

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

July/August 2015

Joseph Young Joins Nebraska Chamber Staff

Joseph Young has joined the staff of the State Chamber. He will oversee the efforts initiated by the State Chamber's Vision Nebraska campaign, which aims to grow Nebraska's economy, workforce and overall competitiveness.

Young, 33, brings a broad portfolio of experience to the position. Most recently, he worked in the private sector as manager of government affairs for COX Communications in Omaha. Prior to his service at COX, he was senior director of public policy for the Greater Omaha Chamber, as well as legislative director at the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Young started his duties July 6 at the Nebraska Chamber.

The Vision Nebraska program was established by the Nebraska Chamber in 2011, originally as the "Forging Nebraska's

Future" initiative. Vision Nebraska uses in-depth research to analyze business, economic and community trends. Over the past three-and-a-half years, the program has offered specific recommendations and legislative proposals – from reforming taxes to enhancing the workforce to making government more efficient.

Specifically, Vision Nebraska is focused on improvements within four key pillars of Nebraska life:

- Education and talent supply.
- Competitive business climate.
- Economic development, innovation and technology.
- Infrastructure and population growth.

"Nebraska has made great strides in recent years," said Barry Kennedy, president of the State Chamber. "But if we are to keep moving in the right direction, our leaders must take steps now to ensure

business growth and job opportunities for the next generation, as well as a higher quality of life for every Nebraskan. I'm confident Joseph Young will ensure that Vision Nebraska plays a leading role in helping accomplish this mission." ■



Plan to Attend Aug. 13 Federal Legislative Summit

What happens inside the beltway can dramatically impact your business and bottom line.

Plan to attend the 2015 Federal Legislative Summit set for Thursday, August 13, and get up to speed on the latest developments from D.C. – including taxes, trade and regulations. This unique event is hosted by the Nebraska Chamber, along with the Lincoln and Omaha Chambers.

The event will once again be held at the Strategic Air & Space Museum near Ashland, just north of Exit 426 on I-80.

Doors will open at 7:30 a.m. (CT). The event will begin at 8:30 a.m. sharp and conclude by 1 p.m. A buffet lunch will be served.

Attendees will be treated to:

- The congressional update, presented by Nebraska's U.S. senators and congressmen.
- A panel on state-federal relations featuring Governor Pete Ricketts and Attorney General Doug Peterson.
- Lunch and keynote address by David Azerrad of The Heritage Foundation, who teaches the tenets of the American political tradition to policymakers and political leaders. A popular keynote speaker around the country, Mr. Azerrad gives engaging

talks on topics such as the nation's founding, modern liberalism and conservatism, and the American dream.

If you are a member of the Nebraska Chamber or a local chamber, cost for this special event is \$95 per person, which includes lunch. Cost for non-chamber members is \$125. Space is limited.

To register for this event, please call Charlie Volnek at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail cvolnek@nechamber.com.

Or visit <http://www.nechamber.net/event/2015-federal-legislative-summit>. ■

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State Chamber Views...

*Editorial by Kimberly A. Russel, President & CEO of Bryan Health, Lincoln
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Your Nebraska Chamber at Mid-Year

It is difficult to grasp, but more than half of 2015 is behind us. It has been a busy first half of the year for your Nebraska Chamber.

In late April, 34 State Chamber members participated in our annual Washington, D.C. Fly-In. This was one of the largest groups to have ever participated in the fly-in.

While in Washington, we met with policy experts from the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the U.S. Chamber to receive updates on the latest policy developments. The following topics were discussed at length:

- Recent actions by the National Labor Relations Board;
- EPA regulations and potential economic impact on Nebraska's economy;
- Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) and Export-Import Bank charter reauthorization; and
- The expiring transportation bill and Highway Trust Fund authority.

A highlight of the fly-in was the State Chamber's Congressional Luncheon held at the Capitol Hill Club. The event featured remarks from members of Nebraska's federal delegation, who were able to converse with fly-in participants in a casual environment. Senior staff from the delegation offices also joined the lunch.

Other activities included the traditional Nebraska Breakfast and a reception at the Washington offices of Husch Blackwell, LLP, as well as a private dinner at The Oceanaire, where we were joined by U.S. Senator Ben Sasse.

