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State Chamber/AIA Continues Leadership Role Against Union Card Check Effort

The State Chamber/AIA continued its leadership role during 2009 throughout Arkansas against proposed federal Union Card Check legislation. Spearheading the coalition, Arkansans For The Secret Ballot, the State Chamber/AIA continued holding meetings with members, making presentations to organizations across the state, meeting with editorial boards and sending letters to members of the Arkansas Congressional Delegation urging opposition to the so-called proposed “Employee Free Choice Act.”

The bill is expected to be re-introduced in Congress in 2010. If this legislation becomes law, unions can be formed in any business by simply obtaining the signature of more than half of a recognizable group of employees on a card. If a contract is not reached within 90 days, then the matter goes to binding arbitration. The unions have one year to collect the signatures and the law eliminates the use of secret ballots – only the signed cards are used to determine if a union will be formed.

Federal Healthcare Reform Legislation Efforts

During 2009, federal healthcare reform legislation was introduced in both the House and Senate. The House passed its version of the bill in November and the Senate passed its version on Christmas Eve. The State Chamber/AIA took a leadership role in attempting to influence our Congressional Delegation to slow down and rethink the process.

We also joined 20 other state chambers in a coalition, Employers for Quality Health Care, which provided information and a grassroots organization for our members to use on this issue.

In November, we sent a letter to Senators Lincoln and Pryor asking them to vote against cloture and the Senate bills that were then being considered. “We agree that America needs some reform of its healthcare system, but all of the current Congressional proposals are, in our opinion, too much, too soon, too costly and all are loaded with potentially adverse unintended consequences,” the letter said. “We believe better reform can be accomplished by taking incremental, manageable steps as opposed to wholesale, difficult-to-measure changes.

“Reducing the cost of healthcare must be a priority and this can be done without the major changes in the current proposals. Many companies ... are currently getting good results. Their costs are not out of control. On the contrary, they are achieving reductions in costs and increased satisfaction levels with their employees. There are many innovative programs like theirs that Congress should nurture and encourage.”

As this publication was going to press, final legislation had not been agreed to by the House and Senate and signed into law.

Recap of 87th General Assembly

During the 2009 Legislative Session, the State Chamber/AIA was successful in its role as the business community’s voice before Arkansas’s elected officials. Following the direction of a legislative agenda adopted by our general membership which was developed in the months prior to the session, we were successful in accomplishing the agenda’s four priorities: to lead the effort to pass a sales tax exemption for energy used in industry and manufacturing, to protect the education reforms passed in 2003-04, to protect the legal reforms enacted by Act 649 of 2003 and to protect the workers’ compensation reforms enacted by Act 796 of 1993. We also worked to both pass and block legislation in a manner to enhance the economic climate in Arkansas.

Through the State Chamber/AIA’s leadership and with the cooperation of several key legislators, we were able to further reduce the sales tax that manufacturers pay on energy costs. This measure has the potential to save manufacturers millions of dollars.

Finally, we were successful on several other issues that impact the business climate such as taxes, energy efficiency and climate change, unemployment insurance, protecting the popular vote election of the U.S. President, constitutional amendments to enhance economic development, immigration, animal cruelty and a statewide trauma system.
Tax Issues

To accomplish our goal of achieving a sales tax exemption for energy used by manufacturers during the 2009 Legislative Session, we balanced our analysis of the session’s political environment with the desire of all manufacturing members of the State Chamber/AIA. First, we filed a bill that would have created an exemption for all fuels used by all manufacturers in Arkansas.

However, it was very evident that such an exemption was not in the Governor’s budget nor was there sufficient political will among legislators to pass such an exemption in 2009. We then shifted our focus to extending the 2 percent reduction we gained in 2007 on electricity and natural gas used by manufacturers in NAICS codes 31, 32 and 33.

We worked closely with House Revenue and Taxation Committee Chairman John Lowrey, House Joint Budget Committee Chairman Bruce Maloch, Rep. David Dunn and Sen. Barbara Horn who negotiated with the Governor’s office and helped build legislative support inside the Capitol. We also organized and managed a group of manufacturing lobbyists who worked to gain legislative support. Eventually we agreed upon a three-fourths percent reduction in the sales tax paid by manufacturers in NAICS codes 31-32-33 on their electricity and natural gas. Our agreement was contained in identical bills, HB 1624 and SB 875, which became Acts 691 and 695.

