

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
January/February 2012

State Chamber Board Approves 2012 Legislative Priorities, Leaders

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry has announced its top legislative priorities for 2012. The priorities were approved by the State Chamber's board of directors at its December meeting. The Chamber's major legislative priorities for the new year include:

- **Tax Reform & Economic Development Incentives.** To grow Nebraska's economy and encourage more investment in job-creating businesses, the State Chamber believes the state tax climate must become more attractive. Major tax reform must be accomplished to reduce the overall tax burden on all taxpayers. The Chamber strongly supports the continued enhancement of Nebraska's performance-based economic development incentives.

- **Workforce Development.** The State Chamber supports efforts to

expand Nebraska's workforce and skilled labor pool, including customized job training opportunities and the Department of Economic Development's public/private partnership programs.

- **More Efficient Government.** The State Chamber supports efforts by the Governor and the Legislature to restrain or reduce state and local government spending, as well as proposals to provide for more focused, efficient government programs.

- **Sales Taxation.** The State Chamber continues to oppose further broadening of Nebraska's sales and use taxes. The Chamber will oppose efforts that would tax more business-to-business services and business inputs, or repeal current sales tax exemptions needed by businesses to remain competitive and viable.

(Continued on page 4)



At the December State Chamber Board of Directors meeting, 2012 State Chamber Chairman Steve Ford, CEO of Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. in Lincoln, discusses business issues with Lori Hogan, co-founder and secretary of Home Instead Senior Care, Omaha.

Register Now For State Chamber's Annual Meeting

On Thursday, Feb. 2, the State Chamber will hold its Annual Meeting and Legislative Caucus at The Cornhusker Marriott Hotel in Lincoln. This is the State Chamber's largest event of the year. Those attending will learn about important legislative issues impacting the business community. Attendees will also get the chance to hear from Nebraska policymakers, officials and economic development experts, as well as pay tribute to some of the state's top business leaders during the evening's Nebraska Business Hall of Fame induction ceremony. To register, use the enclosed registration form, call (402) 474-4422 or e-mail Carol Sibley at csibley@nechamber.com. ■

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State Chamber Views...

Editorial by Barry L. Kennedy, CAE, IOM

President

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

'Ensuring the Chamber's Relevance for the Next Century'

As we settle into 2012, I wanted to take a few minutes to reflect on the State Chamber's first century. It was 100 years ago that a group of 42 Nebraska manufacturers gathered to form the State Chamber's predecessor organization, The Nebraska Manufacturers Association. Passing by-laws, setting a legislative agenda and listening to political leaders were all on the program of these visionary business leaders who understood they could have a more dynamic impact on Nebraska's economy by joining forces and working together than any of them could standing alone.

What did Nebraska look like and what were the primary issues in the early part of the 20th century? Back then, our state was just over 1 million in population. Today, we are striving to attain the 2 million mark. Nebraska was predominately an agrarian society. Today, agri-business continues to play an extremely important roll in our economy, but we are much more diversified.

The first wooden automobile bridge across the Missouri river had just been completed in 1911. Today, infrastructure needs and highway funding, now coupled with technological advances, continue to be major issues in our state as we position ourselves to take advantage of our central location in the country.

A century ago, a balloon school had recently been added to the Signal Corps at Fort Omaha. Today, the Department of Defense is building a new headquarters in Sarpy County where the U.S. Strategic Command will be carrying out its nuclear, space and cyberspace missions. Taxes and labor issues were also on the agenda of the new association just as they are today, but in totally different contexts.

There were many organizations

formed from 1900 until 1920. A number of those lasted only a few years and then folded. Many others lasted somewhat longer but faded over the years. Some have survived into the 21st century and continue to have a positive impact for their constituencies. Because of strong volunteer leadership, your State Chamber has survived two world wars, the Great Depression and numerous other challenges to impact Nebraska's economy in positive ways.

Two recent books capsulize the reasons why some groups have prospered while others have ceased to exist. In a book called "Bowling Alone," Dr. Robert Putnam evaluates several national organizations that have simply not been able to adapt to the changing priorities of their member bases. Because of their inability or unwillingness to adapt, these organizations have either shrunk to a fraction of their former size or gone out of business completely. In another book titled "Race to Relevance," authors Harrison Coerver and Mary Byers point out the challenges that organizations have today in keeping up with generational changes, technology advances and changing expectations.

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry has been extremely fortunate to have a progression of visionary leadership throughout the years. The name of the organization has been changed several times. As new issues arise that are important to Nebraska's economic growth, we have also adjusted our focus and adapted to our members' interests.

