

## **Elevating business advocacy to the next level**

By David C. Olson

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce is positioning itself to become an even more effective advocate for the statewide business community. Our leadership, and the leadership of our local chamber partners, is needed now more than ever.

And we are responding. Our Board of Directors has adopted a strategic plan that aims to enrich our grassroots efforts, develop a more aggressive public relations strategy, add to the strength of our lobbying team, increase our political clout and grow our membership. The strategic plan culminated eight months of examining where our organization is, where we want to be, and what investments must be made to attain the next level.

**Our local partners are an integral cog in carrying out those initiatives. We especially recognize those chambers that are members of the Chamber Federation, including the River Heights Chamber of Commerce. These chambers, by resolution, have committed to be Federation partners in 2012 by formally supporting the business community's top priority issues: Build the state budget with priority-based budgeting; reinstate K-12 high school graduation standards; implement cost-based electricity rates; bring more certainty to environmental review and permitting; create a state-designed health insurance exchange. Federation members also are partners in Grow Minnesota!, our private-sector initiative committed to retaining and creating Minnesota jobs.**

The dynamics of the federation approach - the Minnesota Chamber working in tandem with local chambers and our members - has been a successful formula for addressing public policy issues. The network represents and advocates for the interests of all of our members - large or small, whether located in Greater Minnesota or the metropolitan area, and no matter what their service or product.

The Minnesota Chamber is poised and committed to advancing nonpartisan, pro-business and responsible public policy to improve the lives of all Minnesotans. Three principles are essential for our success: Develop the best talent for our workforce; bring certainty to business costs; ensure fairness in state rules and regulations.

Now is the time to build on our record of advocacy and deliver a unified message to policy-makers in St. Paul. The political environment is increasingly polarized. Attacks on businesses are more frequent. And Minnesota companies are increasingly competing in a global economy.

Our relationship with local chambers of commerce is the foundation of the Minnesota Chamber's grassroots network and our success at the Capitol. We pledge to work with everyone to speak as one voice on critical issues that affect our economy.

David Olson is president of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. For more information, visit [www.mnchamber.com](http://www.mnchamber.com).