In addition to the sales tax reduction for manufacturing, we were also able to pass two additional tax bills. Early in the session, our Tax Committee developed a bill to clarify the exemption for machinery/equipment and tools/dies (SB 770) and a taxpayer’s bill of rights to address tax appeals (SB 769).

These bills were held until the sales tax reduction for manufacturing was completed, which was in the latter weeks of the session. The state Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) was strongly opposed to SB 769 and SB 770. We met with DFA multiple times trying to resolve our differences but got nowhere until we obtained a Do Pass recommendation from the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee on the tax payer bill of rights, SB 769 by Sen. Larry Teague and Rep. Keith Ingram. Then we were able to negotiate an agreement with DFA on SB 769 that changed the standard of proof in tax appeal cases from beyond a reasonable doubt to clear and convincing evidence. SB 769 is now Act 755. We also reached an agreement with DFA on SB 770 that clarifies the existing exemption on dies and molds. SB 770 is now Act 1208.

Mike Parker of Dover Dixon Horne PLLC discusses the tax impact for the reduced rate on manufacturing utilities, which was lowered during the 2009 legislative session, during a joint meeting of the Tax and Unemployment Committees. Parker serves as special tax counsel for the State Chamber/AIA.
Workers’ Compensation

HB 1362 by Rep. Mike Burris, Rep. Rick Green, Sen. Jerry Taylor and Sen. Joyce Elliott contained the agreement negotiated between the State Chamber/AIA and the AFL-CIO on workers’ compensation issues. This bill simply exempted workers’ individual disability policies that they paid for from the workers’ compensation benefit offset requirements, clarified the responsibility for second injury claims, allowed certain claims to move from the Second Injury Trust Fund to the Death and Permanent Disability Trust Fund and strengthened the proof of insurance requirements for certain contractors.

We ran into some unexpected opposition from legislators responding to concerns by small contractors and had some legislative drafting issues that complicated the contractor issue even more. However, we worked with the labor leaders and legislators as well as kept constant grass roots pressure on legislators to honor the negotiated agreement between the State Chamber/AIA and the AFL-CIO. The bill eventually passed and is now Act 327.

During the session, about a half dozen workers’ compensation bills were filed in addition to our agreed bill. Four were held or withdrawn in honor of the agreement between the State Chamber/AIA and the AFL-CIO. The other two passed. One was a simple attempt to deal with volunteer firefighter training, SB 872, which also expanded workers’ compensation coverage to include volunteers who do not fight fires. The State Chamber/AIA and AFL-CIO testified against the bill in the Senate Committee but it was obvious the legislature did not see this bill having a strong impact on the overall workers’ compensation system. It is now Act 808.

Rep. John Edwards filed HB 1403, the Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act. This bill was designed to help Arkansas attract medical professionals to assist in the case of an extreme emergency. After the bill was filed, the State Chamber/AIA and the AFL-CIO studied the bill and determined that it would provide a positive impact on the quality of life for all Arkansans and amended our agreement to include HB 1403, which is now Act 432. This bill will allow out-of-state medical providers to be declared state employees for the purpose of receiving Arkansas workers’ compensation benefits if they are injured while working in Arkansas. The state of Arkansas’s workers’ compensation trust fund agreed to accept such claims, which facilitated management and labor’s ability to include this bill in our agreement.

Energy Efficiency and Climate Change

As the bill filing deadline approached in early March, most of the bills related to energy efficiency, climate change and other issues arising from the Global Warming Commission were filed. The State Chamber/AIA Task Force on Energy identified about 30 bills related to these issues, but only seven required opposition. Of the bills that we were either neutral on or favored, about 10 became law.

Our opposition efforts focused on two bills: HB 1851 by Rep. Kathy Webb and HB 1903 by Rep. Joan Cash. We worked with a large coalition of our industrial and utility members to stop these two bills. HB 1903 would have required electric utilities to achieve energy efficiency recommendations by 2013 but would have allowed the utilities to pass the cost of the programs on to rate payers. Our estimates were that these programs could cost Arkansas rate payers as much as $72 million per year. HB 1851 would have required Arkansas’s public utilities to purchase at least 2 percent of their energy from renewable electric generation facilities. Our information indicated that such purchases could cost between 20 cents and 50 cents per kilowatt hour while we currently pay about 7 cents per kilowatt hour. We opposed both of these bills because of their cost impact on our member businesses. HB 1903 was pulled down by the sponsor without a vote and HB 1851 did not receive approval from the House Insurance and Commerce Committee.

