

THE EXECUTIVE

THE STATE CHAMBER



Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
September/October 2017

Federal Legislative Summit Draws Nearly 400

The 2017 Federal Legislative Summit – hosted by the Nebraska Chamber, along with the Lincoln and Greater Omaha Chambers – was held August 9 at the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum near Ashland. Nearly 400 chamber members and business leaders attended the ninth annual summit.

The event featured a congressional update by U.S. Senators Deb Fischer and Ben Sasse, along with U.S. Congressmen Jeff Fortenberry and Adrian Smith. Utilizing a format similar to the traditional Nebraska Breakfast held weekly on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., the congressional delegation provided briefings on key issues, including the federal debt, trade and possible legislation to enact tax relief, health care reform and infrastructure modernization.

Following the congressional update, John Kirchner with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce recognized Representatives Fortenberry and Smith with the Chamber's annual Spirit of Enterprise Award. The award



Barry Kennedy, president of the Nebraska Chamber, introduces members of Nebraska's congressional delegation during the August 9 Federal Legislative Summit.

recognizes federal lawmakers for their support of pro-jobs, pro-growth policies based on key votes taken in Congress. (Earlier this year, during the Nebraska Chamber's D.C. Fly-In, the Spirit of Enterprise Award was presented to Senator Fischer for her strong, pro-

business voting record.)

The event also featured keynote speaker Dr. Frank Newport, editor-in-chief at Gallup, who reviewed the organization's latest polling data on America's most pressing policy issues. ■

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State Chamber's Legislative Forums Now Underway

Nebraska Chamber staff members are traveling throughout the state for the Chamber's fall legislative forums.

For more than three decades, the Nebraska Chamber – in coordination with local chambers – has held its community forums to inform chamber members on state legislative activities and to gather input from the business community on issues of concern.

State Chamber and local chamber members are invited to participate in the forums.

A 2017 forums schedule is enclosed with this issue of *The Executive* and features the locations of the Nebraska Chamber's fall forum tour. For questions regarding the forums, please contact the local chamber of commerce hosting the forum nearest you. ■



State Chamber Views...
Guest Editorial by Governor Pete Ricketts
Governor of Nebraska

Trade Grows Nebraska Jobs, Opportunities

Over the years, trade has been an integral part of growing not only Nebraska, but our entire country. Since before our country's founding, trade has connected America to international markets seeking a wide variety of commodities unique to the New World.

While trade has been a proven economic good throughout the history of our country, rhetoric in both political parties is requiring business leaders and ag producers to redouble their efforts to reinforce and build on the market access and international partnerships that have helped make America the world's number one economy.

Because of Nebraska's eagerness to engage in trade, international partnerships have been helping grow our state for years. In 2015 alone, we exported over \$8 billion of goods and services, an increase of 238% from a decade earlier. Our commitment to trade has resulted in Nebraska ranking as one of the top five states in terms of the value of our agriculture exports, according to the USDA.

Recent discussions on the impact of trade have centered on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In Nebraska, NAFTA has virtually universal approval from our state's top business and agricultural leaders. And there's a big reason why: Around 40% of our goods in 2015 were exported to Canada and Mexico, countries which share free-trade rights with the United States through NAFTA.

In spite of the recent rhetoric around trade, it's important to remember that free trade agreements like NAFTA help grow Nebraska and the U.S. in three ways. First, they help provide Nebraska firms access to the lowest cost inputs for our farms, factories and businesses. Second, they help us as competitors by expanding market access for our

quality products. Third, they help attract direct foreign investment and great job opportunities to our state.

You don't have to take my word for it. Chris Roth, president and CEO of Reinke Manufacturing in Deshler, knows trade has a big positive impact on his business.

Chris says, "We are an agricultural machinery manufacturer. It is critically important for us to be able to export our product around the world in order for us to create and support jobs here in Nebraska. Additionally, it is essential that American farmers and ranchers be able to export their products globally. Exporting is good for the Nebraska economy on many different levels."

These reasons are why international trade missions have been a big part of my grow Nebraska agenda. The missions help achieve the above goals.

In 2015, I led trade missions to the European Union, Japan, and China. Last year, we returned to China with stops in Hong Kong and Macau. In early August, I headed the first-ever, Nebraska governor-led trade mission to Canada, which is Nebraska's number one export market and a major destination for Nebraska's manufactured projects, as well as ag commodities. I'm also leading a delegation to Japan in September.

Our trade missions over the last two years have borne great fruit:

- Novozymes announced a \$36 million expansion at their biofuels plant in Blair following a 2015 visit to their headquarters in Denmark.

- After a 2015 visit to Tokyo, Kawasaki has expanded their business in Nebraska twice, most recently opening their first aerostructures production line in the U.S. in Lincoln.

- The Chinese beef market

recently opened up to American beef and the first shipment to China came from Nebraska. My team and countless Nebraskans have been advocating for this for years, including trade missions to China in 2015 and 2016.

These are just a few of the great success stories from numerous, successful, Nebraska-led trade missions over the years.

To build on these relationships that have helped Nebraska grow, I've also launched the Nebraska Governor's Council for International Relations. The council brings together leaders from the state's top agricultural, business, and education organizations, including Barry Kennedy from the Nebraska State Chamber.

We have identified three goals for the council. First, develop long-term strategies to expand existing trade opportunities and develop new trade relationships. Second, support growing partnerships and identify new opportunities for collaboration with our overseas counterparts. And third, leverage our combined resources to grow current investments in Nebraska while exploring prospects for future investments.

