

Circle Nov. 8: Let's make Minnesota Ready to compete and grow

By Doug Loon

Minnesotans will go to the polls Nov. 8 to elect all 201 legislators in the State House and Senate. We issue our first challenge to all those elected: Let's focus on placing Minnesota in the top 10 states for job, economic and income growth.

Minnesota needs to be ready for the future – ready for change, ready to grow and ready to compete.

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and our local chamber partners work year-round to help all Minnesota businesses grow and excel. We advocate for public policies to promote economic opportunity and strengthen our business climate that ultimately benefit all Minnesotans by encouraging a growing economy and good jobs.

Where does Minnesota stand? The inaugural Minnesota Business Benchmarks, a collection of key economic business indicators, shows mixed results. The second annual report, which will be released in October by the Minnesota Chamber and our Chamber Federation partners, provides key data points to determine how Minnesota is faring compared with the rest of the nation.

The good news is that we have a dynamic and diverse economy forged by a business culture that is rooted in innovation and growth. We are proud of our talented workforce. Our business owners are forward-thinking and risk-takers. We have a great quality of life. Data show we are improving in key infrastructure areas of transportation and educational achievement, though there's more work to do.

Despite our achievements, however, the Business Benchmarks report clearly shows signs of stress in our business climate. Too many indicators show Minnesota's costs of doing business are not competitive in today's global economy with business taxes among the highest in the nation.

It's important to note that most other states including our neighbors are working to lower costs and regulations to be more attractive for business growth and expansion. Minnesota, unfortunately, is going the opposite direction.

Electing government leaders who understand that business is the engine of our economy is essential if Minnesota is to be ready to compete. Minnesotans can do their part by helping to elect pro-jobs, pro-business candidates to the Legislature.

We invite you to use the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce as an elections resource. Check out our [2016 Voting Record](#) to see if candidates have supported Minnesota employers in the past. Look to the Minnesota Chamber [Leadership Fund PAC site](#) to see which individuals will best advance pro-jobs policies at the Capitol.

The 2016 Legislature was a missed opportunity to enact policies to help develop and grow Minnesota's economy. We still hold hope of a possible special session to complete work from the regular session. Our priorities are to provide much needed tax relief and invest in transportation funding for roads,

bridges and transit. That's just a start. We must take steps every year to strengthen the business climate if Minnesota is to compete in the everchanging global economy.

Rarely does a new legislative session kick off without leaders pledging to advance policies to create jobs for Minnesotans. I fondly recall a favorite saying of our friend and my predecessor, David Olson: "You cannot be pro-jobs and anti-business." This seems to be forgotten by many who are advocating for new regulations, more costs and overall making it harder for job-creators in our great state.

Let's collectively pledge to deliver solutions to ensure that Minnesota is ready for change and ready to grow. That benefits all Minnesotans.

Doug Loon is president of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce – www.mnchamber.com.