We also applied grass roots pressure and worked with a coalition of organizations and businesses to defeat HB 1968 by Rep. Kathy Webb. We feared this bill would have created a chilling effect upon people’s willingness to serve the state through participation in boards and commissions that address the environment or any other issue by expanding the conflict of interest laws including an impact on family members and the addition of criminal enforcement. We believe that many people participate on boards and commissions because of their expertise and experience, and we could see this bill causing such expertise to disappear.

Health Care

The State Chamber/AIA worked with the Arkansas Employers Healthcare Coalition (AEHC) on a few healthcare-related issues in this session. In the first half of the session, the big issue was pharmacy benefit management (PBM). SB 460 by Sen. Percy Malone and HB 1601 by Rep. Allen Maxwell were bills that garnered our attention but were less troublesome than PBM legislation filed in previous sessions. Eventually a deal was struck on SB 460 which is now Act 769.
Late in the session our attention was drawn to three bills that would have mandated coverage for autism (SB 913), hearing aids (HB 1930), and reconstructive surgery (SB 940). We applied grass roots pressure to these bills while coordinating with members of the AEHC who were conducting in-Capitol lobbying and working with each bill’s sponsor. Our opposition to all of these bills was based upon the fact that all would increase healthcare costs. The reconstructive surgery bill was never considered in committee, the hearing-aid bill was amended from mandating coverage to being a mandated offering and the autism bill cleared the Senate but failed to gain approval from the House Insurance and Commerce Committee where the sponsor pulled the bill down and referred it to interim study.

Constitutional Amendments

Each legislative session the legislature can refer up to three proposed amendments to the state Constitution. During the 87th General Assembly, there were about 25 proposals filed by legislators and the State Chamber/AIA supported four: HJR 1003 by Rep. Bruce Maloch, HJR 1004 by Rep. Eddie Cheatham, HJR 1007 by House Speaker Robbie Wills and SJR 6 by Sen. Shane Broadway.

HJR 1007 would modify Amendment 82, the Super-Project Amendment, to make it more broadly applicable to projects in more areas and allow Arkansas to better compete with neighboring states for new businesses. Specifically, it would remove the investment and employment limits (currently $500 million in capital and 500 new employees), as well as the upper limit on the amount of bonds issued, for funding economic development projects. The Governor and the General Assembly would maintain control of which projects would be considered. HJR 1003 would remove the interest rate limits on bonds issued by governmental units and loans made to governmental units. This pro-economic development proposal would also help student loans. HJR 1004 would make the same changes in interest rate limits as HJR 1003. In addition, it would adjust interest rate limits to assist businesses that make consumer loans. SJR 6 was originally filed to make savings from performance-based efficiency projects revenue under the revenue bond statutes.

At their first joint meeting, the House and Senate State Agencies Committees voted to refer SJR 3 by Sen. Steve Faris to the 2010 General Election ballot. This would establish a state constitutional right to hunt and fish. The committees then voted to refer HJR 1007 to the ballot. Both of these joint resolutions were subsequently adopted by the full House and Senate. Meanwhile there was quite a bit of work done by the legislature and many interests on the third and final ballot referral. Eventually the original proposals of HJR 1003, HJR 1004 and SJR 6 were all blended into HJR 1004, which received the approval of both chambers and will be on the November 2010 ballot. The State Chamber/AIA will form a coalition to support passage of HJR 1007 and HJR 1004.

Immigration

In the interim period between the 2007 and 2009 sessions, there was much discussion about immigration legislation coming up in the 87th General Assembly. However, there were fewer than a half dozen bills filed. The most notable immigration bill was HB 1093 by Rep. Bill Sample. We joined with the Farm Bureau and the Poultry Federation in reviewing this bill and found it to be similar to legislation adopted in Oklahoma that was strongly opposed by similar interests as ours. Representatives of these three organizations met with Rep. Sample to discuss our concerns and Rep. Sample was very receptive to our comments. The bill was never brought up for consideration. Our organizational position is that immigration is a federal issue.
**Tort Reform and Education**

We monitored all legislation to identify attempts to weaken the civil justice and education reforms we helped pass in 2003 and 2004. Only three bills required any effort and all three were defeated.

