

# THE EXECUTIVE

## THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

July/August 2016

### Nebraska Chamber Talks Business In D.C.

The Nebraska Chamber's annual Washington, D.C. Fly-In was held May 18 and 19.

This year, 45 State Chamber members participated in the event, including four State Chamber board members and key representatives from the Greater Omaha, Lincoln, Columbus and Grand Island Chambers. Speaker of the Legislature Galen Hadley and Papillion Senator Jim Smith, who chairs the Legislature's Transportation and Telecommunications Committee, also attended.

The Chamber Fly-In commenced with the traditional Nebraska Breakfast on Capitol Hill, where participants heard from all five members of the congressional delegation, while meeting with other Nebraskans visiting the nation's capital. The group then visited the headquarters of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) to be briefed on the major policy issues before Congress.

One of the highlights of the fly-in took place at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building – adjacent to the White House – where Nebraska Chamber members met with administration officials, including Nebraskanative Ambassador Darci Vetter, chief

agricultural negotiator for the U.S., to discuss the latest developments surrounding the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement.

On May 19, participants started the day with policy and political briefings at the U.S. Chamber's headquarters. Included was an Election 2016 update from Rob Engstrom, the U.S. Chamber's senior vice president and national political director.

The group then returned to Capitol Hill for the State Chamber's annual luncheon, where all five members of the Nebraska congressional delegation addressed specific issues of concern to the business community. Following the luncheon, Senator Fischer's staff conducted a tour of the U.S. Capitol building for those who wanted to see firsthand the historical highlights throughout the structure.

During the Chamber Fly-In, the following issues were discussed often:

- Department of Labor rules regarding overtime pay and OSHA's proposal to publicly report workplace injuries;
- EPA regulations impacting the energy and ag sectors;
- Transportation infrastructure funding; and
- A potential tax reform package in 2017.

The Chamber's D.C. Fly-In was sponsored by Blue Cross, Blue Shield of Nebraska; Nebraska Public Power District; HDR, Inc.; Novozymes; Behlen Mfg. Co.; and Home Instead Senior Care. ■



State Chamber Chairman Steve Martin presents Sen. Deb Fischer with the U.S. Chamber's Spirit of Enterprise Award in recognition of her votes to support pro-growth policies.



Many of the fly-in participants took part in the issues briefing at the U.S. Chamber.

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## State Chamber Views...

Guest Editorial by Steven S. Martin

CEO, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Nebraska

Chairman, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

# My First Six Months As State Chamber Chairman

The year is moving along quickly and my term as chairman of the Nebraska Chamber is more than half complete. I am learning a great deal from this experience and have been afforded an opportunity to work with some outstanding business leaders from across the state.

I have always believed that business leaders must be cognizant of the issues that are impacting every sector of the economy. Issues that may not impact one sector today could be a concern for that sector tomorrow. This is why the State Chamber is so valuable to all of us.

Throughout the first half of this year, it has been a pleasure to learn more about the diversity of business and industry in our great state. Through our membership and staff we have a powerful voice in the legislative and executive branches of state government. We speak for both large and small businesses when it comes to keeping a pro-business environment that provides a level, competitive playing field for all.

I am pleased to see how effective the State Chamber's network and staff have been at bringing the voice of the Nebraska's business community forward to stop governmental practices that inhibit growth and economic prosperity.

## Success at the Legislature

When the Nebraska Legislature is in session, the State Chamber's primary mission is to represent the business community on major issues of interest. A recent survey revealed that the Chamber's legislative activity and updates were very important to 90% of our members – and more than 97% of members agree the Chamber is effective in representing the state's business community

As chairman, I was proud to see our Chamber have a successful 2016

session at the Nebraska Legislature. The 60-day session brought some notable achievements, including the passage of State Chamber-supported bills such as:

- LB960 to establish a state infrastructure bank to accelerate completion of roughly 150 unfinished miles of four-lane expressways. Many Chamber members played a key role in the advancement of this plan. By dedicating \$450 million over 17 years, this legislation helps keep Nebraska on the cutting edge of transportation infrastructure funding.
- LB1022, which included language suggested by Chamber staff to extend Nebraska's business incentive programs, including the Nebraska Advantage Act, by an additional three years compared to previous law. This was an important step to ensure more certainty for businesses and to continue the promotion of Nebraska's incentives.
- LB1093, which contained recommendations advanced by the Chamber to enhance Nebraska's unique internship program by eliminating Intern NE's residency requirement, while also allowing high school students in the 11th or 12th grade to participate. Established in 2011 and administered by the state, Intern NE provides financial assistance to businesses that create new internship positions, thereby addressing our workforce challenge.

The Nebraska Chamber's success at the Legislature was spotlighted in this year's "How They Voted" scorecard, which examined key votes cast by all state senators. Of the 49 senators in the Legislature, 37 received a score of 86% or better on the 2016 scorecard.

Nineteen lawmakers (nearly 40% of senators) received a perfect score.

## Washington D.C. Visit

The State Chamber's May 18-19 visit to Washington, D.C. provided members with a firsthand look at the federal issues facing employers and businesses of all sizes. This year, 45 State Chamber members participated in the D.C. Fly-In, including key representatives from the Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island and Columbus Chambers.

During our visits to Capitol Hill, we enjoyed ample time with both Nebraska's senators and all three House members, discussing the concerns facing our state's business community. Nebraska is incredibly fortunate to have such accessible, responsive federal representatives.

