

March 2022

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



The Time is Now to Do No Harm

Christie Ransom, President & CEO
Winona Area Chamber of Commerce

With imminent tax increases coming at our businesses from every angle, along with increased cost of goods and a severe shortage of workforce, the time for 'Do No Harm' legislation could not be more important.

With the State Legislature in session, there are many things that hang in the balance. The most important of those is the UI Trust Fund deficit. With a \$7.7 billion budget surplus, it would seem only logical to use some of those dollars to replenish that fund so that no increase in taxes would be imposed on businesses. The Senate passed a bi-partisan bill that would replenish this fund fully, using \$2.7 Billion of the surplus funds. This legislation is necessary to provide piece of mind and certainty for businesses that could face a significant tax increase, through no fault of their own. This deficit is as large as it is due to increased shutdowns and restrictions that the Governor imposed. It is now up to the House of Representatives to get this same thing accomplished before March 15th. Right now, it appears that the House doesn't see the need for a complete replenishment of the trust fund and that is concerning.

Time is of the essence and no business can burden an increase in taxes of any sort as they are still far from full recovery. Small businesses face an even more profound impact. On behalf of our businesses, I want to extend my gratitude to Senator Miller for his leadership to get this passed in the Senate. Additionally, a special thank you to Representative Pelowski for being the only DFL Representative to present a bill that matches the Senate Bill and fully replenishes the UI Trust Fund deficit.

While that issue is of foremost importance, we know that other items are presenting themselves that will cause damage to our businesses. While it may feel that this is not relevant to all members of our community and region, I assure you that it is. Businesses serve as the bedrock of our communities, providing an income for thousands of families and also providing services or goods that help us thrive and get the things that we need. They support our schools, the arts, sports teams, other businesses, and so much more. When we add unnecessary strain on the businesses that we rely on it is only expected that they will be forced to increase prices, cut products or resources, reduce staff, or worst of all, close all together.

It is my priority for the Chamber to fight for businesses of every size and type and ensure that we do everything we can to 'Do No Harm'. I will work tirelessly to make sure that their voices are heard. I hope that you will join me in being a champion for our businesses!

ABOUT THE CHAMBER

- OUR MISSION -

To Serve Businesses How and When They Need Us

- OUR VISION -

Be the Foremost Resource and Advocate for Businesses in the Winona Area

Officers:

- Andrew Puetz – Chair
- Katrice Sisson – Chair Elect
- Michael Charron – Past Chair
- Randy Skarlupka – Treasurer
- Kyle Rupprecht – At Large

Retiring 2022:

- Michael Charron
- Danny Rivers
- Kyle Rupprecht
- Randy Skarlupka
- Ellen Smith

Retiring 2023:

- Andrea Northam
- Dave Pederson
- Kelly Pronschinske
- Andy Puetz
- Mike Dieter

Retiring 2024:

- Dr. Marsha Danielson
- Janneke Sobeck
- Katrice Sisson
- Jared Literski
- Kendra Maggart

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

FEDERATION

MINNESOTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Don't penalize business for pandemic unemployment

Legislators will debate how to repay the depleted Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund this legislative session. But businesses shouldn't be penalized and taxed to repay the state's unemployment debt while still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially when federal and state funds were and are available to cover this pandemic-related expense.



- FACT** Minnesota's Unemployment Trust Fund faces a **\$1.13 billion deficit.**
- FACT** Lawmakers have a **\$7.7 billion budget surplus.**
- FACT** Lawmakers have over **\$1 billion in federal funds and billions in reserves.**

When businesses were shut down early in the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of workers accessed unemployment insurance. By May of 2020, unemployment hit a record high 11.3%, and the state's unemployment insurance system processed nearly 800,000 applications. This emptied the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Trust Fund that now has a deficit of over \$1 billion. At the same time, relief funds flooded into the state. The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided \$2 billion and the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided \$2.83 billion, to help with pandemic related expenses. Most other states – 31 of them, to be exact – used relief funds to replenish unemployment. But Minnesota didn't use a dime for this purpose.

If policymakers don't act, employers will be hit with double digit payroll tax increases.



The Legislature must act
• Use existing funds to repay the state's unemployment insurance debt



Main Street March Newsletter

Ben Strand, Program Manager
Main Street Program

Shop Small Winter Edition

Shop Small Winter Edition is back for its second year! With the goal of encouraging shopping and supporting our downtown business community, participating businesses are offering coupons for an entire month through March 22. You can find a limited amount of coupon books at participating businesses, but if you don't happen to get your hands on one you can also print coupons you want to use online at winonamainstreet.com/shopsmallwinteredition. Coupons are only valid for one use and cannot be used in conjunction with another coupon.

Your support means a lot to these businesses and keeps our downtown growing and thriving. Let's keep working toward making our downtown a place people want to be!

Participating businesses include:
Acoustic Café, Blooming Grounds, Island City Brewing Company, Miya Japanese Bistro, Baker Shoes, Saporì di Sicilia, Chapter 2 Books, Grace Place, Green Thumb Artistry, Great River Shakespeare Festival,

Hardt's Music, Heart's Desire, Holtan's Jewelry, ORNO Gift + Home, La Boutique, The Rippled Leaf, River City Outlet, Sugar Loaf Lane Resale & Boutique, Winona County Historical Society.