**Animal Cruelty**

Agriculture’s strong impact on the Arkansas economy has put the State Chamber/AIA in the middle of battles over animal cruelty legislation in previous legislative sessions. However, prior to this session, representatives of the Attorney General’s office, the Farm Bureau Federation, the Poultry Federation and multiple animal rights groups worked out differences. Attorney General Dustin McDaniel presented an agreed bill, SB 77 by Sen. Sue Madison and Rep. Pam Adcock, at a press conference the first week of the session. The State Chamber/AIA endorsed the agreement and participated in the press conference. SB 77 is now Act 33.

**Trauma System**

In our legislative agenda we indicated support for the development of a trauma system in Arkansas. We identified the bills that formed this system and kept our members apprised of their development and eventual passage. We also expressed an opinion directly to the members of the General Assembly about the three funding options they proposed. We opposed the use of insurance premium tax dollars to fund the system and were neutral on the tobacco tax increase and increases in certain fines.

**Post Session Follow-up: Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund**

Throughout 2009, the issue of the state’s Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund growing debt became a frequent topic of discussion by State Chamber/AIA staff at the State Chamber/AIA Door-to-Door meetings.

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (DWS) staff projected a negative balance in the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund ($228.3) million at the end of 2009 and were on target with their projection. As of the end of 2009, the DWS staff projected negative Trust Fund balances of ($350.3) million by the end of 2010 and ($380.6) by the end of 2011.

The legislative change that the Council made in 2009 in regard to quits and discharges is now projected to save the UI Trust Fund $38 million instead of $20 million as projected prior to the 2009 legislative session. The change in UI laws required by the federal stimulus (alternative base period) is now projected to cost the state about $6 million annually, which is up some from the original projections during the 2009 legislative session. At the national level 30 states including Arkansas were receiving Title XII Advances (loans) from the U.S. Government for unemployment insurance.

The State Chamber/AIA staff advised our members in the Door-to-Door meetings that we would study the issue and present options for rebuilding the Trust Fund balance in negotiated and/or proposed legislation for the 2011 session. Businesses were warned that their unemployment insurance costs could double over the next three to five years.
Comprised of business leaders from member companies across the state, issue committees meet throughout the year to help identify and develop key issues that are critical to the future of Arkansas.

The committees provide the State Chamber/AIA governmental affairs team guidance in understanding complex topics that often require a great deal of specific expertise. This equips our lobbyists with insights and knowledge about an issue’s potential impact on our member companies and our state.

The committees and their leaders include:

**Education Committee**
Chairman: Luke Gordy, Arkansans for Education Reform Foundation
Co-Chairman: Greg Nabholz, Nabholz Properties

**Governmental Affairs Committee**
Co-Chairmen: Sammie Cox, AEP Southwestern Electric Power, and Robert D. Smith, III, Attorney

**Health Care Committee**
Chairman: Stephen W. Jones, Jack Nelson Jones Jiles & Gregory
Co-Chairman: Kurt Knickrehm, Regions Insurance Group

**National Issues Committee**
Chairman: Ray Bracy, Wal-Mart Stores
Co-Chairman: Archie Schaffer III, Tyson Foods

**Tax Committee**
Chairman: Tom Kennedy, Entergy Arkansas
Co-Chairman: Jim Davis, Georgia-Pacific
Legal Counsel: Michael O. Parker, Dover Dixon Horne, PLLC

**Unemployment Insurance/HR Committee**
Co-Chairmen: Daniel H. Woods, Timex (retired) and Russell Gunter, Cross Gunter Witherspoon & Galchus

**Workers’ Compensation Committee**
Chairman: Lynn Tatum, Tyson Foods
Co-Chairman: Max Koonce, Wal-Mart Stores

**Arkansas Small Business Council**
Chairman: Lydia Carson, Balm Innovations
Co-Chairman: Al Hodge, Arkansas Capital Corporation Group
CONTINUED SUCCESS AND NEW INITIATIVES IN 2009

The State Chamber/AIA continued its success and growth during 2009 and branched out with a number of new initiatives. Our membership continued to climb with 205 new members joining our ranks. In addition to the increase in membership, the State Chamber/AIA attained new member income of $173,700 and sponsorship and advertising income that exceeded $393,000.

