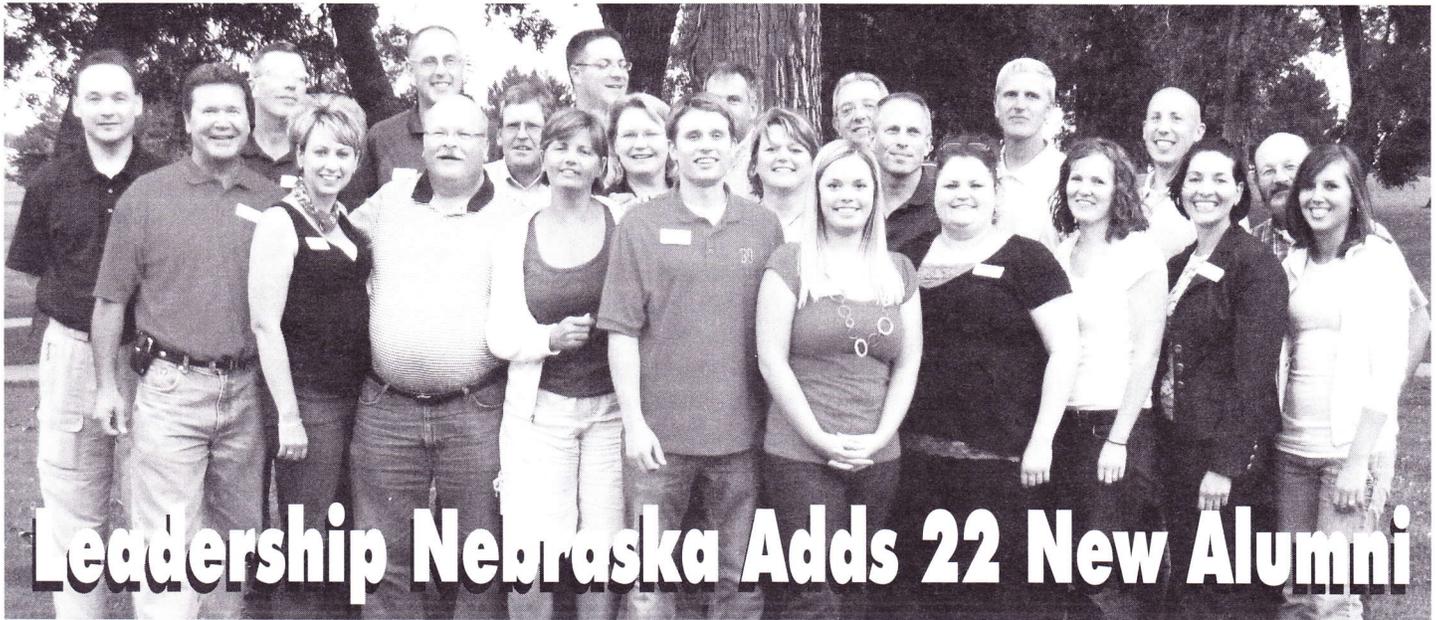


THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER 
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
December 2009



Leadership Nebraska Adds 22 New Alumni

Members of Leadership Nebraska Class III gather during their agricultural tour of northeast Nebraska in August.

Twenty-two Nebraskans were awarded diplomas and commemorative plaques at the State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska commencement ceremony held recently in Lincoln. State Chamber Board member and former U.S. Air Force **Lt. Gen. Robert Hinson**, who serves as a vice president and deputy general manager for Northrup Grumman in Bellevue, spoke to the graduating class and several alumni

regarding essential leadership qualities. Hinson and Leadership Nebraska Chairman **Tom L. Whalen** presented the diplomas to the new graduates.

Graduates of Leadership Nebraska are current and emerging leaders representing communities across the state and from a diverse cross-section of the economy. The program enhances leadership skills while expanding participants' knowledge of the challenges and opportunities facing the state.

The members of Class III participated in six sessions, including: an orientation retreat at Nebraska City's Lied Lodge in February; a session on public service in Lincoln in March; an education session in Kearney in April; a health care and human services session in June; an agriculture tour in northeast Nebraska in August; and an

economic development tour across central and western Nebraska in September.

