

Join us March 8 for Business Day at the Capitol

By Doug Loon

It's difficult enough to compete in today's global economy and the everchanging circumstances that are out of our control. That's all the more reason to bring stability to Minnesota's business environment. Owners and managers need as much certainty as possible if they are to invest dollars to start and expand operations in our state.

The Minnesota Chamber works every day to strengthen the business climate to the benefit of all Minnesotans.

We're most successful in our efforts when the statewide business community sends a united message to the governor and legislators. March 8 is the perfect opportunity. Please join us and our local chamber partners for our annual Business Day at the Capitol.

Our legislative priorities this year are focused on Making Minnesota Ready for the future – ready for change and ready to grow. We seek to bring peace of mind to all Minnesota businesses no matter your size, location or industry.

Leading our agenda this year:

**Enact tax relief:** Reduce uncompetitive taxes to encourage investment, innovation and growth among all businesses.

**Expand health care options:** Ensure access to quality, affordable health care for employers and their employees by expanding options, especially for small and midsize companies.

**Pass long-term transportation investment:** Pass strategic and sustained funding of roads, bridges and transit.

**Minimize workplace mandates:** Pass the Uniform State Labor Standards Act to explicitly preempt local governments from enacting their own wage and benefit mandates on private employers.

We've had some significant early successes.

The Governor has signed legislation which brings immediate relief to all Minnesotans who buy health insurance in the individual market. The bill contains important provisions to increase small employers' options for providing health insurance to their employees.

Real ID legislation has passed the House and is headed toward a Senate floor vote. Conforming to federal law is important to Minnesotans of all rank and file. Unless the Minnesota Legislature passes REAL ID legislation this year, you will not be allowed to use your Minnesota driver's license to get on a commercial airline flight in January 2018. Already, since 2015, you can't get into a federal building or a military facility with your Minnesota license.

Several other bills addressing Minnesota business priorities have been introduced and are advancing, thanks to the support of our members and local chamber partners. This is an especially critical time at the Capitol. The Legislature faces a fast track with all three committee deadlines in March - 10, 17, and 31.

At our forefront is reducing uncompetitive taxes and high cost burdens that are undermining investment, growth, innovation and entrepreneurship in Minnesota. The budget surplus presents a great opportunity. It's noteworthy that of the \$2.57 billion surplus from the 2015 and 2016 legislative sessions, only 1 percent was used for tax relief and nearly half of the surplus went toward new spending. Governor Dayton's tax proposal for the next two-year budget cycle provides for only \$54 million in net tax relief out of the \$1.65 billion surplus in the general fund. His proposal actually increases taxes on businesses by \$100 million.

Rest assured, the Minnesota Chamber and our local chamber partners lead the charge year-around to improve your bottom line for the benefit of your company and your employees – to bring stability to the business climate so businesses can grow and prosper. We support your needs at the Capitol by advancing and passing policy with the goal of securing the health of our state's economy so we can adapt to changing competitive pressures. Please join your peers March 8 and send a united message. Together, we will ensure that Minnesota's economy continues to change and grow.

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