

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER 
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
December 2010

State Chamber Innovation Summit Set For January 19

On Jan. 19, 2011, the Nebraska Chamber's Innovation & Technology Council will host a full-day summit dedicated to technology issues at The Cornhusker Marriott in Lincoln. The summit's theme is "Building Nebraska's Economic Future Through Technology."

This gathering of key leaders and industry experts will help existing businesses better understand the value of investing in technology and how best to collaborate with academic researchers to grow their operations. The agenda includes discussion panels, keynote speakers and sector-specific breakout sessions. Governor Dave Heineman is also scheduled to speak.

Cost to attend is \$75, which includes lunch. For more information or to register, call (402) 474-4422 or e-mail csibley@nechamber.com. If your business or organization is interested in sponsoring this event, e-mail jberringer@nechamber.com. ■

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❄️ *Happy Holidays!* ❄️

State Chamber Survey: Strong Opposition to Tax Increases, Concern Over Federal Actions

A new statewide survey conducted by the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry shows that businesses and community leaders overwhelmingly oppose tax increases to address Nebraska's projected budget shortfall. The survey also revealed deep concerns over recent federal laws and legislation proposed in Washington, D.C.

The survey was conducted at the State Chamber legislative forums in 32 locations across the state in September and October. The forums, held in coordination with local chambers of commerce, were attended by nearly 1,300 Nebraskans, including more than 50 state senators and candidates for the Legislature.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of those who participated in the State Chamber's annual survey said they want to see state lawmakers address the budget shortfall by "cutting spending on state agencies and programs." A handful of participants (about 2%) wanted taxes raised on businesses. Even fewer supported higher taxes on individuals. About 6% of participants

said the budget gap should be bridged by reducing state aid to counties, local governments and schools.

The survey also addressed the issue of sales tax exemptions for selected goods and services. The overwhelming majority of participants (87%) opposed eliminating all existing exemptions, as has been suggested by a few Nebraska lawmakers in recent years.

Participants were also surveyed on federal issues and their potential impact on business operations. Five recently-passed laws or proposed bills were listed on the survey; of those, the new health care law solicited the most concern. One-third of participants (33%) said all of the following laws or proposals would impact their operations in an equally negative manner. Among those who listed only one federal issue, the breakdown was as follows:

- ◆ Health care overhaul – 28%
- ◆ Expiration of the current tax cuts – 15%
- ◆ Cap-and-trade legislation – 14%
- ◆ Financial re-regulation – 7%
- ◆ Union "card check" – 5% ■



State Chamber Views...
*Editorial by Barry L. Kennedy, CAE, IOM
 President
 Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry*

'Delivering Business Leadership Through Political Action'

"It is not the critic who counts, nor the man who points out where the strong man stumbles, nor where the doer of deeds could have done them better. On the contrary, the credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose vision is marred by the dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up again and again; who knows the great devotions, the great enthusiasms; who at best know in the end the triumph of high achievement. However, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

-President Theodore Roosevelt

Real business leadership is about recognizing opportunities and taking calculated risks to make a big difference on key issues and important election campaigns.

In the 2010 election cycle and legislative session, the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry was once again actively involved in the legislative and political process. For nearly 100 years now, the State Chamber Board of Directors, with support from our membership, has taken positions on issues that are important to sustaining a strong business economy and allowing the best opportunity for investment growth and job creation by employers.

There are never any guarantees that all of our efforts will always be

successful, but one thing is for sure: if employers stay on the sidelines, our voice will not be heard. It is employer involvement in the legislative and political process that creates a positive impact on the economic growth of our great state.

This past year, we witnessed once again that there are numerous entities willing to get involved through concerted efforts to defeat pro-business candidates in hopes of creating more cost and regulatory burdens for business. If these efforts go unchecked, Nebraska's economy is less likely to grow.

When the Legislature convenes in January, many proposals and decisions will be made that will affect how Nebraska is able to compete in a global economy for many years to come. The

best way to enhance our competitiveness is to be an active participant in the process and elect officials who have a pro-business philosophy.

When you consider the magnitude of the impact that both the state government's executive branch and the legislative branch have on a business' ability to survive and grow, it becomes very understandable how important it is for those same businesses to attempt to impact elections and then keep their elected officials informed regarding how their decisions affect your company operations.

The State Chamber-PAC was quite successful again in 2010 in helping to elect the right people to the State Legislature. As stated in our articles of incorporation, we now must continue to promote, encourage, and protect all aspects and elements of the private free enterprise system. The best lobbyist is always a constituent who stays in touch with his or her elected representative and continues to monitor the actions of that senator. The employer community today faces one of the most challenging environments in the modern era on both economic and regulatory fronts.

