By Nebraska Governor

Dave Heineman

Across the country, governors are looking for the best strategies to strengthen state economic performance. Many are focused on the potential for small businesses and new startup companies to transform their economies.

Each year the chair of the National Governors Association develops a policy initiative that can impact discussions in states across the nation. I have the privilege of serving as chair of the NGA during the next year and my focus will be to highlight opportunities to grow state economies.

My 2011-12 NGA initiative is Growing State Economies. This initiative is an opportunity to focus on development strategies that impact entrepreneurs and startup companies that help them become the fast-growing firms.

My NGA initiative will provide governors and other state leaders with policy options to assess the economic environment in their states and with strategies to leverage new opportunities. A major emphasis will be on understanding how a small business becomes a fast-growing firm and what policies support that transformation.

High growth small businesses are increasingly one of the driving forces of the modern global economy. They are a primary source of job creation, prosperity and economic competitiveness in the innovation economy. New, fast-growing firms—called gazelles—often evolve to become large employers.

Nebraska has benefitted tremendously from the kind of growth of achieved by smaller businesses in emerging industries. We want to encourage that success which involves the right mix of talent and innovation, investment and policies that help growth-oriented companies that are poised to create new and high-quality jobs succeed.

In order to better shape the economic environment for high-growth companies, policymakers need better information and a detailed understanding of: who the successful small businesses are in their state and from which industries are they likely to emerge; the strengths and weaknesses of their state's business environment; and they need a options for practical policies that help businesses generate job growth.

During the next year, my colleagues, business leaders and others will focus on the role entrepreneurs play in business and job growth; the role of innovation, university research and development efforts; the role of science and technology; the role of productivity; and the role of exports.

Additionally, the NGA will host four regional meetings to highlight regional strengths and opportunities. The meetings will be held in Hartford, Conn. in October; in Nashville, Tenn. in November; in Seattle in January, 2012; and in Omaha in April, 2012.

The NGA is a forum for governors to work in bipartisan fashion to share insight and feedback that advances economic and job growth across America. We have very talented individuals serving as CEO's for our states, and I'm excited to work with my colleagues in this new role to help share some of the success Nebraska has had in growing our state economy.