

March 2020

www.winonachamber.com | (507) 452-2272 | 902 E. Second St., Suite 120, Winona, MN



Winona Delegation at State Capitol

Christie Ransom,
President & CEO

The Winona Area Chamber of Commerce sent a delegation of business leaders to St. Paul to participate in the annual Business Day at the Capitol, hosted by the MN Chamber.



The delegation met one-on-one with our local state legislators to advance our top priorities, toured the MN Capitol, and heard some additional legislative updates from the MN Chamber. As part of the MN Federation of Chambers, the Winona Chamber has adopted the 2019 Legislative Priorities:

Local chambers represent economic vitality in their communities. The Minnesota Chamber Federation unites and amplifies the voice of local chambers by advocating for policies to advance business in every corner of the state. Federation partners represent more than 43 communities and more than 21,000 businesses. They have worked to promote pro-growth policies to the Legislature for more than a decade, helping ensure that state lawmakers understand the needs and interests of Minnesota's diverse and successful local business community.

The Federation has the following policy priorities for the 2020 legislative session:

Workplace Management

We are committed to providing the best workplaces for employees. This includes sharing employers' best practices so all businesses are aware of effective approaches to maintaining progressive workplaces to retain and compete for the best employees. Employers adhere to strict labor laws and workplace standards at the state and federal levels to maintain safe, healthy, respectful and inclusive workplaces. They must have flexibility to make staffing decisions and provide appropriate wages, benefits and schedules for their workplace and industry.

We oppose "one size fits all" state mandates that limit employers' ability to design competitive benefit packages for their employees.

Minnesota has 853 cities and 87 counties. When local-level government bodies pass workplace mandates, it creates an administrative nightmare for employers and could cause unintentional errors subjecting businesses to legal action.

We support state legislation that explicitly prohibits local government labor mandates.

As new laws and regulations are imposed on Minnesota's employers, enacting technical changes can create onerous compliance concerns.

We will pursue modifications to the 2019 wage theft law that has far-reaching, overly complicated requirements for employers.

Tax Competitiveness

Minnesota's high taxes continue to rank as a top barrier to economic growth, according to chamber members. Business taxes are among the highest in the nation in many categories. High taxes negatively impact innovation, entrepreneurship, talent recruitment and investment – the very catalysts needed to foster economic growth. The Minnesota Chamber Federation has a broad tax reform agenda including business property tax relief,

personal and corporate rate reductions, estate tax federal conformity and enhancement of the research and development tax credit.

We support tax relief for businesses that pay taxes through their personal tax returns and adopting federal conformity with Section 179 business expensing rules.

Environmental Sustainability

We recognize scientific consensus that the climate is changing due to human activity. Environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness, if done right, are not mutually exclusive.

We encourage the Legislature to recognize that state policies could result in disruption or discontinuation of business operations in Minnesota, considerably affect state and local economies, and may only marginally impact global environmental progress.

We support state policymakers pursuing policies that collectively enable a cleaner environment, recognize technological and economic limitations, consider implications to safety and reliability, support and advance innovation, maintain a secure economy and protect jobs.

We support environmental policies that drive private investment in Minnesota while helping employers reduce environmental impacts.

Health Care

Minnesota already requires health insurance policies to cover more than 60 benefits – one of the longest lists of required benefits in the country. Large employers tend to insure their workers under federal law. As a result, these state mandates negatively impact small employers. Research shows the average mandate increases premiums by .44% to 1.11% annually.

We support requiring a cost-benefit analysis before any proposal to add insurance mandates to state law.

Education and Workforce Development

Minnesota's education and workforce development efforts must align with employer needs, for our skilled workforce to continue to be a cornerstone of our competitive business climate. Systemic reforms are necessary to raise all student achievement, ensuring every high school graduate is ready for postsecondary education or a career.

We support private-sector initiatives to increase employer engagement in the training of workers in addition to supporting policies that ensure student readiness. Local chambers' private-sector led "Business Education Network" is connecting employers, students and learning institutions to local job opportunities and needed academic and training preparation for those jobs.

Students are better prepared for the future when they make meaningful career connections during their school years. Postsecondary and dual-credit programs provide high school students with credit toward certificates and degrees from high schools, two-year colleges and four-year universities, and should be promoted.