There were many other significant accomplishments during the year including:

Leadership Classes III and IV

Seventy-six members of the third Leadership Arkansas class were recognized at a graduation ceremony on June 26 at the Walton Arts Center in Fayetteville. Peter Lane, president and CEO of the Walton Arts Center, was the guest speaker.

Class IV kicked off with a Retreat and Tourism Session in mid-September in Hot Springs, followed by sessions in Little Rock and Conway. 2010 sessions include Russellville, Texarkana, West Memphis and the final session and graduation in Bentonville in late June.

50th Annual Washington Fly-In/ Congressional Dinner

The 50th Annual Washington Fly-In and Congressional Dinner was held in mid-April at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Nearly 300 people attended the Congressional Dinner, which was emceed by Mack McLarty, president of McLarty Associates. Also providing remarks were State Chamber/AIA President & CEO Randy Zook, State Chamber Chairman Randy Wilbourn and AIA Chairman Ray Dillon.

The event also included remarks from special guests Senior U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor, Congressmen Mike Ross and John Boozman, and Congressmen Berry’s and Snyder’s chiefs of staffs.

While members of the Congressional delegation essentially focused on health care and the economy, the Chamber re-emphasized its concerns about the Employee Free Choice Act. “In this unique economic climate, it is more important than ever that business have a voice,” Zook said.

The Washington Fly-In also included a State Chamber/AIA board meeting and individual breakfast, lunch and dinner meetings with members of the Arkansas Congressional Delegation, which were hosted by the Jonesboro Regional Chamber, the Little Rock Regional Chamber, the Fort Smith Regional Chamber, the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber, and The Economic Development Alliance of Jefferson County. Special thanks to the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce Executives who hosted the hospitality suite at the hotel.

Lincoln, Ross, Snyder, Beebe Address Annual Meeting

Close to 500 attendees gathered Monday, October 19th at the DoubleTree Hotel in Little Rock for the State Chamber/AIA’s 81st Annual Meeting.

Senior U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln provided the keynote address, touching on a number of topics including health care reform, the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) and proposed climate change legislation.

Also speaking during the Annual Meeting were U.S. Rep. Mike Ross, U.S. Rep. Vic Snyder and Governor Mike Beebe.

During the business portion of the Annual Meeting, State Chamber/AIA President and CEO Randy Zook provided an update on recent initiatives. State Chamber Chairman Randy Wilbourn and AIA Chairman Ray Dillon oversaw the election of State Chamber and AIA board and executive committee members respectively.


Annual Meeting attendees included (from left) Maria Hoskins, Judge Rita Bailey, Tamika Edwards, Frank Bateman and David McClain.
“Door-to-Door” Regional Meetings

The State Chamber/AIA instituted a series of regional “Door-to-Door” meetings throughout the state during 2009. The meetings, which began during the summer and ended in mid-December, drew more than 650 State Chamber/AIA members, state and local chamber leaders, community leaders, local business representatives and state legislators.

They featured presentations on state and federal governmental affairs issues and State Chamber/AIA programs and events by State Chamber/AIA President & CEO Randy Zook, Executive Vice President Kenny Hall and Senior Vice President-Programs Susie Marks.

Meetings were held in McGehee, North Little Rock, Searcy, Hope, Russellville, Rogers, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Mountain Home, Arkadelphia, El Dorado, Harrison, Pine Bluff, Fort Smith, Conway, West Memphis, Batesville and Texarkana.

Additional “Door-to-Door” meetings are planned for late summer through the fall of 2010.
State Chamber/AIA Hosts Procurement Conference

The Arkansas State Chamber partnered with the office of Senior U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, the office of U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor, the office of Congressman Vic Snyder, the U.S. Small Business Administration and SCORE to bring the Arkansas Procurement Opportunities Conference to Little Rock on June 2 at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock.

The event kicked off with remarks by Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe and Congressman Snyder. Dan F. Sturdivant, II, assistant to the director, outreach programs for the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization for the Department of Homeland Security provided a presentation on “Doing Business with the Government (State, Local & Federal) for Newcomers.”

