

November elections: Don't sit on sidelines ***By David C. Olson***

Our work begins now for advancing statewide business priorities at the 2011 Legislature.

This year's general election is important for all Minnesotans as the governor and all constitutional officers, plus each of the 201 House and Senate members, are on the Nov. 2 ballot. It's critical to elect a governor and legislators who understand the importance of creating private-sector jobs and economic opportunity in our state.

The stakes are high. Those who win in November will be charged with:

- Resolving a nearly \$6 billion projected shortfall in the general fund: Will they increase taxes on employers and individuals, or will they emphasize and enact spending reform and restraint?
- Crafting important public policy decisions: Will they support or stifle reforms in education, taxes and spending, energy, environment, labor and transportation?
- Making key commissioner and judicial appointments: These appointees and their decisions can have a direct and lasting impact on Minnesota's business climate and your company's bottom line.
- Redistricting: New boundaries for legislative and congressional districts will shape Minnesota elections and policies for the next decade.

The goal of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and its network of local chambers is to help you make an informed decision on which individuals will best advance the interests of the statewide business community, and provide tools and a variety of avenues to support those candidacies.

Election Center – The Election Center, as part of the new and customized Action Center on the Minnesota Chamber website, provides information and resources to be effective voters. Individuals can view candidate responses to questionnaires on statewide business issues.

Mymn – mymn.org is a new approach to addressing the issues important to everyone's quality of life. This multiyear project is a new opportunity for all Minnesotans to speak their minds and have a real impact on the state's future.

Political Action Committee - Our nonpartisan Political Action Committee endorses and helps elect pro-business candidates for the Legislature. Personal contributions finance independent political expenditures made on behalf of political candidates. To learn more about the Leadership Fund, click on <http://www.mnchamberpac.com/>.

MN Forward: Corporations now have the ability to contribute to a new organization. MN Forward is a growing coalition of private-sector employers that will make independent expenditures to help elect candidates who agree with our agenda of growing jobs and

Minnesota's economy. The organization is made possible by a U.S. Supreme Court decision and a subsequent ruling by the U.S. District Court in St. Paul. Nonpartisan legislation signed by the governor clarified that corporations and unions have a right to freedom of speech during campaigns. Corporate contributions will be disclosed to the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board similar to the personal contributions to PACs. Contributions are not deductible as a business expense. MN Forward will not make contributions to candidates or coordinate efforts with candidates or candidate committees. To make a donation, visit www.MNForward.com.

Minnesota job providers have a stake in Minnesota's future, because we live here, too. We send our children to local schools, volunteer with local charities, support each other's businesses – and we value the economic opportunity and quality of life our state has to offer.

A recent poll shows that voters are already focused on economic issues like jobs, the state budget and reining in government spending. But our message won't spread by itself. We need broad-based support across the statewide business community to engage voters and to ensure the economy and job growth are at the forefront of the election debate.

Our challenge – and the impact on your company's bottom line – is clear. This year we have an important and unprecedented opportunity to help elect candidates who support our agenda to create jobs and grow Minnesota's economy. The other side is organized and moving aggressively. We must take action now.

David Olson is president of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. For more information, visit the Web at www.mnchamber.com.

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