We support fostering and encouraging career exploration and hands-on training opportunities for students.

Postsecondary institutions and workforce programs should track and adapt to changes in the labor market and workforce needs. Access to work-based learning and career pathway resources should be expanded with data-driven efforts including workforce supply and demand projections.

We support using data to better understand training needs and high-demand careers. Transparency and accessibility improvements should be made to allow students to make informed decisions on the institutions and programs that best fit their needs.

Minnesota Chamber Federation Partners

Include the following local chambers of commerce: Albert Lea-Freeborn County, Alexandria Lakes Area, Apple Valley, Austin Area, Bemidji Area, Brainerd Lakes, Burnsville, Cloquet Area, Cuyuna Lakes, Dakota County Regional, Duluth Area, Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, Eden Prairie, Elk River, Faribault, Grand Rapids, Greater Mankato Growth Inc., Hastings Area, Hibbing Area, International Falls, Lakeville Area, Laurentian, Litchfield Area, Marshall Area, MetroNorth, New Ulm Area, Northfield Area, Owatonna Area, Pipestone Area, River Heights, Rochester Area, St. Cloud Area, Shakopee, SouthWest Metro, Twin Cities North, TwinWest, Waconia, Waseca Area, White Bear Area, Willmar Lakes Area, Winona Area, Woodbury Area, Worthington Area.

About the Chamber

Our Vision:

To be the premier business advocate in Southeastern Minnesota.

Our Mission:

To provide value to our members through business advocacy, training, economic development and the support of tourism.

Officers:

Dave Jensen - Chair
Michael Charron - Chair Elect
Corey Hancock - Past Chair
Jolene Vaselaar - Treasurer
Scott Rodeghier - At Large

Retiring 2020:

Dave Erickson
Corey Hancock
Scott Rodeghier
Dan Welsh
Terry Klonecki

Retiring 2021:

Ben Adank
Joanne Thompson
Dave Jensen
Rebecca Lamberty
Jolene Vaselaar

Retiring 2022:

Michael Charron
Danny Rivers
Kyle Rupprecht
Randy Skarlupka
Ellen Smith

Staff:

Christie Ransom – President & CEO

Kay Mathews – Vice President of Finance and Operations

Amanda Steine – Membership Development and Programs Manager

Ben Strand – Main Street Program Manager

Nicole Schossow – B.E.N./REACH Program Manager

CHAMBER CHAMPIONS

- VISIONARY -

Merchants Bank

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MORE THAN A BANK

WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY
Altra
Federal Credit Union

- PREMIER -

BREMER BANK

WELLS FARGO

- EXECUTIVE -

HBC
We serve. We connect. We care.

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A TECHNICAL & COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Saint Mary's University
OF MINNESOTA

Winona Health

MILLER
INGENUITY
Safety Starts Here

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Main Street News March 2020

Ben Strand, Main Street
Program Manager

The third annual Main Street Day at the Capitol will take place on Tuesday, March 10 from Noon-4:30PM. Rethos (formerly Preservation Alliance of Minnesota) organizes the annual Capitol visit and encourages community members and stakeholders from Main Street communities to attend.

This effort is important because there is a need to communicate to our local representatives and senators that the Main Street program has been beneficial and crucial to economic development in each community.

Currently, Rethos (the organization that houses the Main Street Program at the state level) does not receive any state funding to help bolster and support the program (like our neighbors to the south, Iowa, does). If the state were to budget money for the Main Street Program in the future it would allow Rethos to enhance the program via expanded programming, workshops, webinars, additional funding through grants, and much more.

Contact Ben at bstrand@winonachamber.com or Sarina Otaibi at sotaibi@rethos.org for more information or to register for Main Street Day at the Capitol



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Chamber Federation launches legislative agenda

By Doug Loon, President of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce

MINNESOTA
CHAMBER *of*
COMMERCE

Strike up a conversation with any business owner on the challenges to growing jobs in Minnesota, and the themes ring familiar.

High taxes hinder growth. Access to quality health care at an affordable price. The increasing number of government-mandates on employee benefits. Shortage of skilled workers.

Businesses of all types and sizes feel these stresses. Job-creators across the state hold their collective breath as the 2020 Legislature gets underway. Listen to those on the front lines as we seek ways to lessen these headwinds and create economic opportunity for all Minnesotans.

