

Nebraska Governor's 2011 in review

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Friday, 06 January 2012 20:53 - Last Updated Friday, 06 January 2012 20:56

Dear Fellow Nebraskans

By Gov. Dave Heineman

The new year presents the opportunity to reflect upon the important issues that have been addressed during the past year.

In 2011, Nebraska has been able to build upon the momentum we were experiencing regarding job creation, education, public safety and growing Nebraska's innovation economy.

We are fortunate in Nebraska to be in much better shape than the rest of the country because we don't spend money we don't have. Whether it's the family budget or the business budget, this is a principle that we adhere to.

Additionally, we balanced the state budget without raising taxes, our unemployment rate is 4.1 percent and we are recognized nationally as a top ten business friendly state.

As Governor, I also focused on international trade, direct investment and the creation of new export opportunities. That was the focus of Nebraska's second Reverse Trade Mission that was held last September.

As a result, several international companies have committed to investing millions of dollars in new and expanding businesses in Nebraska.

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These companies could have located anywhere in the world, but they are choosing to come to Nebraska. They continue to cite the relationships we build, our work ethic and our competitive tax incentive programs as just a few of the many reasons that Nebraska is an ideal place to locate and expand business.

In the 2011 Legislative session, I signed into law the Talent and Innovation Initiative to advance business innovation and workforce recruitment efforts in Nebraska and to attract new, advanced companies to Nebraska.

Part of this initiative is the Nebraska Internship Program, which is off to a great start. A total \$1,416,000 of the original \$1.5 million appropriation has already been allocated for this program.

As part of our continued efforts to build Nebraska's innovation economy, we have made a one-time investment of \$25 million to accelerate the initial development of the University of Nebraska's Innovation Campus, which is a critical component to our economic future.

With the move to the Big Ten, the University of Nebraska has an outstanding opportunity to significantly increase student enrollment, expand its rapidly growing research base and develop public-private partnerships at Innovation Campus that will increase job opportunities for Nebraskans.

The Nebraska Student Information System recently implemented by the state colleges and University of Nebraska is an example of our focus on greater efficiency in government.

This system is used by all seven university and state college campuses with the opportunity to ensure personalization by campus, allowing each institution to "brand" their own system.

The projects were first proposed as two separate systems with the costs estimated at more than \$42.5 million dollars. The joint project was completed at a cost of \$20.4 million dollars, saving our taxpayers approximately \$20 million dollars.

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To help ensure highway safety, travelers on Nebraska roads have a service available which provides real-time road and weather conditions using tools to monitor highway conditions and communicate road closings to travelers.

Whether accessed via hotline or website, the 511 system is a resource that continues to be very useful in the midst of road construction, severe weather conditions and road closure conditions.

This is vitally important when winter weather strikes and I encourage Nebraskans to utilize this resource and travel safely.

We've made great progress this year, but we have more work to do.

I am committed to making strategic decisions that provide our sons and daughters with a bright future. Together, we continue to make Nebraska the best place to live, to work and to raise a family.

Happy New Year.