In addition to the council, Nebraska has a unique opportunity coming up next year. In September 2018, Nebraska will host the 50th anniversary conference of the Midwest US-Japan Association in 2018. This will be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to showcase Nebraska as a great place to do business for Japanese companies who have helped make their home country Nebraska's number one direct foreign investor. I hope you'll mark your calendar for this big event and make plans to join us.

As we continue to leverage trade opportunities to grow Nebraska, future trade missions and the trade council will be pivotal to raising Nebraska's international profile. I appreciate the continued partnership between my office and the State Chamber as we work together to expand international markets and grow our state through international trade.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to growing Nebraska. ■

Transportation Secretary Chao Visits Nebraska Leaders

In late August, U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao visited Nebraska, accompanied by U.S. Senator Deb Fischer, a member of the Senate's Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee. The two met with representatives from the Nebraska Department of Transportation, as well as several business leaders from the trucking, rail and aviation industries, and the construction companies that build infrastructure projects. Nebraska Chamber staff and several State Chamber board members took part in the discussions on infrastructure and transportation concerns. Pictured above with Secretary Chao and Senator Fischer are Chamber board members (from left) Donna Kush with Union Pacific, Sarah Wellman with Werner Enterprises, Bob Caldwell with NEBCO, State Chamber Chairman Dirk Petersen, and John Kirchner with the U.S. Chamber. Also attending the meetings, but not pictured, were State Chamber board members Tom Janssen with Kiewit Corp. and Todd Duncan with Duncan Aviation. ■



Nebraska Manufacturing Summit Is Oct. 12 In Omaha

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 2017 Manufacturing Summit on Thursday, October 12, at the CenturyLink Center in Omaha, from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. The event is free of charge.

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, but you must register.

In addition, the summit will coincide with the Nebraska Products Show for Business & Industry, one of the largest and most diverse business expos in the Midwest.

For the summit highlights and to register, call Charlie Volnek at 402-474-4422. Or visit <https://www.nechamber.net/event/2017-state-chamber-manufacturers-summit>. ■

Nebraska Chamber Awarded Runner-Up State Chamber of the Year

In late August, the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry was recognized as one of the nation's top state chambers, receiving the second runner-up award at the Council of State Chambers (COSC) annual conference.

The competition highlighted best practices among state chambers of commerce. Entries were judged in six categories: public affairs, political action, communications, membership development, membership services and organizational development.

Among its accomplishments, the Nebraska Chamber highlighted the success of its advocacy efforts during the 2017 session of the Nebraska Legislature, as well as the impact of the Nebraska Chamber Political Action Committee (PAC).

The Nebraska Chamber was also recognized for its Cornerstone Project, its Leadership Nebraska program and Vision Nebraska policy initiative, and its communications outreach.

Chamber President Barry Kennedy accepted the award on behalf of the Nebraska Chamber. Kennedy said the recognition was a tribute to the Chamber's members, board of directors and staff.

"We take pride in being the voice of Nebraska business," Kennedy said. "Our team works hard every day to grow opportunities for all Nebraskans by improving the climate for business activity."

Kentucky received the top award, and Pennsylvania was named first runner-up.

COSC is the professional association for state chambers and has offices in Alexandria, Va.

The State Chamber is Nebraska's largest statewide business association and has served as the voice of Nebraska's business community since 1912. The Nebraska Chamber represents the interests of approximately 2,000 businesses across the state. ■



Leadership Nebraska Travels West



In mid-August, the State Chamber's Leadership Nebraska Class X 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. U.S. Senator Deb Fischer met with the group in Scottsbluff and stressed the importance of strong leadership for our state.

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 rural Nebraska with Cozad Development Corporation staff and 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 and the Legacy of the Plains Museum.

Diversity in Nebraska's climate and crops was the topic at UNL's Panhandle Research Station where the class viewed sugar beets and learned more about alternate crops. The group also heard from representatives of Western Sugar Cooperative and Kelley Bean regarding the harvest and processing of the Panhandle's sugar beets and dry edible beans.

For more information about Leadership Nebraska, contact Roberta Pinkerton at 402-474-4422 or email rpinkerton@nechamber.com. ■

Nebraska Chamber PAC Prepares For 2018 Election

While next year's election may not yet be on the minds of many, Nebraska's May 15, 2018 primary election is approaching quickly.

When it comes to the Nebraska Legislature, 24 of the state's 49 legislative seats will be on next year's ballot, signaling another busy year for the State Chamber Political Action Committee (PAC) – a separate and political arm of the Nebraska Chamber.

The State Chamber PAC's mission is simple: To elect business-minded representatives to the Legislature. Through this PAC, political investments are consolidated with those of other businesses, ensuring that every donation has a more dramatic impact on key races.

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 Amanda at awilliams@nechamber.com. ■

Send Us Your Email 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. ■

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.

GENEVA

**Heinisch & Lovegrove
Law Office PC LLC**
Christin Lovegrove

Kamler Enterprises LLC
Eric Kamler

LINCOLN

Southeast Community College
Marguerite Himmelberg

OMAHA

AVI Systems
Rachael Quackenbush

Infogroup

Michelle Macnamara

JPMorgan Chase

Larry Guenther

Lockton/Nebraska

Jack Struyk

Warren Distribution

Charles Downey