

Help wanted: Throw your hat in ring for 2014 elections

By David C. Olson

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce is recruiting candidates now to seek a legislative seat in the November 2014 elections. Please step forward, and we'll guide and support you through the election process. Our pitch is sincere and straightforward. It's more important than ever that we send men and women, Democrats and Republicans, to the Capitol who understand what it takes to run a business in today's dynamic economy.

Why the urgency? Witness the legacy of the 2013 Legislature. The session kicked off with a common theme of jobs. Yet the gavel closed one of the most bruising and challenging sessions for Minnesota employers and their employees. We ask you to join the Minnesota Chamber and our statewide network of local chambers to place a priority on electing pro-business individuals to the Minnesota House in 2014.

We're working on many fronts to build relationships with existing legislators as well as to identify pro-business candidates. Here are a few ways you can help.

Offer personal tours of your business: Think about leaders in your community who understand what it's like to operate a business, and encourage them to run for the Legislature. Invite candidates and legislators to your facility, whether you are a large manufacturer or have three employees. Seeing your business and your employees in action is a great way to educate policy-makers on the issues you face and your value to your community and Minnesota.

Communicate with your workers: Communicate with employees about the key issues that face your company and their paychecks. Do what works best for you, whether it's including information in newsletters or conducting an information session over lunch hour. Then encourage and allow individuals to run for office if you can make it work for your businesses.

Support pro-business candidates: Seeking elective office can be a daunting task, especially for political newcomers. You can support candidate efforts in a variety of ways – from knocking on doors or writing a letter to the local newspaper to introducing them to other key business leaders or writing a check to their campaigns.

The Minnesota Chamber has a skilled team that works diligently at managing the risks that legislative decisions pose to you. Our ultimate success, however, depends on the individuals who cast the "yes" and "no" votes.

Our work for the 2014 elections begins with targeting individuals who can bring their business acumen to St. Paul. There's no better place to identify candidates than within our working ranks. While we acknowledge the challenge for employers and employees alike with the time demands of today's Legislature, we must make electing pro-business candidates a higher priority. The results of the 2013 session speak for themselves. Minnesota cannot afford more sessions like the one we just had.

David Olson is president of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce – www.mnchamber.com.