

2011 Results for Business


2011 Legislature

What passed.
What didn't.


*And what it means
to your bottom line.*





— TAXATION —

<p>Limits On Phone Occupation Taxes LB165</p>		<p>LB165 limits local occupation taxes on telephone and cell phone services at a maximum rate of 6.25%. Cities can still impose such occupation taxes with rates higher than 6.25%, but only if approved by a vote of the citizens and only in increments of 0.25%. Local occupation taxes may not be imposed on phone equipment and accessories. Recent national studies conducted prior to the enactment of LB165 showed that Nebraska had the nation's highest average tax on wireless phone service, with nearly 24% of a Nebraskan's wireless bill going to taxes and fees. State Chamber Supported.</p>	<p>PASSED</p>
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— LABOR RELATIONS —

<p>CIR Reform LB397</p>		<p>LB397 significantly reforms the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) for the first time in more than 40 years. The CIR is the agency that resolves labor disputes between Nebraska's public employee unions and government employers. Before the 2011 session, there were many criticisms about how the CIR set wages and other conditions of employment, negatively affecting local units of government that are under unprecedented budgetary pressure. With the Legislature's adoption of a compromise plan agreed to by several parties, the State Chamber changed its position on LB397 from "oppose" to "support." The compromise maintains collective bargaining for public employees and retains the CIR, but gives local officials new tools to control labor costs, and ensures more transparency for taxpayers. The law takes effect October 1, 2011. State Chamber Supported.</p>	<p>PASSED</p>
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— ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT —

<p>Nebraska Internship Act LB386</p>		<p>LB386 establishes a statewide internship program to provide more career opportunities for Nebraska's skilled young people and recent college graduates. The program focuses on specific industries, including research and development, data processing and manufacturing. It provides \$1.5 million annually, using redirected job training funds, and a 100% match from participating employers. LB386 could create an estimated 700 new internships over the next year. The law took effect June 1, 2011. State Chamber Supported.</p>	<p>PASSED</p>
<p>Business Innovation Act LB387</p>		<p>LB387 creates a modern incentive program to encourage research, innovation and development in Nebraska's small business community and at colleges and universities. It allocates nearly \$7 million in financial assistance, with 40% of the funding dedicated for economically distressed areas, mostly in rural Nebraska. LB387 implements several recommendations from the 2010 Battelle study that examined Nebraska's industries and talent base. Studies have shown Nebraska lags in technology transfer and support for entrepreneurs who want to move their product to market. The law takes effect October 1, 2011. State Chamber Supported.</p>	<p>PASSED</p>







Cover: Governor Dave Heineman gathers with key senators and chamber of commerce representatives to celebrate the passage of the Talent and Innovation Initiative.

— TOURISM —

Tourism Planning LB684		LB684 was the primary tourism bill of the session. LB684 formally establishes the Department of Economic Development's (DED) Travel and Tourism Division Advisory Committee, which will develop a statewide plan to cultivate and promote tourism throughout Nebraska. The proposal will go before the Legislature no later than September 1, 2012. Among other things, the plan will include a review of existing and potential funding for tourism at the state and local levels, as well as marketing strategies for promoting tourism. State Chamber Supported.	PASSED
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— KEY CARRY-OVER LEGISLATION —

(Bills To Re-Emerge In 2012)

Carry Forward Tax Relief LB483		LB483 would expand the period of time that a business could carry forward unused income tax relief due to net operating losses. "Carry forward" is one of the key factors considered by site selectors around the country. The State Chamber supports LB483 and urges lawmakers to amend the bill to allow a carry forward period of 20 years to improve Nebraska's competitiveness. State Chamber Supports.
Property Tax Hearings LB457		LB457 aims to assist taxpayers contesting their property tax valuations. Based on a process being utilized in Lancaster County, the bill would provide opportunities for real property owners to meet with county officials regarding valuation before assessment rolls are created and to meet with the county board of equalization if final valuations are protested. State Chamber Supports.
Sales Tax Expansion LB560		LB560 would authorize state sales tax on several additional services, including: repair or maintenance labor on vehicles; personal care services, including hair care, skin care and nail care; funeral services, including burial and cremation; dating services; cleaning of clothing; storage of property; waste hauling, waste disposal and recycling; motor vehicle parking; yard maintenance; and snow removal. The Chamber has longstanding policy opposing further broadening of sales tax on services. State Chamber Opposes.
Local Sales Tax Refunds Under NE Advantage LB323		LB323 would amend the Nebraska Advantage to allow cities to opt out of the local tax refund provisions of the Nebraska Advantage Act. The bill threatens the viability of current agreements, diminishes the value of the Nebraska Advantage program and makes the state less economically competitive. State Chamber Opposes.
Fuel Tax Increase LB504		LB504 would raise the gas tax by 10 cents over two years to provide \$77 million in new highway funds. While the Chamber supports preservation of the Highway Trust Fund and believes that infrastructure improvements should be a budget priority, Chamber policy states that such improvements should not be accompanied by new or increased tax rates. State Chamber Opposes.
Credit History Use LB530		LB530 would prohibit employers from inquiring about or using an employee's or prospective employee's credit history as a basis for employment, recruitment, discharge or compensation. State Chamber Opposes.
Health Insurance Mandates LB223		LB223 would require insurance policies to include coverage for single or bilateral cochlear implants for persons diagnosed with severe to profound hearing impairment. Chamber policy opposes any legislation that mandates minimum standard for health insurance coverage that exceeds federal ERISA requirements, thereby affecting the affordability and availability of health insurance. State Chamber Opposes.