Nearly a hundred years ago, our organization's chairman, C.L. Aller, noted the importance of Nebraska's manufacturers and their impact on the WWI effort. Recent chairmen have exalted the Chamber's efforts on economic development, tax competi-

tiveness and federal issues that affect our members' ability to grow their business activity and employ more of our citizens.

It is interesting to note that one of this year's Business Hall of Fame inductees was born in 1912. Hal Lainsen of Hastings served as chairman of Associated Industries in 1948-49. Hal and others—like Bob Daugherty, Lew Harris, Virgil Eihusen, Ken Wortman, George Russell, Roy Smith (and I could probably name a few hundred other past business leaders here)—understood that to have a positive impact you must make a commitment. Growing and diversifying Nebraska's economy is not a spectator sport. Our business leaders need to be involved on the front lines of structural changes that need to happen from time to time. The State Chamber continues to grow its influence because of a strong, member-driven philosophy.

The State Chamber has thrived for 100 years. We can claim many successes over those years; however, simple success is not enough in today's world. We must be "significant" to survive the next 100 years. We will do that by remembering the core mission that the organization was founded on and focusing on ideas and issues that will stimulate long-term economic opportunities, create jobs and grow our state's population. ■

Send Us Your E-Mail Address

If you have recently changed your e-mail address or have not yet provided it to us, please take a second and send it to the State Chamber by e-mailing Kay Koch at kkoch@nechamber.com or call (402) 474-4422.

By providing your e-mail address, you will get the most from your State Chamber membership. During the Unicameral's legislative session, members receive the State Chamber's weekly Legislative Report, written by our staff regarding new legislation and recent action that could impact Nebraska's business community. Members also receive updates on committee hearings and the status of all legislative bills. In addition, Chamber members will be e-mailed the State Chamber's News Update, a summary of state and national news on events and trends that affect Nebraska's economy and the overall business climate. ■

More Than 100 Attend Innovation & Technology Summit

In December, more than 100 Nebraskans attended the State Chamber's Innovation & Technology Summit held in Kearney. Participants learned more new details about the state's latest initiatives designed to build Nebraska's innovation economy, while hearing from more than a dozen Nebraska business leaders who are utilizing progressive practices and the latest technology to compete in the global marketplace.

Speakers included Nebraska business experts such as Paul Eureka, CEO of Xpanxion in Kearney; Dr. James Linder, president of the University Technology Development Corp. in Omaha; Dr. Terri Wasmoen, senior director of biological research for Intervet/Merck Animal Health in Elkhorn; Gloria Thesenvitz, president of Nova Tech in Grand Island; Tom Henning, president of Cash-Wa Distributing in Kearney; Dr. Tim Burkink, dean of UNK's College of Business and Technology in Kearney; and Dennis J. Schulz, CEO of Mid-Continent Technologies in Kearney. State Senators Galen Hadley of Kearney and Ken Schilz of Ogallala spoke about their efforts on recently enacted legislation to grow Nebraska's innovation economy. The keynote address was delivered by Kenneth Bachulis, executive vice president of WebEquity Solutions, headquartered in Omaha.

The Chamber summit also spotlighted Nebraska's new development tools aimed at creating more opportu-

nity and jobs in the innovation economy. Gary Hamer from Nebraska's Department of Economic Development briefed participants on the state's Innovation and Talent Initiative, including a statewide internship program designed to retain more of our educated young people.

The summit concluded with insights from some of central Nebraska's most prominent businesses on how they have utilized innovative practices to become leaders in their field. Richard Baier, executive vice president of the State Chamber's Forging Nebraska's Future initiative, provided an overview of the State Chamber's comprehensive effort to address Nebraska's current challenges and capitalize on new opportunities.

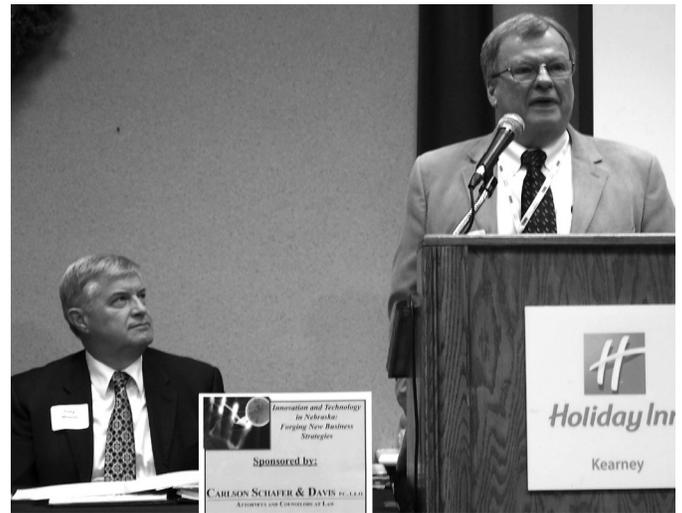
KHAS TV in Hastings reported that Gary Warren, chairman of the State Chamber's Innovation and Technology Council, said Nebraska businesses and higher education institutions are doing some very exciting things. Warren noted, "One of the things Nebraska doesn't do as well is brag about those ideas and how they're turned into businesses. But we think we have that potential to be that silicon valley, if you

will, of the prairie.