St. Cloud and River Heights are among the 40-plus members of the Minnesota Chamber Federation, which unites and amplifies the voice of local chambers by advocating for policies to grow business in every corner of the state. Together with the Minnesota Chamber, the Federation is launching its 2020 agenda as the Legislature gets underway.

Workplace regulations are center stage for St. Cloud businesses, says Teresa Bohnen, president of the St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce. Among their concerns is the broad wage theft law that, among other things, penalizes employers for unintentional payroll errors. "It seemed like the wage theft law sailed through last year without much consideration of the unintended consequences. Now we are requiring all businesses to absorb additional costs related to excessive paperwork and compliance to regulations that the vast majority of them were already following."

The Federation will pursue modifications in the wage theft law.

We also continue to oppose "one size fits all" state mandates that limit employers' ability to design competitive benefit packages for their employees. The patchwork of local mandates is cited in Inver Grove Heights.

"Many small businesses don't just work in one community," says Brenda Dietrich, co-owner of Hardline Concrete & Masonry. "When cities make their own legislation, such as mandating wages and benefits, it is a hindrance to small businesses."

Kari Rihm, president and chief executive of Rihm Family Companies, underscores the most widespread difficulty facing businesses: Finding workers. "Too few people are going into trades, and too many people are retiring from them," she says. "It's no secret. Businesses will be stymied if they can't hire enough experienced, skilled workers." The Federation continues to seek systemic reforms to raise all student achievement, ensuring every high school graduate is ready for postsecondary education or a career.

Local employer concerns resonate with Jennifer Gale, president of the River Heights Chamber. "We need to align our state's legislative policies with our desire to keep Minnesota competitive," she says. "Local chambers can work side by side with our legislators to connect them with business owners who know firsthand the everyday challenges."

Conforming Minnesota law with the federal Section 179 tax code tops our tax agenda to allow immediate expensing equipment purchases. Rounding out our priorities are requiring a cost-benefit analysis as part of any proposal to add insurance mandates to state law and supporting environmental policies that drive private investment in Minnesota while helping employers reduce environmental impacts.

Federation partners have collectively advanced employer priorities for more than a decade; they represent 43 communities and 21,000-plus businesses.

If you want to be in the know – and lend your collective voice to help improve the lives of all Minnesotans – I encourage you to become a member of your local chamber or the Minnesota Chamber. Sign up for email updates throughout the legislative session to keep abreast of what is happening at the Capitol.

As one employer, your voice can be a whisper. Combine it with hundreds of others, and your voice becomes a roar.

Biz Bites



Leighton Broadcasting is pleased to announce that **Jim Allgeier** has been hired as General Manager for Leighton Broadcasting Winona. Stephanie Theisen, VP of Sales and Marketing for Leighton Broadcasting said, "Jim is an accomplished media expert with experience in radio and beyond. The addition of a radio veteran, like Allgeier, with over 19 consecutive years in the business will provide the direction and leadership we have been seeking for our Winona market." Jim was born and raised in Fort Wayne, Indiana where he then continued on to receive a degree in Accounting and Management from the University of Dayton, Ohio. Allgeier then worked in the billboard business for 15 years where he had roles in Sales, Sales Management and General Management. He has spent the last 19 years in the radio business as both a General Manager and Market Manager. The last seven years he has served as the market manager for six radio stations in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Allgeier stated, "I am excited to be a part of a company like Leighton Broadcasting and look forward to leading and growing the great team they have in place, in Winona, as well as getting to know the town and community."



Winona Community Foundation announces new location, new logo and new website! The new location is at the 111 Riverfront Building, Suite 2 East Annex. The entrance is located on Walnut Street. "The logo comes at a time we look to push the Foundation in a bolder direction, thus the bold and trendy colors. You will note the presence of an upward pointing arrow to demonstrate growth. At the same time, you may see an evergreen tree which communicates the everlasting nature of a community foundation and reflects on the natural beauty of our region," shares President/CEO, Nancy Brown, CFRE. "Along with a fresh new logo, we have redesigned our website to communicate the various aspects of the Foundation to better serve those visiting the site." Visit the new website at www.winonacf.org