"The State Chamber has developed an excellent, broad-based program to educate those wanting to make Nebraska a better place," said Scott Kudrna, a graduate of Class III and vice president of Carson National Bank in Auburn. "Our class and other Leadership Nebraska alumni have seen that what we do can greatly benefit the future of our state."

The 2010 Leadership Nebraska class will begin in February. For more information on the program, contact Executive Director Don Mihovk at the State Chamber office (402-474-4422). To download an application, visit <http://nebraskaleadership.nechamber.com/> ■

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
PO Box 95128, Lincoln, NE 68509-5128
Tel: (402) 474-4422 Fax: (402) 474-5681
<http://www.nechamber.com>
nechamber@nechamber.com
Editor: Jamie Karl



State Chamber Views...

Editorial by Barry L. Kennedy, CAE, IOM
President

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

"Ten Reasons To Care About Health Reform"

The health care debate in Washington consumes the headlines. It is controversial because it affects all of us.

Most Nebraskans can agree some version of reform is necessary. For years, members of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry – 90 percent of who provide health benefits for their employees – have raised concerns about rising health care costs. These expenses hinder the productivity of Nebraska businesses and cripple our competitiveness in the global economy.

Employers have a big stake in health care reform. After all, employers voluntarily pay more than \$500 billion nationally every year for employee health coverage.

State Chamber members want reform that reduces medical costs, improves efficiencies, and raises the quality of health care. But these objectives cannot be achieved under legislation passed by the House of Representatives, nor by the 2,074-page bill recently introduced by Senate leaders.

Here are ten key reasons why employers care about the reform debate – and why the current proposals before Congress are unacceptable:

1.) **More Expensive Insurance.**

Under the House proposal, more employers would be forced to offer more costly coverage with "minimum benefit levels." For example, mental health parity would be required. Prohibited exclusions for pre-existing conditions and mandated coverage for dependents until age 27 would add even more insurance costs. Discounts based on health status of the group would be forbidden, while age discounts in the small-employer market would be limited – doubling rates for employers in some states.

2.) **Additional Mandates.** The House bill would require employers to provide 72.5% of the cost of an "essential benefits package" for full-time employees and 65% for their families; employers would also be required to pay for the coverage of part-time employees.

3.) **Increased Taxes for Employers and Workers.** A 40% excise tax on high-cost insurance plans, as proposed by the Senate bill, would add to the tax burden of employers and workers alike. The House bill would add a 5.4% tax on families and small businesses. Both the House and Senate plans would also impose a new employee payroll deduction for government-run disability/long-term care benefit.

4.) **Less Consumer Control.** Health Saving Accounts (HSAs) and Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) would no longer be eligible for over-the-counter medical purchases, and the tax penalty for non-qualified distributions from HSAs would double.

5.) **New Penalties.** For employers who do not provide the required health insurance benefits described above, the House bill would impose an 8% payroll tax. The Senate bill would levy fines of \$750 per employee.

6.) **More Lawsuits.** Current protections would be lost under the House bill, which would allow legal actions to be filed in state courts against employers with self-funded insurance plans for employees. No medical malpractice reforms are contained in either the House or Senate bill, leaving the high costs of practicing defensive medicine unaddressed.

7.) **More Delays.** Nationally, the shortage of physicians is already at alarming levels, with the current ratio

of primary care doctors to patients at 1:963. If nearly 50 billion insured are added, the ratio becomes a staggering 1:1155, according to estimates.

8.) **Government-Run Health Care.** Currently, America has the best health care in the world, and roughly 80% of Americans say they are "satisfied to very satisfied" with the care they receive. A government takeover of health care would directly impact private insurance and threaten 160 million Americans currently covered. Typically, government-run programs create a one-size-fits-all approach that creates more paperwork and bureaucracy, but do little to benefit patients.

9.) **More Burden on States.** While Nebraska and other states struggle to address the exploding costs of education, state government and welfare programs, current health reform plans would place another unfunded mandate on the states to expand their Medicaid programs.

