

# For

THE STATE CHAMBER 

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

# MANUFACTURERS

# Only



Summer 2015

## Plan To Attend Federal Legislative Summit Set For August 13

**F**rom taxes and trade, to highway funding and regulations, what happens in Washington can dramatically affect Nebraska businesses and their bottom line.

Plan to attend the 2015 Federal Legislative Summit on Thursday, August 13, to learn about the latest developments from inside the beltway and the impact they are having on the business community.

All the members of the Nebraska's congressional delegation have been invited. This includes U.S. Senators Deb Fischer and Ben Sasse, and U.S. Congressmen Jeff Fortenberry, Adrian Smith and Brad Ashford.

This unique event is hosted by the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry, along with the Lincoln and Omaha Chambers of Commerce. The summit will again be held at the Strategic Air & Space Museum, located near Ashland (Exit 426) immediately north of Interstate 80.

Doors will open at 7:30 a.m. (CT) for those who have not yet registered and for chamber of commerce networking. The summit will begin promptly at 8:30 a.m. and conclude by 1 p.m. A buffet lunch will be served.

Attendees will be treated to:

- The congressional update as presented by Nebraska's U.S. senators and congressmen.
- A panel addressing state-federal relations featuring Governor Pete Ricketts and Attorney General Doug Peterson.


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- Lunch and keynote address by Mr. David Azerrad of The Heritage Foundation. Mr. Azerrad teaches the tenets of the American political tradition to policymakers and the public at large. 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 any local chamber of commerce, the 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 the Nebraska Chamber at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail [cvolnek@nechamber.com](mailto:cvolnek@nechamber.com)

Or register online at [www.nechamber.net/event/2015-federal-legislative-summit](http://www.nechamber.net/event/2015-federal-legislative-summit)

The State Chamber is Nebraska's largest statewide business association and has proudly served as the voice of Nebraska's business community since 1912. 

Manufacturing is a vital component of the Nebraska economy. It also represents an essential segment of the membership within the Nebraska Chamber. The State Chamber Manufacturers Council evaluates and recommends policy positions to the State Chamber Board of Directors and serves as a forum for the exchange of views and information that the State Chamber manufacturing members wish to share.

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## SAVE THE DATE: MANUFACTURING SUMMIT WILL BE SEPT. 2 IN OMAHA

**T**he Nebraska Chamber's annual "Manufacturing and Distribution Executive Summit" will be Wednesday, Sept. 2, in Omaha at the CenturyLink Center. The summit will coincide with the Nebraska Products Show for Business & Industry, the premier business and industrial show in the Midwest.

According to Barry Kennedy, president of the Nebraska Chamber, this summit is one of the state's top events for those involved in manufacturing and related sectors. Co-hosted by McGladrey — a leading provider of assurance, tax and consulting services — the manufacturing summit will begin at 11:30 a.m. (CT) and will conclude by 4:15 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

The winners of the 2015 Nebraska Innovation in Manufacturing Award will be announced shortly after lunch.

The summit will feature presentations from experts who will highlight actions taken by successful manufacturing and distribution companies to grow in today's business climate, as well as a review of important legislation passed by the Nebraska Legislature. More details will be announced as the event schedule is finalized.

There is no charge to attend the summit, but reservations are required. Reservations can be made by e-mailing [cvolnek@nechamber.com](mailto:cvolnek@nechamber.com) or calling (402) 474-4422. Online registration details coming soon. □

## GOVERNOR HOSTS CHAMBER'S CORNERSTONE DINNER

**I**n early July, Governor Pete Ricketts hosted the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry's Cornerstone Dinner at the Governor's Residence in Lincoln. More than 50 attended the event. The governor spoke with State Chamber members at the pre-dinner social and then spoke to attendees later in the evening. He discussed some of the highlights of the 2015 legislative session, as well as his plans to address the state's current challenges.

The annual dinner is held in tribute of the State Chamber's "Cornerstone members" — the organization's top financial contributors. The contributions made by Cornerstone members allow the Nebraska Chamber to enhance and expand its services for all members and the state's business community.

Top sponsors for this year's dinner were Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Nebraska, ConAgra Foods, and Nebraska Public Power District. Platinum sponsors were Archer Daniels Midland, BNSF Railway, Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Farmers Mutual Insurance, Lincoln Industries, Mutual of Omaha, Nelnet, NUCOR Steel, Pinnacle Bank, Union Pacific, TransCanada, Vetter Health Services, and Woodman of the World Life Insurance. Gold sponsors were Ameritas, Black Hills Energy, CenturyLink, Exmark Manufacturing, Farm Credit Services, Great Plains Communications, Kawasaki, SourceGas, State Farm Insurance, and Valmont Industries. □

*Top: Governor Ricketts greets State Chamber Immediate Past Chairman Chris Roth, President & CEO of Reinke Manufacturing Co., Deshler.*

*Bottom: Governor Ricketts welcomes Kawasaki Motors Manufacturing President Masanobu (Matt) Kurushima, as well as State Chamber District Director Mike Boyle, who is also vice president and plant manager for Kawasaki in Lincoln.*





## CHAMBER EXPERIENCES SUCCESSFUL YEAR AT THE NEBRASKA UNICAMERAL

**T**he 2015 Nebraska Legislature adjourned in late May. 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.

To see a more comprehensive summary of key bills before the 2015 Nebraska Legislature, see the State Chamber's "Results for Business" brochure online by clicking [here](#). To see the State Chamber's 2015 legislative voting record for state lawmakers, click [here](#).

