



Marshall Area

Chamber of  
COMMERCE

## Business Community Sets the Stage for 2006 Legislative Session

**The 2006 Legislative Session will begin on March 1.** The Chamber has been preparing for the session for several months, meeting with and surveying members concerning policy issues that are important to them, as well as holding discussions with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and other regional chambers to determine where we can collaborate together.

Since the 2006 session is in an even numbered year, the legislative session will be focused on bonding issues. Typically, this indicates that it will be a quick session, with legislators limiting their agendas to bonding issues, rather than major policy initiatives. Rising health care costs, the state budget and taxes, plus transportation funding are major concerns that carried over from last year's lengthy session.

**The Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce is working on several priorities that have been identified by our members, Government Affairs Committee and our Board of Directors as issues of most importance to our member businesses and our community.**

We will work with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, and other local chambers as advocates of the business community, here in Marshall and across the state. In fact, you might note, that with only a few exceptions, the results of our member poll are quite similar to the Minnesota Chamber's, indicating that businesses across the state do agree on their highest priority legislative issues.

Public policy influences business success, workforce and community development, education at all levels and the quality of life throughout Southwestern Minnesota.

The Government Affairs Committee sponsors

issue forums, session updates, candidate debates, surveys and participation in regional coalitions and information sessions.

MACC believes that by studying, debating and taking positions on important business issues, the Chamber membership can impact the governmental process for the betterment of area businesses and the greater community.

For more information about the priorities of the Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce, please contact the Chamber office.

The following are Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce preliminary priorities for 2006:

### Transportation:

Minnesota's transportation infrastructure must be funded to insure the safest, most cost-effective transportation system that will meet the economic and quality of life needs of our state. Funding must also be long-term and sustainable. In addition, a transportation plan must be accountable and efficient, statewide, multimodal, project specific and financed through users.

- ◆ Continue to advocate for Minnesota Moves, a long term initiative that links new transportation revenues to specific projects --- such as improvement of Highway 23.
- ◆ Promote passage of a constitutional amendment to dedicate the proceeds from motor vehicle sales tax (MVST) to transportation purposes.
- ◆ Advocate for increased transportation funding in the bonding bill.

### Health Care:

Quality health care should be available and affordable for all Minnesotans. Initiatives to

PUBLIC POLICY

2006

**A Guide to the Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce Legislative Issue Priorities**

insure this should come from both the Legislature and the marketplace.

- ♦Health care plans should be designed to reward providers based on quality and value, including tiered networks, centers of excellence, and performance pricing.
- ♦Incentives should be provided to create health information systems where data can be easily shared among providers.
- ♦Consumers should have easy access to comparable information on cost and quality so they can make informed purchasing decisions.

### **State Budget:**

A balanced state budget should deliver services with maximum results, accountability and efficiency.

### **Energy:**

The reliability of Minnesota's electric system should be improved by increasing transmission capacity.

- ♦The use of renewable energy should be encouraged through the use of financial incentives and market forces, rather than mandating the use of these technologies.

### **Environment:**

Rules, regulations and processes that impede economic growth should be streamlined.

- ♦Business should work proactively with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to reduce mercury pollution through voluntary efforts.
- ♦Business should continue to promote the Clean Water Legacy Act to clean up the state's "impaired waters" and prevent new limits on business growth.

### **Emerging Issues:**

Other issues that will continue to be monitored and reported by the Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce are:

### **Eminent Domain:**

Recent Supreme Court case rulings did not change how eminent domain can be used in Minnesota, however the topic is likely to generate debate as several areas of Minnesota law are more clearly defined.

### **Elections and Legislative Reform:**

Although recent legislative sessions were generally positive for business, many citizens have started to question the legislative process, which appears to be overwhelmed by politics. Changes to elections and the legislative process that increase the legislature's accountability to all Minnesotans should be debated.

### **Education and Workforce Development:**

The workforce shortage needs to be addressed to ensure that Minnesota businesses stay competitive in a global marketplace. Our state needs to do a better job of bringing new Americans into our workforce, and businesses need to be proactive in explaining their worker training needs. MACC members feel strongly that today's students --- tomorrow's workforce --- needs more comprehensive information about the benefits of technical and vocational careers, and well as the value of higher education.

Watch for our Legislative Updates, published bi-weekly during the session to keep you updated concerning these and other pending business issues.

## **Enterprise Network Systems Analysis**

Economic Development staff from communities in our region are currently participating in a project facilitated by the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Council called Enterprise Network Systems (ENS). ENS is a unique approach to economic development.

1990's economic development through was characterized by the notion of industry clusters --- or groups of interrelated firms that derive some competitive advantage from the regional mix of resources available. The cluster concept has driven many communities to assess their industry make-up and identify their competitive advantages.

Although it is relatively easy to map our local industry strengths, it is much more difficult to identify those industries that are missing from the local economy --- industries that do not currently reside in the area but could benefit from the resources within that area. The ENS tool uses existing regional industry data to identify such potential industries. Committee input steers the direction and application of the end product.

Beyond providing a data-driven tool for decision-making, ENS can drive new collaboration across communities and organizations.

For more information about this project, contact Tracy Veglahn at 532-4484, or Cameron Macht, DEED Regional Statistician at [cameron.macht@state.mn.us](mailto:cameron.macht@state.mn.us).



## Recruiting New Employees?

**The Chamber can help! We have complete relocation packets available that can be customized for your business. Whether your needs are for one or one hundred, call us at 532-4484, and we would be glad to discuss your recruitment material needs.**