Parade of Trucks

Last year we switched the format of Touch-A-Truck to a parade style event to better follow the Covid-19 restrictions at the time. The parade format was so well received by attendees that we decided to keep it that way moving forward!

Stay tuned to our Facebook page as we'll be putting out more information about the event in the coming weeks. Can't wait to see everyone there!

If you or your business would like to have a vehicle (or vehicles) involved in the parade, or you'd like to learn about sponsor opportunities, contact Ben at bstrand@winonachamber.com or call 507-452-2272.



CHAMBER CHAMPIONS

- VISIONARY -



- PREMIER -



VITERBO UNIVERSITY



- EXECUTIVE -



**BE SEEN • BE HEARD • BELONG
JOIN THE CHAMBER!**

It's not just business as usual in Winona. The potential dividends from an investment in the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce are unlimited, because what develops at the Chamber is everyone's business.

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BIZ BITES



Andrew Guzzo has been promoted to Chief Banking Officer & President (Winona) at **Merchants Bank**, according to Greg Evans, President & CEO. Guzzo will continue to have primary leadership responsibility for Merchants Bank's Winona and Goodview locations, along with meaningful community engagement for the Winona area. Additionally, Guzzo will now also oversee the strategic direction of the Wealth Management division, Marketing and other key centralized business units. "Andrew has provided outstanding leadership for our Winona and Southeast Region market locations over the last five years and constantly models the servant leadership approach that is at the core of our culture," said Evans. "His promotion will help ensure that Merchants' strong leadership culture continues into the future as we work to continue to be the community bank of choice for individuals, families and businesses across our footprint." Guzzo joined Merchants Bank as Winona & Southeast Regional President in 2017. Prior to Merchants he spent more than a decade in the banking industry, working for American Bank & Trust in the Quad Cities (Iowa/Illinois) area and leading NXT Bank in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He also has more than 15 years of sales and sales management experience with US Foods.



Denver Brown, a certified physician assistant (PA-C) at **Winona Health** has received the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine Physician Assistant Program and Services 2021 Preceptor of the Year award. According to Maria Meller, Coordinator of Clinical Program Services Department of Physician Assistant Studies and Services, "Denver has been a favorite with the Program for many years." "Denver provided an exceptional learning experience. He allowed me to have an active role in procedures and helped me to grow as a provider by asking thought-provoking questions and providing thorough education on various topics. He was and still is my role model for talking with patients, providing clear and appropriate levels of education to patients and remaining up to date with the newest health maintenance screening recommendations, treatment plans, and constantly expanding his scope of practice. I could have stayed and learned from him all year!" - Student of the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine Physician Assistant Program. The award was presented in December 2021 by Dr. David Aspery, Professor and Chair of the Department of Physician Assistant Studies. Brown has been caring for the community at Winona Health since 2016. He is from Becker, Minnesota, and earned his bachelor's degree from Winona State University before completing the physician assistant program at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine. He achieved a perfect score on his Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE). While earning his undergraduate degree at WSU, he was a supplemental instructor for Anatomy and Physiology and a nursing assistant at Saint Anne of Winona, now Benedictine Living Community Winona.



WNB Financial is pleased to announce that **Ben Knuesel** has joined the Business Banking Team as Treasury Management Advisor. In his new role, Knuesel assists Business Banking clients with Cash Management and other electronic banking services. While his office is located in Winona, he will serve clients in all markets including Winona, Wabasha, Altoona, and Holmen. "Ben's ability to provide innovative solutions and build relationships makes him a natural fit for the role," said Chad Anderson, Vice President and Senior Lending Manager. "He's passionate about helping people and commits to achieving results at a high level. I'm excited to see him perform in his new role, and we're fortunate as an organization to have him." "I'm excited to build relationships through the same community-focused company that helped me start my career," Knuesel said. "I look forward to providing top tier service and solutions to our customers and becoming their trusted financial advisor." Prior to his new role, Knuesel spent seven years in the WNB Financial Marketing Department. He currently serves the board of directors for Ready Set School, is a meal delivery driver for Winona Volunteer Services, and has volunteered for many other community organizations including Habitat for Humanity Serving Winona County and the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce.



If you are interested in leading the way with us, go to www.winonachamber.com and complete the online form. To set up an appointment to explore the advantages of Chamber membership or to learn more about available resources at the Winona Chamber contact us at (507) 452-2272 or email info@winonachamber.com

NEW MEMBERS



Hope Harbor's mission is to equip teens, empower parents, and serve those in need by anchoring them to the hope of God's promises. Hope Harbor is a privately funded 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization operating as a Christian ministry, serving teens ages 12-17 in a small setting and reconciling them to their families.

