

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
September/October 2018

Federal Legislative Summit Draws Nearly 400

On August 9, nearly 400 chamber members and business leaders attended the tenth annual Federal Legislative Summit – hosted by the Nebraska Chamber, as well as the Lincoln and Greater Omaha Chambers at the Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum near Ashland.

The event featured a congressional update by U.S. Senators Deb Fischer and Ben Sasse, along with U.S. Congressmen Jeff Fortenberry, Adrian Smith and Don Bacon. Utilizing a format similar to the traditional Nebraska Breakfast, which is held on Capitol Hill, the congressional delegation briefed summit attendees on key policy issues and committee work in areas such as trade, workforce development, defense spending, international relations and immigration.

Following the congressional update, John Kirchner with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce recognized all five members of Nebraska's federal delegation with the U.S. Chamber's Spirit of Enterprise Award, which honors lawmakers for their support of pro-jobs, pro-growth policies based on scored votes taken in Congress.

Later in the morning, Nebraska Chamber President Bryan Slone and former State Senator Jim Smith discussed the need



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for and process behind Blueprint Nebraska – the new economic development initiative that seeks to establish a comprehensive plan to stimulate the state's economy while building on current strengths. Smith now serves as executive director of Blueprint Nebraska.

The summit's keynote speaker was Neil Bradley, executive vice president and chief policy officer of the U.S. Chamber. Bradley addressed major federal policy items and chamber priorities, such as trade agreements, tax reform, regulatory relief, data security, infrastructure and energy. ■

Nebraska Manufacturing Summit Is Oct. 30

The Nebraska Chamber is working with the governor's office to once again recognize October as "Manufacturing Month" in Nebraska to spotlight the sector that employs nearly 100,000 Nebraskans.

As part of October's salute to manufacturing, the Nebraska Chamber will host its 2018 Manufacturing Summit on Tuesday, October 30, at the La Vista Conference Center from 8:30 a.m. until 12:45 p.m. The event is free of charge, but registration is required.

The State Chamber's Manufacturing Summit is intended for those involved in

manufacturing and related sectors, and is sponsored by RSM – a leading provider of audit, tax and consulting services. A free lunch will be provided to registered attendees.

In addition to a morning packed with informative speakers, Governor Pete Ricketts will present the 2018 Nebraska Manufacturer of the Year Award.

For the summit highlights and to register, call Charlie Volnek at 402-474-4422. Or visit our website at <https://www.nechamber.net/event/2018-nebraska-chamber-manufacturing-summit>. ■

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State Chamber Views...

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Tackling Nebraska's Workforce Challenge

"Labor shortage is single biggest problem for small biz."

"Lack of skilled labor leading to housing shortages."

"Workers are the focus as states battle for business."

These recent headlines reflect what is quickly becoming the number one challenge for Nebraska's business community. The shortage of qualified, skilled workers has become an especially urgent issue since the end of the last national recession and is clearly hindering our ability to grow as a state.

In July, financial network CNBC reported that U.S. employers "are clamoring for talent." That's why for the last four years, workforce has been the most heavily weighted category in CNBC's "Best States for Business" study. States and communities are going to extremes – offering grants and sign-up bonuses – to recruit workers and close the skills gap.

Recent statewide surveys conducted by the Nebraska Chamber have revealed that more than half of respondents have had difficulty in hiring qualified employees over a 12-month period. More than 80.4% of respondents said their community faced a workforce shortage. And roughly 25% of respondents said the lack of available labor or skilled employees was the key issue limiting their business' growth.

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Complicating matters is Nebraska's low unemployment rate, which now hovers under 3.0%. At the same time, every year Nebraska is losing a net 2,000 college graduates who are age 25 and older to out-migration, according to one estimate. Nebraska's businesses are poised to grow

further but are bumping up against the realities of the workforce shortage.

There is no quick fix to the workforce challenge. Solving it will require a comprehensive and thoughtful set of solutions from both the public and private sectors.