The Procurement Opportunities Conference matched 225 small business representatives from 10 states with 60 buyers – government agencies, nonprofits and corporations – from eight states.

Sponsors for the Procurement Conference included Department of Workforce Services, Title; Aerojet Corporation, Entergy Arkansas, Tyson Foods, Inc. and Verizon Wireless, Gold; and AEP/SWPCO, Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Arkansas Employees Federal Credit Union, Bank of the Ozarks and the Arkansas Procurement Assistance Center, Supporting.

Other partners in the success of the event included the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the Arkansas Procurement Assistance Center, the Arkansas Mississippi Minority Suppliers Development Council, the Arkansas Minority Business Development Roundtable and the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center.

Buyers and sellers discuss business opportunities.

A Tyson Foods employee (right) mans an exhibitor booth during the Arkansas Procurement Opportunities Conference.

Jennifer Bonds of the Arkansas Small Business & Technology Development Center in Little Rock works the “bullpen” to match buyers and sellers.

Maria Hoskins of U.S. Representative Vic Snyder’s staff addresses attendees.
19th Annual Arkansas Small Business Awards Luncheon

Ten individuals and businesses were honored during the 19th Annual Arkansas Small Business Awards Luncheon in early June, which was held at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock in conjunction with the Arkansas Procurement Opportunities Conference.

Each year, the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/Associated Industries of Arkansas honors the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Small Businesses of the Year in Arkansas. C. Sam Walls, CEO of Arkansas Capital Corporation Group, was the guest speaker. Roby Brock, host of Talk Business, was the MC for the event.

Approximately 250 people attended the event.

The event was sponsored by CenterPoint Energy, Arkansas Blue Cross Blue Shield, Metropolitan National Bank, Arkansas Manufacturing Solutions and The Heritage Company.

The winners included:

- Veteran Small Business Champion and Entrepreneurial Leadership – Two Awards – Major General William D. Wofford, Arkansas National Guard, North Little Rock
- Financial Services Champion – James G. Coffey, Metropolitan National Bank, Little Rock
- Minority Small Business Champion – Emma Agnew, Beacons & Bridges, Jonesboro
- Women in Business Champion – Lisa Massey, Taylor, Rodgers and Turner PLLC, Arkadelphia
- SBA 7(a) Lender – Highest Volume – FY 2008 – Metropolitan National Bank, Little Rock
- Resource Partner of the Year – Jennifer Bonds, Arkansas Small Business & Technology Development Center, Little Rock
- Arkansas Score District Chapter of the Year for 2008 – Little Rock SCORE
- SBA 504 Lender FY 2008 – Six Bridges Capital Corporation, Little Rock
- Small Business Journalist – Roby Brock, Talk Business, Little Rock
“Connecting Your Business with China” Seminar

The State Chamber/AIA, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Arkansas World Trade Center and business and community leaders from throughout the state welcomed the The Honorable Zhou Wenzhong, Chinese Ambassador to the United States during “Connecting Your Business With China – The World’s Most Dynamic Market.” The seminar was held on August 11 at the Capital Hotel in Little Rock.

Speakers for the seminar besides the Chinese Ambassador included Senior U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, Senior Trade Adviser for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Leslie Schweitzer, AEDC Director Maria Haley, Managing Partner of Technomic Asia Steve Ganster, Director of Business Development Southeast for Nair & Co. Neil Bagchi, AEDC Director of Business Development Joe Bailey, AEDC Deputy Director Becky Thompson, Smart Sourcing Vice President Brian Strebel, Arkansas World Trade Center President Dan Hendrix and State Chamber/AIA President & CEO Randy Zook.

Arkansas State Chamber/AIA Legislative Luncheon

The Arkansas State Chamber/AIA hosted a Legislative Luncheon on February 23 in Little Rock at Next Level Events. The co-hosts for the event included the Leadership Arkansas program and Arkansas Economic Developers.

The Legislative Luncheon drew more than 300 legislators and their staffs, State Chamber/AIA members and Leadership Arkansas Alumni. The event was an excellent opportunity for legislators to network with members of the state’s business community as well as an opportunity for business leaders to discuss issues of concern with their legislators in a one-on-one setting.

State Senator Barbara Horn and AEDC Director Maria Haley at the Luncheon for Legislators and staffs in late February at Next Level Events in Little Rock.