Hope Harbor transforms lives through a cohesive program including education, biblical counsel, life skills, and spiritual growth all focused on restoration to the family unit. Every family that comes through the door at Hope Harbor Winona hears the gospel as the basis for their reconciliation. Hope Harbor Winona is blessed to love, serve, and help the families achieve functionality. Parents are equipped, teens choose to heal, relationships are restored. The Winona location has been open since 2017 and is the second location opened by Hope Harbor. Winona has a capacity for six girls on site.

For more information on Hope Harbor visit them at hopeharbormn.org or email them at winona@hopeharbormn.org.



Luxe Hair & Beauty knows that you deserve the best! Luxe stylists are elite trained in the latest hair artistry techniques, with many years of experience and training from top educators all around the U.S.

Luxe is a luxury and eco-friendly hair salon that offers organic beauty products and coloring services. They currently carry Kevin Murphy and Moroccan oil hair care lines. They have 7 stylists with an array of backgrounds and cannot wait to help you with your hair care and beauty needs!

To learn more about Luxe Hair & Beauty and the services they provide visit them at luxehairwinona.com, give them a call at 507.474.1161, or send them an email at luxehairwinona@gmail.com.



Peak 7 is a unique client experience that owner Garry Watts has created to help business owners, CEO's, and their Leadership Teams address issues.

Issues Garry covers are- Growth: of their leaders, their people, and their profits; Control: business is run on a system with structured accountability, so everyone knows who is doing what, and what "good" looks like; Impact: to think bigger about the impact of their business and help them get their lives back.

To learn more about Peak 7 and the services they can provide you and your team give them a call at 507.458.5407 or send Garry an email at gwatts@peak7strategies.com.

FEDERATION

MINNESOTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2022 Legislative Session Priorities Minnesota's economic recovery is imperative

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. The Federation is comprised of nearly 50 chambers representing more than 75 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.

Accelerate economic growth

The state's two-year budget was set in 2021 with nearly a 12% increase in all funds spending from the previous biennium. Minnesota will have a significant forecasted budget surplus providing the opportunity to accelerate the state's economic growth and improving Minnesota's tax climate. The state will be flush with cash:

- \$7.7 billion in additional surplus dollars
- \$1.15 Billion federal funds unspent (from \$2.8 billion federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA))
- \$2.65 Billion budget reserves (after expected transfer in November 2021)

Replenish the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Trust Fund: Use ARPA funds and the large budget surplus to help resolve the \$1.13 billion deficit in Minnesota's UI Trust Fund. Nearly half of the other states in the country have replenished their unemployment insurance funds with money from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) or ARPA. Minnesota

lawmakers could impose a significant payroll tax hike on employers to replenish the fund. Increased payroll taxes will further impede economic recovery. Employers should not be penalized especially when state and federal funds are available to cover this pandemic created deficit in the UI Trust Fund.

Offer tax relief: Reducing Minnesota's tax burden continues to be the number one priority of Minnesota businesses. Minnesota has the third highest corporate income tax, and fifth highest personal income tax rate in the country. These taxes, coupled with other significant tax burdens are one of the major factors driving an increase in the number of businesses to consider locating and expanding in other states. The Legislature can encourage long term economic growth by reducing uncompetitive taxes that are hindering entrepreneurship, talent recruitment and retention, and business growth and investment. This includes getting Minnesota out of the top ten highest tax rankings by lowering top rates for both corporate and individual income taxes; continuing progress in reducing the state business property tax levy and enacting federal estate tax conformity.

Enact employer friendly workforce strategies: The ability to attract and retain workers is as important to employers as reducing the overall tax burden. Minnesota employers are subject to a unique 0.1% payroll tax that generates over \$150 million dollars per biennium for workforce development programs that too many employers simply do not use. A more collaborative approach in the development and management of and access to these programs would provide a greater return on investment for both employers and our workforce. Further, allowing employers to receive a credit on this tax to support their own customized training specific to their needs would have an immediate and direct benefits to the workforce.

Facilitate innovation and productivity: An important ingredient for Minnesota's future success is a thriving and growing private sector. Business success is contingent on an environment that is attractive to investment, risk-taking,

innovation and growing productivity. Access to capital is also critical. Encouraging investment and innovation through the angel tax credit; enhancing the research-and-development tax credit and similar tax incentives to encourage investment and productivity improvements will help generate needed capital for new business growth.

Do no harm

Oppose additional mandates and workplace restrictions: Minnesota businesses must be provided the autonomy to make appropriate and responsive decisions for their workplace, and changing economic conditions. We support employer flexibility in determining workplace wage, benefit, scheduling and staffing decisions. Employers design benefit packages to meet their employees' needs. Employer protections must be recognized, addressed and implemented if Minnesota legalizes use of recreational marijuana.

Streamline inefficient regulation: Reasonable regulation is essential to keeping Minnesota's workers, consumers, and our environment safe and healthy, but Minnesota burdens employers with regulations, certifications, licensing, and permitting requirements more than other more competitive states. Overregulation harms our economy - by raising prices, thwarting competition, stifling employee earnings, and can keep otherwise qualified individuals unnecessarily under-employed - or out of the workforce altogether. We support reforms requiring the state to use the least restrictive regulation necessary and remove duplication. Minnesota's environmental and regulatory process must provide greater timeliness, accountability and predictability.