The **Winona Area Industrial Development Association** (W.A.I.D.A.) held their Annual Meeting and announced the officers for 2020. President: **Tom Wynn** - Wynn Think Tank Consulting, Vice President **Josh Severson** - Severson Oil, Past President: **Dan Arnold** - DCM Tech, Inc., Treasurer: **Brad Peterson** - Mississippi Welders Supply, At Large Members: **Rich Mikrut** - Seven Rivers Intermodal and **Jack Richter** - WNB Financial, Secretary: **Christie Ransom** - Winona Chamber of Commerce. W.A.I.D.A. has a mission to serve as a facilitator, catalyst and communicator of activities that advance industrial development and economic growth in the Winona region. W.A.I.D.A.'s vision is to support the creation of industrial action that fosters entrepreneurial growth of existing and future industries, with the goal of providing economic opportunities and jobs for future generations in the Winona region via the following actions:

1. Assist in location of potential properties for industrial parks
2. Foster communications between business and government entities
3. Support entrepreneurial growth as a resource of business plan evaluation and financial options review



Sarah Eichenberg, PA-C, joined the **Winona Health** staff and will care for people in the Emergency department. Most recently, she has been seeing patients in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City.

A Winona native, Eichenberg said, "I always knew I wanted to return to this area—to come back to the community I grew up in and give something back to Winona. There are so many ways to help people in the Emergency department whether it's discovering the root of the problem, helping them feel better, performing a procedure or connecting them with the resources they need. Patients need to know they have people on their team." Eichenberg earned her bachelor's degree in Health Sciences, graduating with distinction, from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, she earned her master's degree in Physician Assistant Studies from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse and completed her Emergency Medicine Residency at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. She is certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. Eichenberg and her husband, who is also from Winona, enjoy being outdoors, boating and fishing. She also enjoys cooking, exercising, reading, and traveling. Eichenberg is a member of the Society for Emergency Medicine Physician Assistants, American Academy of Physician Assistants, Minnesota Academy of Physician Assistants and the Physician Assistant Education Association. In addition to her work at Winona Health, Eichenberg is a clinical assistant professor for the Physician Assistant program at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.



Minnesota State College Southeast announced today the selection of chemistry instructor **Dr. Leah Schnaith** as the college's Outstanding Educator of the Year. "Dr. Schnaith is a passionate educator who strives on a daily basis to help her students be successful. Her commitment to education and outstanding work ethic have earned her the respect, admiration, and genuine affection of her students," said Interim President Larry Lundblad. "She embodies the qualities of a brilliant educator who puts her students first and endeavors to see them master the material and achieve their goals." Leah currently teaches Fundamentals of Chemistry, Environmental Chemistry, Introduction to Forensic Science, Principles of Chemistry, and General, Organic & Biochemistry at the college, commuting between the Red Wing and Winona campuses and teaching online. Leah Schnaith was nominated for the Outstanding Educator award by five different students. One student wrote, "Leah is an absolute angel. She has gone out of her way to stay late with me and other students to make sure that we are able to get the help we need to pass." Having been named the college's Outstanding Educator of the Year, Leah Schnaith will be among those recognized at a statewide awards banquet in April 2020. At that time, the Minnesota State Board of Trustees will announce its awards for Excellence in Teaching and the state-wide Educators of the Year.



Juniors in REACH Enjoy Immersions

Nicole Schossow,
B.E.N./REACH Program Manager

REACH
YOUR FULL POTENTIAL

During the first year a student is in the REACH program, they take part in four different business immersions. Students visit our local businesses in small groups for half-day, on-site experiences. Each immersion is an opportunity to see, touch, and do what is involved in a specific career and business. REACH students say that immersions are one of their favorite activities in REACH. Devon explained, "I have a much better idea of what was really interesting to me about being in manufacturing."

Over 30 local businesses have hosted immersions for REACH students and more businesses are being added every year. Students are excited to get involved and our local business partners are thrilled to share their business and career opportunities with the students. Heather Grinsteiner, with the Winona Area Ambulance Service, stated, "we loved having the Chamber REACH students come spend a day with us on immersion. I think the students enjoyed learning what the day of a paramedic entails. It was great to see how enthusiastic they were about attempting the skills on our manikins and we enjoyed being able to answer the questions that they had."