Nebraska's business community needs to remain vigilant and informed about federal activities. I commend the individuals who made the effort to be part of this year's D.C. Fly-In. And a special thank you to Barry Kennedy and Jamie Karl, who coordinated the event.

Thanks to our Federal Delegation

From my perspective as a health care executive, it seems that health care issues are always a hot topic in Washington, and so I'm in regular contact with our delegation

and members of their staff.

I've been particularly impressed with the availability and accessibility of Nebraska's elected officials. They clearly understand the importance to our state's economy of Nebraska's 89 hospitals, which employ 43,000 people with a combined payroll (including benefits) of \$2.4 billion.

I thank our delegation for their service to Nebraska and their concern for our state's business community. They do listen and it is very important that Nebraska Chamber members convey their concerns along with appreciation for their accomplishments.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at the next scheduled opportunity to meet with our federal representatives – at the Federal Legislative Summit on August 13, 2015, at the Strategic Air and Space Museum near Ashland. ■

State Chamber Announces Fall Forums

The Nebraska Chamber, in cooperation with several local chambers across the state, will present its annual legislative forums beginning in late August.

The Chamber's forums are held every autumn to inform local chamber members on important state legislative activities, and to gather input from the business community on issues of concern.

Members of the State Chamber, as well as members of local chambers of commerce and the news media, are invited to participate. State senators will also be invited to the forums in their district so they can update constituents.

Enclosed in this issue of The Executive is a detailed schedule of the Nebraska Chamber's fall forum tour. (Note: More dates and locations may be added in the future.) ■



Successful Year at the Unicameral

The 2015 Nebraska Legislature adjourned on May 29. More than 660 bills and constitutional amendments were introduced this session. In total, the Nebraska Chamber had positions on and/or monitored more than 250 measures due to their potential impact on employers and the state's business community.

While much of the media coverage of the Legislature focused on divisive social issues, the 90-day session brought numerous and notable achievements for the business community, including State Chamber-supported bills to:

- Modernize the Workers' Compensation system in an employer-friendly manner;
- Allow businesses to exempt a portion of their personal property tax liability;
- Boost skilled labor availability for high-demand career fields;
- Enhance rural economic development by promoting agri-tourism; and
- Expand the amount of credits available under the Angel Investment Tax Credit Act.

The State Chamber worked equally as hard to defeat or amend harmful legislative proposals. In 2015, there were a number of harmful bills in the Legislature. Fortunately, none passed. Among this year's more menacing proposals were bills to:

- Increase the state sales tax rate;
- Raise income tax rates for individuals and corporations;
- Impose severe limits on the local use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF);
- Mandate that private employers provide paid sick leave; and
- Create a local income tax, adding as much as 30% to state income tax liability.

The State Chamber staff thanks all who were involved and took time to contact their senators during the session. ■

Nebraska Chamber Visits Washington D.C.



Nearly three dozen Nebraskans recently took part in the State Chamber's Washington, D.C. Fly-In. (See Nebraska Chamber Chair Kim Russel's editorial in this issue of The Executive to read about the trip's highlights.) The event was sponsored by the Nebraska Public Power District, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, and TransCanada. Pictured (left) are some of this year's fly-in participants following policy briefings at the headquarters of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Also pictured (right) are U.S. Senator Ben Sasse and Nebraska Chamber President Barry Kennedy discussing issues at the Nebraska Breakfast on Capitol Hill. ■



Boost Your Local Workforce with Internships

One of the top concerns voiced by Nebraska employers is the shrinking pool of qualified or skilled workers.

With the nation's lowest jobless rate, the workforce challenge has become an even bigger hurdle.

Fortunately, the Cornhusker State offers a unique program to improve its workforce and retain the state's young people. The Intern Nebraska (InternNE) program –

administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development – provides financial assistance to businesses that are willing to create new internships. Interns obtain valuable experience, while businesses develop future employees.

Research shows that more than 50% of interns go on to become full-time employees at their place of internship. In this way, internships help ensure that your commu-

nity and its businesses continue to grow.