The first place to start is working to keep our talented people here in Nebraska. In recent years, Nebraska has laid a solid foundation to grow our workforce by placing more focus on the skills needed by employers, as well as more emphasis on available housing in communities outside of Omaha and Lincoln. Some examples include:

▼ **InternNE:** The Nebraska Chamber has been a strong advocate of the state-administered internship program, which was created in 2011 to give 2- and 4-year college students more work opportunities in the state. Chamber-supported legislation (LB1093) expanded the program to 11th and 12th graders. This creative program matches students with employers in high-growth, high-demand industries. It's estimated that nearly 50% of interns go on to become full-time employees at their places of internship. If you're an employer, or a student looking for a paid internship, go to InternNE.com to register online.

▼ **Workforce Housing:** Over the past three years, the Nebraska Legislature has passed and the governor has signed important bills (LB1059, LB518 and LB496) to address Nebraska's workforce housing shortages, which hinder hiring in most of Nebraska's communities. By being able to dedicate more local and state funds to incent the private sector to build new homes, Nebraska communities certainly have more tools to address their housing needs than they did just a few short years ago.

▼ **Career Academies:** Perhaps the most

positive trend in workforce development in recent years is the establishment of career academies and vocational training for high school students, such as Grand Island's Career Pathways Institute. These academies produce a pipeline of skilled high school graduates who can go to work immediately in well-paying career fields such as manufacturing, IT, automotive repair, health care, construction and drafting.

▼ **Job Training:** Nebraska offers programs to help businesses train and develop workers, using the assistance of local community colleges. Programs like the Nebraska Customized Job Training Advantage helps ensure the state's workforce is prepared for rapidly changing technology and industries.

▼ **Dream It! Do It!:** Nebraska is one of 30 states with "Dream It! Do It!" programs. This private-sector initiative educates high schoolers about careers in advanced and high-tech manufacturing, and is working to close the nation's skills gap by encouraging more focus on science, technology, math and engineering.

▼ **Nebraska's Developing Youth Talent Initiative:** The Developing Youth Talent Initiative (DYTI) creates collaboration between Nebraska businesses and public schools. This state grant program connects young Nebraskans in 7th and 8th grades to learning opportunities in the Manufacturing and IT industries can play an important role in their decision to build their careers in our state. Employers who receive grants partner with schools to engage students in participation of hands-on career exploration and relevant workplace-learning opportunities. Businesses interested in applying for DYTI grants should call the Nebraska Department of Economic Development at 402-840-0831.

Despite these efforts, Nebraska has much more work to do and will need to take additional bold steps to ensure an adequate workforce for the future. Today's global economy demands a consistently high level of labor quality and quantity.

Time is ticking as every state in America competes against 49 others. In the upcoming months, the Nebraska Chamber will be working even more closely with business leaders across the state, as well as policymakers and educational leaders to help solve our workforce challenges. ■

State Chamber's Legislative Forums Now Underway

Nebraska Chamber staff members are traveling across the state for the Chamber's annual fall legislative forums. The Nebraska Chamber will visit a total of 30 communities through late October.

For more than 30 years, the State Chamber has conducted these legislative forums in cooperation with local chambers of commerce across Nebraska. The forums allow the Chamber to gather input from business leaders on important issues, while sharing information about recent state legislation and developments impacting the business community.

This year's State Chamber presentation will examine key business-related bills in the 2018 session of the Nebraska Legislature, as well as important issues awaiting state lawmakers in 2019.

A significant portion of the forum will be dedicated to Blueprint Nebraska, a recently formed organization that is spearheading a statewide economic development initiative. Blueprint Nebraska seeks to establish a comprehensive, long-term plan to stimulate the state's economic growth, competitiveness and prosperity, while building on current strengths. (Learn more by visiting Blueprint-Nebraska.org.)

All local chamber of commerce members, as well as members of the news media, are encouraged to attend. Elected leaders are also invited.

Included in this issue is the 2018 schedule of the Nebraska Chamber's fall forum tour. If you have questions regarding the forums, please contact the local chamber of commerce hosting the legislative forum nearest you. ■

Leadership Travels West

In mid-August, the State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska Class XI conducted sessions in western and west-central Nebraska to learn more about agriculture, health care, education and economic development.

State Senator Matt Williams of Gothenburg talked with the group about leadership and his core values.