10.) **No Answer for Soaring Costs.** While the focus of reform should be improving quality and controlling costs, there is little in the current proposals that would reform the delivery system. No end to waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement. No medical malpractice reform. No small business pooling. No incentives for healthier lifestyle choices.

The health reform plans proposed thus far are unsustainable and unaffordable. If enacted into law, these new burdens will mean less job creation and fewer private-sector investments in our economy. They will discourage businesses from hiring lower-wage workers, while adding \$1 trillion or more to the nation's \$12 trillion debt.

The State Chamber commends Nebraska's Senators Ben Nelson and Mike Johanns for continuing to listen to the concerns of our employers – the job providers. There are reasonable steps that can be taken to ensure affordable, high-quality health care. Nebraska's business community remains engaged and willing to work for real reform. ■

Survey: Health Costs Again Top Concerns of State Business Leaders

The State Chamber conducted 31 legislative forums throughout Nebraska during September and October. More than 1,200 people attended this year's State Chamber forums. In addition, more than 35 state senators participated in the presentations.

Approximately a third (33.6%) of business leaders participating in the State Chamber's annual survey listed employer-provided health care benefits as their "greatest concern" in the cost-of-doing-business category. State and local taxes came in second at 24.7%, followed by regulatory compliance costs (12.5%), as well as energy and transportation expenses (11.9%). Also receiving a significant number of votes were workers' compensation premi-

ums, unemployment compensation taxes, and human resources expenses.

Other findings from the State Chamber survey include:

◆ An overwhelming majority – about 92% – of respondents opposed federal "card check" legislation to end the guarantee of secret ballot elections in labor union organizing efforts, while forcing government-imposed binding arbitration on employers and workers.

◆ More than 89% of attendees disapprove of efforts to repeal all state sales tax exemptions. Earlier this year, legislation was introduced in the Nebraska Legislature to impose a sales tax on exempt goods and services, including groceries; medi-

cines; medical supplies; manufacturing components; occasional sales by individuals (including garage sales); farm and ranch inputs; and purchases by non-profit organizations (including churches and schools).

Another recent State Chamber survey found that most respondents said the best way to address rising health costs would be to "allow small businesses to pool their purchasing power to lower insurance premiums." Others mentioned Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), incentives for employees who practice healthy habits, and legal reform. Only 8% of respondents cited government-run plans as their preferred method of lowering health expenses. ■

Plan To Attend The State Chamber's D.C. Fly-In, May 4-5, 2010

The 2010 State Chamber congressional visit to Washington, D.C. is set for May 4-5. As in previous years, participants will have lunch with Nebraska's U.S. senators and congressmen, as well as senior congressional aides, on Capitol Hill.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to attend the traditional Nebraska Breakfast. To help participants stay abreast of the latest policy issues and developments, briefings will be held at the headquarters of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. More details will be available in upcoming issues of *The Executive* and the State Chamber's electronic *News Update*.

With so many issues being debated in Washington, it is important for State Chamber members to maintain contact with their elected representatives. For more details about the State Chamber's congressional visit or to reserve your spot with the State Chamber delegation, contact Jamie Karl at (402) 474-4422. ■

Berringer Elected President of State Chamber Association

James D. Berringer, Vice President-Membership and Marketing for the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry, was recently elected by his peers as president of the Association of State Chamber Professionals (ASCP).

ASCP is a national organization comprised of membership and marketing executives from state chambers of commerce from around the country. The objective of the organization is to educate, train and network to ensure successful state chambers. Berringer

has been on ASCP's board of directors since 2002. At ASCP's annual conference this autumn, the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry was recognized with the ASCP member retention award for its high ranking compared to other states.