Or visit [www.NEchamber.net](http://www.NEchamber.net) and view the selections under the "Advocacy" tab near the top of the site.



*Pictured above: Nebraska Chamber's Barry Kenney (left) and Ron Sedlacek (right) visit with Gothenburg Senator Matt Williams during the 2015 legislative session.*

## NEBRASKA EXPORTS WERE WORTH \$8 BILLION IN 2014

**A** recent report by the U.S. Trade Representative and the U.S. Commerce Department details the impact of trade on all 50 states. The report, called the "United States Of Trade," provides snapshots of trade benefits, particularly benefits for small- and medium-sized businesses. The report also provides data on how the pending Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) trade deals would benefit each state.

According to the report, Nebraska exported \$7.9 billion of goods in 2014 — a 238% increase from a decade earlier.

Of the \$8 billion in Nebraska exports, more than \$6 billion were manufacturing exports, including processed food (\$2.8 billion), machinery (\$1.1 billion), chemicals (\$697 million), transportation equipment (\$393 million), and electrical equipment (\$280 million).

## EMPLOYMENT LAW SEMINAR SET FOR SEPT. 10

On September 10, 2015, the Nebraska Chamber will host a workshop to review the various state and federal employment laws and regulations. This labor law workshop will focus on the many aspects of employer-employee relationships before, during and after employment – with explanations of key responsibilities, forms, reports, records, administrative procedures and penalties.

The event will be held from 1 p.m. until 4:15 p.m., at The Cornhusker Marriott in Lincoln. Registration fee is \$129 for State Chamber members (\$149 for non-members).

Speakers will include two top labor law attorneys – Jerry Pigsley of Woods & Aiken, LLP,

as well as Kevin McManaman of Knudsen Law Firm, LLP. Also speaking will be Tom Champoux, a highly respected account executive with UNICO Group.

This workshop is perfect for anyone responsible for employee benefits or compliance, including senior executives, managers, business owners, HR managers, payroll staff and supervisors.

To register, call Charlie Volnek at (402) 474-4422 or e-mail [cvolnek@nechamber.com](mailto:cvolnek@nechamber.com). Or register online by going to <http://www.nechamber.net/event/state-and-federal-employment-labor-laws-workshop>. □

## 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 community 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 internship assistance, contact Rose Baker with DED at (402) 471-1559 or e-mail [rose.baker@nebraska.gov](mailto:rose.baker@nebraska.gov).

To see what internships are currently available – or to register a student or business with InternNE – visit <http://www.internne.com/>. □

## Manufacturing's Economic Output In Nebraska: \$14 Billion

The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) – one of the State Chamber's national affiliates – recently issued updated figures highlighting the importance of manufacturing to Nebraska's overall economy.

Manufacturers in Nebraska account for almost 13% of the total economic output in the state, employing around 10% of Nebraska's non-farm workforce. Meanwhile, Nebraska's total output from manufacturing was \$13.96 billion in 2013, the latest year of data available. In that year, Nebraska was home to 96,700 manufacturing employees making an average annual compensation of \$55,802.

Manufacturers helped drive Nebraska's economy with around \$6.5 billion in manufactured goods exports in 2014. Small businesses comprise more than 82% of all exporters in Nebraska.

See more Nebraska manufacturing facts as compiled by the NAM by visiting <http://www.nam.org/Data-and-Reports/State-Manufacturing-Data/2014-State-Manufacturing-Data/Manufacturing-Facts--Nebraska/>. □

# STUDY: NEBRASKA RANKED FOURTH FOR FISCAL SOLVENCY

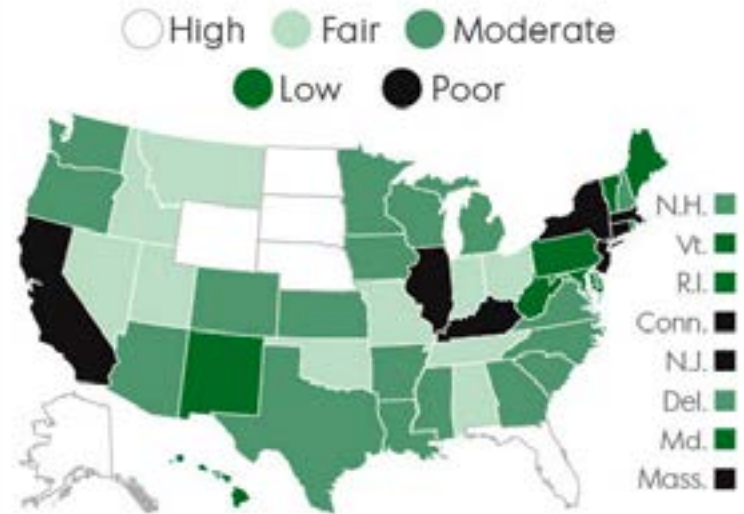
**A** new study by George Mason University's Mercatus Center, a public policy research group, shows that several states face an uncertain fiscal future due to skyrocketing government spending and state debt.