For a description of InternNE's rules and requirements, or to find out how your business can qualify for assistance, contact Rose Baker with DED at (402) 471-1559 or rose.baker@nebraska.gov.

To see what internships are available – or to register a student or business with InternNE – visit www.interne.com. ■

Chamber Board Visits Innovation Campus

In June, the Nebraska Chamber's board of directors met in Lincoln for their spring board meeting and to get a firsthand look at Nebraska Innovation Campus (NIC), located at the former state fair grounds.

State Chamber board members heard from Dr. Ronnie Green, who serves as the Harlan Vice Chancellor of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) and UNL's Interim Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

Dr. Green reported on the progress at NIC, which is a research campus designed to facilitate new and in-depth partner-

ships between the University of Nebraska and the private sector.

When completed, NIC will be a 2.2-million square-foot campus with uniquely designed buildings and amenities to encourage people to create and transform ideas into global innovation. Innovation Campus aspires to be the most sustainable research and technology campus in the United States.

State Chamber board members toured NIC and its ongoing construction following Dr. Green's briefing. For more information about Innovation Campus, visit www.Innovate.unl.edu. ■



Leadership Nebraska Class VIII Begins

The newest class of the State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska held its first session June 17-19, 2015, as the 28 members in the program's Class VIII met at Lied Lodge in Nebraska City.

Founded in 2006, Leadership Nebraska helps identify current and emerging leaders throughout Nebraska, enhances their leadership skills and deepens their knowledge of the challenges and opportunities facing our state.

Included in the orientation activities were:

- "Emergenetics" training led by Angela Galloway to discover class members' individual strengths and build better teams;
- A review of Nebraska's history with Dr. Sara Crook;
- Briefings on Nebraska's key issues in agriculture, education, economic development and health care by industry experts;
- A presentation and discussion on leadership pathways with Matt Harris, CEO of the Arbor Day Foundation;

- A tour of Peru State College, Nebraska's first college.

Industry experts addressing the group included Dr. Steve Joel, Lincoln Public Schools; Dr. Cory Epler, Nebraska Department of Education; State Senator Mike Gloor of Grand Island; Marty Fattig, CEO Nemaha County Hospital; Stan Garbacz, Nebraska Department of Agriculture; Jay Rempe, Nebraska Farm Bureau; Lara Hus-

key, Nebraska Department of Economic Development; and Randy Thelen, Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership.

Class VIII will conduct five more sessions at the following locations: western Nebraska in August; the Omaha metro area in September; Kearney and Grand Island in October; Norfolk in November; and Lincoln in January. A commencement ceremony will be held in February 2016. ■



Are You Still Receiving State Chamber E-Mails?

The Nebraska Chamber makes it a priority to keep in touch with our members frequently. Much of this communication is through our News Update e-mail, as well as our electronic legislative service and weekly State Chamber Legislative Report.

The State Chamber has recently heard from some members who said they were no longer receiving our updates via e-mail.

If you are a State Chamber member who is no longer receiving your News Update or other electronic communications, it's likely due to one of two reasons:

1.) Bulk e-mails are occasionally delivered to your e-mail provider's "junk folder." Sometimes they are even blocked by individual servers. Be sure to check to see if either situation applies to you.

2.) If you have forwarded the State Chamber's News Update or Legislative Report to others and they click the e-mail's "unsubscribe" link, your subscription will be deleted. If you suspect this has occurred, contact Charlie Volnek with the Nebraska Chamber at (402) 474-4422 or cvolnek@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.

BENKELMAN

Valley Farm Industries, LLC
Rod Damrow

Stone Fin Technology

Carl Steffen

OMAHA

Arbor Bank
Kassie Jorgenson

SHELTON

PG Farms, Inc.
Debra Gangwish

LINCOLN

Congo-USA Chamber of Commerce
Laurent Kondohoma

Unite Private Networks, LLC

Stuart D. Howerter II

SEWARD

Hydraulic Equipment Service, Inc.
Mike Sheehan

WAVERLY

Lenco, Inc. – PMC
Ernie Giordano

Dell

Amitabh Bisaria

OGALLALA

Ogallala Comfort Company
Herbert Knudsen