One fly-in highlight was our meeting with administration officials -- including Nebraska-native Ambassador Darci Vetter, chief agricultural negotiator for the U.S. -- to discuss the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement. During this meeting, we were reminded that 95% of the world's consumers live outside our borders, representing nearly limitless expansion opportunities for U.S. businesses and entrepreneurs -- an important fact for an agricultural and manufacturing state like Nebraska.

We also received political and policy briefings from experts at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers, the State Chamber's national affiliates. Key topics included tax reform, regulatory action, health care and trade.

With a divided government and a presidential election just months away, the business community is facing tremendous uncertainty. You can be assured that the Nebraska Chamber staff is working with our national affiliates to address the concerns of our members.

Let me take this opportunity to say thank you for your membership to the Nebraska Chamber. Our long history and record of success would not be possible without members like you. The Chamber is counting on the continued support and involvement of Nebraska's business community to make our "good life" even better.

I look forward to serving you during the remainder of 2016. Given the national political playing field before us, we have a lot to prepare for in 2017. ■

## State Chamber Announces Schedule For Legislative Forums

Autumn may seem a long way away, but the Nebraska Chamber is already preparing for its fall legislative forums.

For more than three decades, the Nebraska Chamber – in coordination with local chambers across the state – has held annual forums to inform chamber members on 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 and candidates for the Legislature will also be invited to the forums.

Enclosed in this issue of *The Executive* is the 2016 schedule of the Nebraska Chamber's fall forum tour. (Note: More dates and locations may be added in the future.)

For details online, please visit [NEChamber.net](http://NEChamber.net) and click on the "events" tab on the top menu. Forums are listed on the Chamber's events calendar, beginning in August and running through November. If you would like to attend the forum in your community, contact information is listed with the calendar announcement or call (402) 474-4422 for more information. ■

## Register Today For Aug. 4 Federal Legislative Summit

Whether it is taxes, trade or regulations, what happens in Washington, D.C. can dramatically impact Nebraska employers and employees.

Plan to attend the eighth annual Federal Legislative Summit on Thursday, Aug. 4, 2016. Hosted by the Nebraska Chamber, along with the Lincoln and Omaha Chambers of Commerce, the summit will again be held at the Strategic Air Command (SAC) & Aerospace Museum, located immediately north of Interstate 80 at Exit 426, near Ashland.

This year, attendees will be treated to a congressional update presented by Nebraska's U.S. senators and congressmen; a special presentation by keynote speaker Jay Timmons, president and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM); an in-depth look at Nebraska's workforce and population trends; and an update on efforts to retain and grow Offutt Air Force Base, which brings Nebraska an estimated \$1.3 billion in annual economic activity.

To register, call (402) 474-4422 or e-mail [cvolnek@nechamber.com](mailto:cvolnek@nechamber.com). Or register online at <https://www.nechamber.net/event/2016-federal-legislative-summit>. ■



## Still Receiving 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 – both of which are e-mailed to members when the Legislature is in session.

If you are a State Chamber member who is no longer receiving the News Update or other electronic communications, it is 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](mailto:cvolnek@nechamber.com).

We value your input. If you have suggestions on how the Chamber can improve its communications, please email Jamie Karl at [jkarl@nechamber.com](mailto:jkarl@nechamber.com). ■

## Omaha, Lincoln Ranked Among Best Cities For Young Job Seekers

Not all American cities are created equally. That is especially true when it comes to career opportunities and quality of life for recent college graduates. In 2016, Nebraska's two largest communities have received high marks in both categories, as more young people realize that Nebraska provides superior opportunities to build a financial life and family.

Financial website WalletHub.com recently compared the 150 largest U.S. cities to determine which were best to start a career. The publication examined 17 key metrics to analyze each city's job market, as well as the attractiveness of their social scenes and other factors important to job-market entrants. Both Omaha (No. 11) and Lincoln (No. 19) were ranked in the study's top 20 – and both were recognized for their high quality of life.

In another 2016 study, WalletHub ranked the best U.S. cities for jobs. Once again, of the 150 cities examined, both Omaha (No. 10) and Lincoln (No. 18) received high marks. In the study's "socio-economic" analysis – which included cost of living, commute time to work, job benefits, housing affordability, crime rates, and safety – Lincoln was ranked No. 3 and Omaha No. 6 of the 150 cities considered. ■

# Leadership Nebraska's Class IX Begins

In mid-June, 30 Nebraskans began their journey as a part of the State Chamber's leadership program and its new class for 2016.

Leadership Nebraska's Class IX held its orientation at the Lied Lodge in Nebraska City. This year's class is the largest in the program's 10-year history.

Orientation activities included:

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

Industry experts addressing the group included Dr. Cory Epler with Nebraska Department of Education; State Sena-

tor Adam Morfeld, District 46; David Brown with the Greater Omaha Chamber; Dan Curran with Nebraska Department of Economic Development; Mat Habrock, Nebraska Department of Agriculture; Jay Rempe with the Nebraska Farm Bureau; Kim Russel with Bryan Health; and Pat Bourne with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska.

Throughout the next several months, Class IX will conduct five additional sessions at the following locations: western Nebraska in August; 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 2017.

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. More information on Leadership Nebraska is available at [www.leadershipnebraska.com](http://www.leadershipnebraska.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.

### **COLUMBUS**

**Industrial Systems and Supply Inc.**  
Duane Ohlrich

### **LINCOLN**

**A-J Roofing & Waterproofing Co.**  
Alan Jacobsen

### **Husker Auto Group**

Terry Zimmerman

### **Scientific Analytics, Inc.**

Dennis Schultz

### **MILFORD**

**Nebraska Assn. of Transportation  
Providers**

Tiffany Fougeron