The report is based on short- and long-term debt and other key fiscal obligations, including unfunded pensions and health care benefits such as Medicaid. With new spending commitments for Medicaid and growing long-term obligations for pensions and health care benefits, the report notes that states must be ever vigilant to consider both the short- and long-term consequences of policy decisions.

While 30% of states received a "poor" or "low" grade for fiscal solvency, Ne-

braska was ranked fourth best overall, with Alaska, the Dakotas, and Florida also making the top five. California, Kentucky, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Illinois and California were in the worst financial condition, according to the study. See the full study by visiting [http://mercatus.org/statefiscalrankings?utm\\_source=Email&utm\\_medium=NRP&utm\\_campaign=Newsletter](http://mercatus.org/statefiscalrankings?utm_source=Email&utm_medium=NRP&utm_campaign=Newsletter). □

## State Fiscal Solvency in 2015



## NEBRASKA CHAMBER OPPOSES NEW OVERTIME RULE

**T**he Obama administration announced new rules that will require businesses to pay millions of additional workers overtime wages. The regulation would make all salaried workers who earn less than \$50,440 a year automatically eligible to earn overtime pay if they work more than 40 hours a week. Under current rules, employees who make over \$23,660 a year and work more than 40 hours a week are considered management and are not eligible for overtime pay.

The new rules will be subject to a public comment period and could take effect in 2016. In coordination with its two national affiliates — the U.S. Chamber and the NAM — the Nebraska Chamber opposes the overtime rule change

since it will negatively impact small businesses and drastically limit employment opportunities. Additionally, many reclassified employees will lose benefits, flexibility, status and opportunities for advancement.

The average annualized transfer of income from employers to employees is estimated at \$1.18 billion to \$1.27 billion if the rule is implemented. To see an analysis by the Husch Blackwell law firm regarding the overtime rule change, visiting <http://www.huschblackwell.com/businessinsights/labor-department-proposes-changes-to-overtime-exemption-rules>.

□

# NEBRASKA DROPS THREE SPOTS IN BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS STUDY

Nebraska has dropped three spots in CNBC's latest "Top States for Business" comparison, falling to seventh place from last year's No. 4 spot. The Cornhusker State's highest score was in business friendliness; its lowest in access to capital.

Nebraska fell in six of 10 categories of the study, including cost of doing business. (Last year, Nebraska voters increased the state's minimum wage, which at \$8 an hour is higher than any neighboring state. Nebraska's minimum wage is scheduled to increase again to \$9 in 2016.)

Compared to 2014, CNBC also gave Nebraska less favorable scores in infrastructure, economy, quality of life, business friendliness, and access to capital. However, the state leaped from 21st to a tie for No. 8 in cost of living, and saw an improvement in its education and workforce rankings, No. 16 and No. 11, respectively. Nebraska is still a laggard in technology and innovation, CNBC says.

Overall, Minnesota finished first in the study, followed by Texas, Utah, Colorado, Georgia and North Dakota. □



## STATE CHAMBER'S 2015 HUMAN RESOURCES LIBRARY NOW AVAILABLE

Keeping up with employment regulations is complex work for any business, but good human resources guidance can help employers steer clear of costly lawsuits and legal fees. Fortunately, the 2015 Nebraska Human Resources Library is now available.

Since 2008, the Nebraska Chamber Human Resources Library has helped business owners and HR personnel find answers quickly. When a federal or state labor law or regulation changes, the library will be updated — and you'll receive an email notice so you can easily determine what, if any, changes you need to make. Written by authors you know and trust — the Knudsen Law Firm — the Nebraska Human Resources Library features:

- A hard copy book and online subscription to the Nebraska Human Resources Manual, which covers everything from pre-hire through post-termination. Use this as your go-to guide when you need a quick answer on any HR topic.
- An online subscription to Model Policies and Forms for Nebraska Employers, a collection of over 350 Human Resources forms, checklists and sample policies that you can download and customize. Use it to build and maintain your employee handbook.
- A subscription to HR Update, a weekly e-newsletter that lets you know what's new in the HR world every week.

With these tools, you can effectively manage your most important resource -- your employees. And as a member of the Nebraska Chamber, you will save 20% off any publication at <https://hrsimple.com/nebraska-human-resources>. Visit [www.hrsimple.com/NE](http://www.hrsimple.com/NE) or call (866) 439-2227 to. Be sure to use coupon code NENEWS15 to receive your member discount. □