAA Nebraska

Cricket Communications, Inc.

Travis Anderson

Olsson Associates
Michael Piernicky

Wolf Bros., Inc.
Suzanne Schultz

PAXTON

Ole's Big Game Steakhouse
Tim Holzfaster
Recommended by: Steve Mossman, Mattson-Ricketts Law Firm

THURSTON

Thurston Manufacturing Co.
Layton W. Jensen

WISNER

Citizens State Bank
Steven Ausdemore
Recommended by: Jeff Scherer, Smeal Fire Apparatus Co.

YORK

Zito Media, L.P.
Megan Hager