Berringer, who started his career with the State Chamber in 1992, said he was grateful for the support he received from his ASCP peers. "I am very honored to be recognized on a national level," he said. ■

2010 State Chamber Schedule

Jan. 6	Nebraska Legislature Convenes
Jan. 12	Public Affairs Council Meetings Begin (Every Tuesday During Legislative Session)
Feb. 4	Annual Meeting & Business Hall of Fame Induction
Feb. 5	Nebraska Chamber of Commerce Executives (NCCE) Annual Meeting
Mar. 19	Hall of Fame Committee & Executive Council Meetings
April 9	NCCE Spring Board Meeting
May 4-5	State Chamber Visit to Washington, D.C.
June 4	Spring Board Meeting
July 13-18	U.S. Chamber Institute for Organizational Management
Sept. & Oct.	State Chamber Legislative Forums
Sept. 10	Fall Board Meeting
Oct. 22	Executive Council Meeting
Nov. 30	Public Affairs Council Meeting
Dec. 3	Winter Board Meeting

State Chamber Annual Meeting Set For February 4, 2010

One of the most prominent events for the Nebraska business community is approaching quickly. On Thursday, February 4, the State Chamber will hold its Annual Meeting and Legislative Caucus at The Cornhusker Marriott in Lincoln. This is the State Chamber's largest event of

the year – and several special guests plan to take part in the upcoming gathering.

Those attending will learn about state and federal legislative issues that could impact 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.

For more information, call the State Chamber at (402) 474-4422 or see the registration form enclosed with this issue of *The Executive*. ■

Annual Meeting Brings Sponsorship Opportunities

Now is the time to start planning for one of the state's most notable business events of the year. The State Chamber is offering sponsorship opportunities to get your business recognized before a large target audience at the Chamber's Annual Meeting on February 4, 2010.

Businesses or organizations interested in sponsoring this important meeting of business and community leaders should contact James Berringer, Vice President-Membership & Marketing, at (402) 474-4422 or jberringer@nechamber.com. ■

Fifty Percent Of State Chamber Dues May Be Deductible

Your 2009 annual dues to the State Chamber may be deductible as an ordinary and necessary business expense.

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry is a registered 501C(6) organization and dedicates a portion of every member's dues to lobbying and business advocacy. Because the Chamber serves as an advocate for the interests of our members – and the association commonly asks policymakers for their support or opposition to legislation – not all of your annual dues are deductible as a business expense.

Members with questions should consult their tax professional. ■

Hertz Card Brings Savings To State Chamber Members

State Chamber members are eligible to earn savings on their next car rental from Hertz. Go to www.Hertz.com and check the box, "I have a discount coupon or other offer." Or call Hertz directly at 1-800-654-3131. Just mention the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry discount number (CDP# 0166707). Then enter the PC# for the discount offer of your choice.

Discounts include up to \$15 off a weekend rental (PC# 107586); \$20 off a weekly rental (PC# 107520); or two free days of NeverLost service (PC# 106282).

Discounts on Hertz car rentals are another benefit of your State Chamber membership. ■

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.

AINSWORTH

Ainsworth Area Chamber of Commerce
Donna Ries

Michael Morledge

Recommended by Tim White, Beaver Creek Marketing

Talent Plus, Inc.

Sandy Maxwell

O'NEILL

Agricultural Services, Inc.
Maurice Koenig

AUBURN

Carson National Bank
Scott Kudrna

GRANT

NKC Railway
Jonathan Carnes

OMAHA

Focht Consulting, LLC
Bradley A. Focht

SOUTH SIOUX CITY

New York Life
Ron Rapp

BEATRICE

O'Neill Insurance, Inc.
Robert J. O'Neill, Jr.

LaVISTA

Headley Financial Group
Terry K. Headley

L&M Construction
Chemicals, Inc.
Greg Schwietz

SPRING HILL, KS

Johnson & Johnson
Susan Zalenski

GRAND ISLAND

Agricultural Services, Inc.
Jerry Bremer

LINCOLN

Executive Travel, Inc.
Steve Glenn

SITEL
Kaylene Taylor

WAUNETA

Maddux Cattle Co.
John Maddux
Recommended by Tonn Ostergard, Crete Carrier Corp.

Credit Management
Services, Inc.

Mom's
Jennifer Hawkins

Two Men And A Truck
Eileen Marrison