2011 Legislature

When the Legislature meets in Lincoln every year, the actions of lawmakers can profoundly impact your business and its ability to grow. That is why the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry works hard to represent our business community.

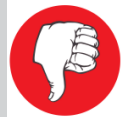
Located a half block from the Capitol, the State Chamber staff stays in close contact with Nebraska's 49 State Senators, as well as state agencies and the governor. The State Chamber is one of the most effective lobbying teams in Nebraska, ensuring that businesses of every type and size have a powerful and respected voice in the legislative process.

The 2011 session of the Nebraska Legislature saw actions on a broad range of issues. Nearly 750 bills and constitutional amendments were introduced this year. Your State Chamber monitored or took positions on more than 250 measures that impacted Nebraska businesses or the state's business climate.

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During this year's session, the State Chamber **SUPPORTED** pro-business, growth-oriented legislation.



The State Chamber **OPPOSED** legislation that threatened the success of Nebraska businesses and the state's economy.



(Top left) State Chamber Chairman Jeff Scherer and his wife Lori join the Governor and First Lady at the Chamber's Cornerstone Dinner held at the Governor's residence. *(Top center)* Senator Tom Hansen of North Platte speaks at one of the State Chamber's fall legislative forums, held annually in more than 30 Nebraska communities. *(Top right)* Valentine Senator Deb Fischer, who represents the state's largest legislative district in terms of geography, meets with State Chamber staff regarding LB84, Senator Fischer's roads funding bill. *(Bottom)* Several of the Legislature's key members speak during the Chamber's annual meeting in February. Appearing as part of the "Legislative Leaders" panel this year was Speaker Mike Flood of Norfolk, along with Senators Deb Fischer, Steve Lathrop, Abbie Cornett and Lavon Heidemann.



(Top left) York Senator Greg Adams, chair of the Education Committee, addresses the Chamber's Public Affairs Council. (Lower right) Hastings Senator Dennis Utter, a key leader in this year's CIR reform bill, speaks at Small Business Day at the Capitol, an event co-hosted by the Nebraska Chamber. (Lower center right) Chairman Jeff Scherer meets with Senators Jim Smith of Papillion and Lydia Brasch of Bancroft at the State Chamber's dinner for newly elected senators. (Lower center left) Outside the rotunda of the State Capitol, Omaha Senator Steve Lathrop, chair of the Business and Labor Committee, discusses legislation with the Chamber's Barry Kennedy and Ron Sedlacek. (Lower left), Kearney Senator Galen Hadley reviews an economic development proposal with State Chamber staff.



The Membership & Mission Of The State Chamber

For nearly a century, the State Chamber has proudly served as the voice of Nebraska's business community. Today, it is the State's only broad-based business association, representing a grassroots membership of more than 100,000 people in 400 different categories of businesses located in more than 150 communities.

The State Chamber works hard to promote the interests of employers of all sizes, as well as self-employed individuals, other Nebraska associations and local chambers of commerce. What links our members is the shared goal to improve Nebraska's business climate.

The State Chamber staff works effectively with members of the Legislature and other government officials, with three full-time lobbyists leading our legislative efforts. Throughout every legislative session, the State Chamber keeps its members well informed on day-to-day action through the *Legislative Report* and electronic communications, such as the daily *News Update*.

State Chamber members know when lawmakers are considering legislation that could impact their interests. Action alerts notify members when they should contact senators regarding upcoming votes. After the session, State Chamber members receive complete summaries of the year's legislative activities, as well as a scorecard on key votes.

The State Chamber also monitors legislative activities in Washington, D.C. The association stays in close contact with Nebraska's congressional delegation, as well as its national affiliates – the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.

Beyond legislative services, the State Chamber provides many programs, publications and other tools for our members, including educational workshops, member directories, labor law publications, unemployment services, and car rental discounts.

With a record of major legislative accomplishments and solid service, Nebraska's business community can count on the State Chamber to stand strong for its interests.

THE STATE CHAMBER 

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