Highlights of the tour included studying water use for agriculture at the Monsanto

Water Utilization Center in Gothenburg and hydro power at Lake McConaughy/Kingsley Dam near Ogallala. The group was briefed on economic development efforts in Scottsbluff/Gering by Starr Lehl, with the City of Scottsbluff and talked about rural health care issues at Great Plains Health in North Platte.

The class also toured Union Pacific's Bailey Yard, learned about public power and electricity generation at NPPD's Gerald

Gentleman Station in Sutherland, and visited Scotts Bluff National Monument, Chimney Rock and the Legacy of the Plains Museum.

The group toured Western Sugar Cooperative in Scottsbluff and learned about tourism in Nebraska with Karen Kollars, Nebraska Tourism Commission.

The next session will be September 12-14 in the Omaha metro area. ■



Save The Date: Manufacturing Day Set For Oct. 5

October 5 is this year's official date for Manufacturing Day – the annual celebration of modern manufacturing meant to inspire the next generation.

Manufacturing Institute Executive Director Carolyn Lee says, "Too often, the very talented younger Americans who could make the most of (manufacturing) careers either don't know they exist or have the wrong idea about what a career in modern manufacturing might look like."

While Manufacturing Day is October 5, companies and

organizations should plan their events on the date in October that works best for them. Events can be registered on the Manufacturing Day website at www.mfgday.com. Events can be marked as public or invitation-only.

Manufacturers in Nebraska are encouraged to open their doors to the public and elected officials to share their stories and showcase their facilities. For help with publicizing your Manufacturing Day/Month event, visit www.mfgday.com. ■

Available Now: Nebraska Human Resources Library

Good HR guidance can help employers steer clear of added risk and costly lawsuits. Fortunately, the latest version of the Nebraska Human Resources Compliance Library is now available. This comprehensive guide has helped employers and HR personnel find answers quickly – from pre-hire to termination.

Written by two top Nebraska attorneys at the Knudsen Law Firm, the Nebraska HR Library features a hard copy book and online access to the Nebraska HR Manual; a comprehensive set of policies and sample form templates to help you write/rewrite your HR manual and employee handbook; and much more.

When laws or regulations change, the library is updated and you'll receive an e-mail notice so you can easily determine what, if any, changes you need to make.

As a chamber member, use coupon code "nemem18" at checkout to receive your 20% discount. Go to www.hrsimple.com/shop/nebraska/HR_Library for more information or to order. ■

Nebraska Chamber PAC Prepares For General Election

The November 6 general election is approaching quickly. This election could significantly affect Nebraska's Legislature – for better or worse.

Here are some of the dynamics surrounding the 2018 election :

- Fourteen current state senators face re-election.
- Two appointees (Senators Thibodeau and Clements) are also running.
- Six senators are term-limited and another two are not running.
- At least nine new senators (18% of the Unicameral) will be elected this year, perhaps more.
- Since 2006, nearly 100 new senators have entered the Legislature – a body of 49 seats.

As Nebraska's term limits continue to take a toll, 2018 has been another busy year for the State Chamber's Political Action

Committee (PAC). The State Chamber PAC's mission is simple: To elect business-minded representatives to the Legislature. It is the Nebraska business community's best defense against anti-business forces.

In the 2016 election cycle, PACs organized by organizations mostly opposed to Chamber policies spent almost \$1 million on legislative races. And almost all of those dollars were sent to candidates opposed by the Chamber and other business groups.

The State Chamber PAC is serious about getting more pro-business candidates elected. That's why we need your help today. To help ensure strong support for pro-business legislative candidates, you can contribute to the State Chamber PAC by calling 402-474-4422 or e-mailing awilliams@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.

HUMBOLDT

Lewis Implement Company
Gary Lewis

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Printing Industry Midwest
Debra L. Hurston, CAE MBA

OMAHA

The Alliance Group
Michael Mapes

SEWARD

Concordia University – Nebraska
Brian Friedrich

LINCOLN

Hausmann Construction Inc.
Stanton Beeder
*Recommended by: Robert
Schafer, Smith Schafer Davis
Gaertig LLC*

NEBRASKA CITY

J.J. Palmtag, Inc.
Janet Palmtag

Paxton Advisors, LLC

Steve Martin

ORD

**Valley County Economic
Development**
Trevor Lee

ST. LOUIS, MO

Boeing Company
Charles J. Poplstein