With your continued encouragement and support, we will work hard to keep you informed on pending issues and how they impact your business. We will also continue our work to keep Nebraska moving forward by delivering business leadership through political action. ■

Voters OK Amendment 1 for Economic Development

On Election Day, Nebraska voters narrowly approved Amendment 1. The constitutional amendment, supported by the State Chamber, will permit cities to fund economic development projects or programs from more than just local sales or property taxes. This includes funding from other taxes, federal grants, donations and state and federal funds. Despite the change in law, funding projects or programs with these additional sources will still require approval from the majority of voters in a city. ■

Leadership Nebraska Adds 21 New Alumni

Twenty-one Nebraskans were awarded diplomas and commemorative plaques at the State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska commencement ceremony held Oct. 22 in Lincoln. State Chamber Past Chairman and current board member **Gary Warren** spoke to the graduating class and several alumni regarding key leadership qualities. Warren and Leadership Nebraska Chairman **Tom L. Whalen** presented the diplomas to the new graduates. For more information on the Leadership Nebraska program, contact Executive Director Don Mihovk at the State Chamber office (402) 474-4422 or visit <http://nebraskaleadership.nechamber.com/> ■

State Chamber Welcomes New Senators to Lincoln

On the evening of Nov. 8, members of the State Chamber Executive Council and Chamber staff welcomed the Legislature's next freshman class to Lincoln by hosting a reception and dinner for the senators-elect. The event, which is a long-standing tradition in election years, was held at The Cornhusker Marriott and in conjunction with the new senators' orientation session held at the State Capitol. The 2011 legislative session convenes Jan. 5 and will feature six new senators, including the Governor's appointment to Legislative District 17 in northeast Nebraska. ■



Above: State Chamber Vice President-General Counsel Ron Sedlacek and Chairman Richard Reiser meet with District 22 Senator-elect Paul Schumacher of Columbus.



Below: Senators-elect Jim Smith of Papillion and Lydia Brasch of Bancroft visit with State Chamber President Barry Kennedy and Chairman-Elect Jeff Scherer.

Competitiveness Index Ranks Nebraska at No. 6

As reported in the State Chamber's *News Update*, Nebraska is ranked No. 6 overall in the 2010 "State Competitiveness Index" compiled by Suffolk University's Beacon Hill Institute in Boston. The report measures the long-term competitiveness of an area by taking into account 43 indicators in eight sub-indexes. Nebraska was ranked No. 18 for its government and fiscal policy; No. 5 for security; No. 3 for infrastructure; No. 7 for human resources; No. 26 for technology; No. 28 as a business incubator; No. 37 for openness; and No. 13 for environmental policy.

North Dakota topped the list, followed by Colorado and Massachusetts. The lowest-ranked states were Alabama, West Virginia and Mississippi. ■

A Portion of Your State Chamber Dues May Be Tax Deductible

A percentage of your 2010 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 501(c)(6) organization. The State Chamber 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. ■

State Chamber Annual Meeting is February 3, 2011

On Thursday, Feb. 3, 2011, 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. Those attending will learn about key policy issues impacting the business community. Attendees will also get the chance to hear from Nebraska lawmakers, officials and economic development experts, as well as pay tribute to some of the state's top business leaders during the Nebraska Business Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

For more information, call the State Chamber at (402) 474-4422 or see the registration form enclosed with this issue of *The Executive*. If you are interested in sponsoring this event, e-mail jberringer@nechamber.com. ■



Happy Holidays!



2011 State Chamber Schedule

- Jan. 5 Nebraska Legislature Convenes
- Jan. 11 Public Affairs Council Meetings Begin (Every Tuesday during Legislative Session)
- Feb. 3 Annual Meeting & Business Hall of Fame Induction
- Feb. 4 Nebraska Chamber of Commerce Executives (NCCE) Annual Meeting
- April 15 Executive Council Meeting
- May 3-4 Chamber Fly-In to Washington, D.C.
- June 10 Spring Board Meeting (West Point)
- July 18-21 U.S. Chamber Institute for Organizational Management
- Sept.-Oct. State Chamber Legislative Forums
- Sept. 9 Fall Board Meeting
- Oct. 28 Executive Council Meeting
- Nov. 29 Public Affairs Council Meeting
- Dec. 2 Winter Board Meeting

Study of Nebraska's Economic And Industrial Development Efforts Now Online

In September, a new report from the Battelle Institute gave Nebraska mixed marks for its economic and industrial development efforts. Now, the full Battelle report is available online. According to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, this report contains a comprehensive assessment of Nebraska's competitive position and a guide for Nebraska's future economic development actions. See the report at http://www.neded.org/files/DED/Home/Main_Report_NE_Competitive_Advantage_Assessment_v8a.pdf ■

State Chamber's D.C. Fly-In Set For May 3-4, 2011

The 2011 State Chamber visit to Washington, D.C. is set for May 3-4. As in past years, participants will have lunch with Nebraska's U.S. senators and congressmen, as well as their senior aides. 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. For more details about the State Chamber's congressional visit, contact Jamie Karl at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail jkarl@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.

CENTRAL CITY

MidAmerica Speakers Bureau
Barry Carlson

Dell
Dustin Beekman

First Edition Printing
John Pinkerton

LINCOLN

Bizco Technologies
Alissa Ellis

OMAHA
Paul Davis Restoration
Chris Mangan

WAVERLY
Waverly Area Chamber of Commerce
Alexandrea Hill