The summit was sponsored by Carlson, Schafer & Davis law firm in Beatrice ■

Top Photo: Hamilton Telecommunications' President Gary Warren (left), chairman of the State Chamber's Innovation and Technology Council, hears from State Chamber Vice Chairman Thomas Henning, president of Cash-Wa Distributing in Kearney. Henning spoke at the State Chamber's Innovation and Technology Summit held in Kearney on Dec. 7.

Bottom: State Senator Galen Hadley of Kearney addresses the participants of the Chamber's Innovation Summit. Senator Hadley was the sponsor of LB387, Nebraska's Business Innovation Act of 2011.



Business Hall of Fame Nominations Due March 15

March 15 is the deadline for nominating the next class of inductees to the Nebraska Business Hall of Fame. Nominees can be living or deceased individuals who have added to the prestige and growth of Nebraska's business community. A nominee may be from a large or small business. The key qualification is that the individual has made significant contributions to Nebraska's private enterprise system.

This year, five new inductees to the Nebraska Business Hall of

Fame will be announced the evening of February 2. They are: **John Gottschalk** of Omaha, Philanthropist; **Hal Lainson** (deceased) of Hastings, Dutton-Lainson Co.; **Bob and Cynthia Milligan** of Lincoln, MI Industries; and **Eldon N. Roth** of Dakota Dunes, S.D., BPI Technology, Inc.

For more information on nominating individuals for the Nebraska Business Hall of Fame, call the State Chamber at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail Don Mihovk at dmihovk@nechamber.com. ■

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- **Health Care Mandates.** The State Chamber strongly opposes any new mandates that would require group health plans to cover specific diseases, illnesses, drugs or therapies that exceed federal requirements. Such mandates make employer-provided plans unaffordable and less available to employers and employees. The Chamber supports efforts to allow Nebraska to control its own health care insurance future via a state-run insurance exchange.

In addition to approving the Chamber's major legislative objectives, the State Chamber board also confirmed the election of the association's leadership for 2012. **Steve Ford**, CEO of Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. in Lincoln, will serve as chairman. Ford will officially begin his duties Feb. 2 at the State Chamber's Annual Meeting in Lincoln. He succeeds **Jeff Scherer**, CFO of Smeal Fire Apparatus Co. in Snyder, as the Chamber's top elected officer. **Brian Hamilton**, president of Beardmore Chevrolet, Inc. in Bellevue, will serve as chairman-elect. ■

Attend Small Business Day At The Capitol, February 22

If you are a small business owner, consider spending the morning of Feb. 22 at the State Capitol to learn about the key legislative issues impacting small businesses. The 2012 Small Business Day will feature State Chamber President Barry Kennedy and NFIB State Director Bob Hallstrom, who will provide insider information and summaries of legislation that the associations are following.

From taxes to health care to economic development, this is your opportunity to ask your state senators

about the important issues. Highlights will include a visit from Gov. Dave Heineman and several leaders of the Legislature. The event is presented by the NFIB/Nebraska, the State Chamber, the Lincoln and Omaha Chambers of Commerce, and the Lincoln Independent Business Association. Cost for the program is \$15, which covers materials and lunch. For more information or a registration form, call (402) 474-3570 or e-mail bob.hallstrom@nebankers.org. ■

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.

ELKHORN

Dough Pac, Inc.
Greg Nolan

FALLS CITY

Julie D. Bauman, CPA, P.C.
Julie D. Bauman

Recommended by: Dan Vodvarka,
Nebraska Society of Certified Public
Accountants

GRAND ISLAND

Nova Tech, Inc.
Gloria J. Thesenvitz

HASTINGS

A-1 Fiberglass, Inc.
Dan Gernstein

KEARNEY

Eaton Corporation
Wayne Brantley

Recommended by: Tom Henning,
Cash-Wa Distributing Co.

SCORR Marketing

Phil Kozera

LAUREL

Laurel BioComposite, LLC
Tim Bearnes

LINCOLN

National Research Corporation
Kevin Karas

OMAHA

HRC, Inc.
Richard Hensel

N.P. Dodge Company
Leslie Delperdang

OXFORD

Furnas/Harlan Partnership
Kim Winter