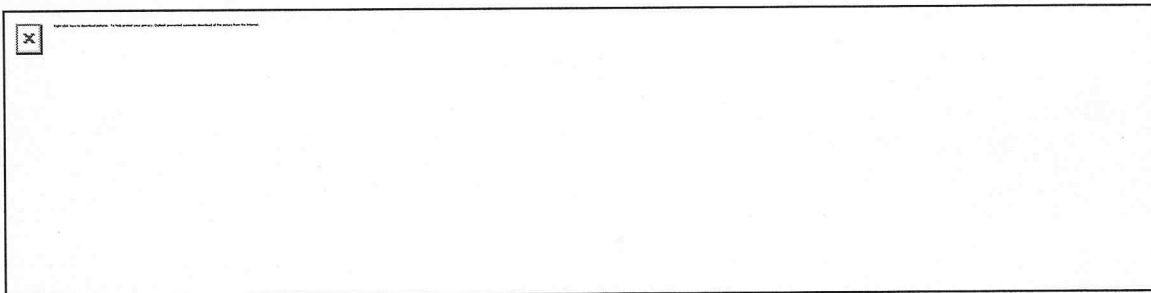

From:
Sent: Monday, May 16, 2011 9:03 AM
To:
Subject: FW: CIR Solutions Offered - Time to Act

If you haven't seen this article...enjoy below.

From:]]
Sent: Monday, May 16, 2011 8:02 AM
Subject: CIR Solutions Offered - Time to Act



Below is an editorial that was submitted to the Omaha World-Herald. It was published on Sunday, May 15, 2011.

This editorial was written by the following individuals:

Jim Krieger, Greater Omaha Chamber chairman of the board

Tonn M. Ostergard, Lincoln Chamber of Commerce chairman of the board

Jeffrey M. Scherer, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry chairman of the board

Over the past months, the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) has been consistently in the news. The CIR is an appointed body that mandates resolutions of wage and benefit disputes between government employers and their employee unions. We are interested in this issue because we are concerned about the impact high taxes have on the ability of the state economy to grow. Our business members, their employees and their families are all affected.

In January, nine proposals were introduced in the Nebraska Legislature attempting to reform the CIR. In April, the Business and Labor Committee unveiled a proposal, which has become LB397. The process involved in developing LB397 was not conducive to participation by all stakeholders interested in helping shape a solution.

In January, representatives from our business organizations testified before the Business and Labor Committee advocating for substantive change in the function and structure of the CIR. Those proposals were killed by the committee.

In the spirit of compromise, a few weeks later we offered a major proposal that would have fully preserved collective bargaining for public employees and retained the CIR, but would allow the CIR to share powers with elected officials. We began with these four basic principles: impact all

facets of government, including schools; result in the opportunity for cost savings and/or cost containment for every facet of government; allow elected officials and public employers to manage the budget they were elected to manage; provide a transparent means to resolve labor disputes. That proposal was also rejected.

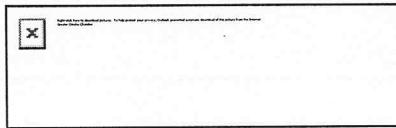
Yet again, in the spirit of compromise, we are offering another significant proposal that would retain collective bargaining for public employees and keep the CIR. This new proposal focuses on providing flexibility and creativity by establishing a range for total compensation rather than establishing a definitive wage. Our proposal was developed after receiving input from broad-based constituencies not previously represented. It allows for transparency and several cost-containment measures. We believe all stakeholders benefit.

The business community continues to search for an appropriate solution to this vexing problem for the benefit of the state. In business, we know it is imperative to provide competitive wages and benefits that attract the best talent. We believe the same holds true for government employees. Average is not inspiring.

Businesses understand we won't be in business long if we lose control of our expenses. The same is true for government, and out-of-control expenses negatively affect taxpayers. Our innovative approach effectively addresses the issues we've outlined above while LB397 doesn't work and doesn't address the fundamental problems with the process.

It is important that substantive and comprehensive change to the CIR be accomplished legislatively this session. We understand that time is very short but we pledge to continue to work toward a solution.

We encourage all Nebraskans to ask their senators to seek real CIR reform.



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