Rae Ann Fields of the Bryant Chamber of Commerce and State Senator Shane Broadway at the Legislative Luncheon hosted by the State Chamber/AIA, Leadership Arkansas Class III and the AED.
MARKETING/SALES/OUTREACH

Membership Directory and Buyers’ Guide

In early August, the State Chamber/AIA published its Membership Directory & Buyers’ Guide. Published annually, the Membership Directory & Buyers’ Guide includes a listing of members, information on standing committees, and descriptions of products and services many companies provide for business development professionals.

The Membership Directory & Buyers’ Guide is a great resource for locating a wide variety of products and resources offered by the State Chamber/AIA’s more than 1100 member companies.

This directory is available exclusively to State Chamber/AIA members. This resource guide provides members with a ready list of suppliers and products, key executives and decision makers. Gain year-round exposure in this comprehensive member resource used by consumers and industry professionals.

E-Newsletters

The State Chamber/AIA continued its efforts to reach the broadest possible business audience via various e-newsletters.

E-Business is a twice-monthly compendium of articles chronicling our organizations’ events, activities, programs, efforts and committees.

Daily Legislative Update is e-mailed each business day during legislative sessions and as needed during the year. It outlines the day’s most important issues being tracked by the State Chamber/AIA Governmental Affairs team.

Washington Watch is e-mailed the second week of each month and concentrates on federal issues that impact businesses in Arkansas.

Industry Insight focuses on manufacturing and industrial news and issues and is e-mailed the fourth week of each month.

In addition, periodic Congressional Updates are e-mailed to members when major federal issues like health care reform are being considered. These newsletters are also posted on our web site – www.arkansasstatechamber.com – along with a calendar of events and other information pertaining to the State Chamber/AIA.
Legislative Summary

Following the conclusion of the 87th General Assembly, the State Chamber/AIA compiled a 2009 Legislative Summary. The Legislative summary is designed to provide a comprehensive document that not only summarizes key legislation tracked by the State Chamber/AIA legislative staff and bills that were enacted, but also includes an overview of how the State Chamber/AIA priority issues fared in the legislative session.

Chamber Staff Gain National Recognition

The Arkansas State Chamber membership development staff gained Top Ten recognition from the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE). Marcus Turley and Bill Watson both finished in Top 10 contention for membership sales dollars and number of memberships sold from their participation in the ACCE Circle of Champions sales competition. Both Turley and Watson were recognized at the ACCE National Convention held in August at Raleigh, North Carolina.

The ACCE Circle of Champions program is designed to connect chamber sales professionals and to inspire and recognize excellence in membership sales performance.

State Chamber/AIA Offers Networking for New Members

State Chamber/AIA new members get an opportunity each quarter to come together and meet each other as well as network with executive committee and board members. The New Member luncheon offers new members and new employees of existing members an opportunity to learn firsthand the many benefits of Chamber membership. New members also become familiar with the role of each Chamber staff member and get first-hand knowledge of the best way to maximize the benefits and services of Chamber membership.
Small Business Council

Under the leadership of Chairman Lydia Carson of Balm Innovations, the State Chamber/AIA Small Business Council continued to grow during 2009.

The SBC kicked off the year with a meeting on January 22 at the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce. Eric Munson, Region VI advocate for the U.S. Small Business Administration, provided a presentation on “Federal and State Governmental Regulations.” All other meetings were held in the State Chamber Conference Room.

On March 19, Karen Light of Strategic People Solutions provided a presentation on “Employee Benefits.”

On May 6, Derek Federowski of All Computing Net, Inc. provided a presentation on “Information Technology.”

On July 9, Phyllis Holifield of Priddy & Holifield CPAs provided a presentation on “The Stimulus Package and How It Can Affect Small Businesses.”

On September 3, Retired Major General Don Morrow provided a presentation on “Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.”

The final meeting of the year was held on November 5. Deputy Public Information Officer Renee Preslar of the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management provided a presentation on “Disaster Preparedness.”


Business Development Workshop

The State Chamber/AIA, the U.S. Small Business Administration and O’Neal Technologies hosted a free business development workshop entitled “Business Development-Strategic Marketing” on September 16 in the State Chamber Conference Room. The workshop was part of a series of such events given across the country.

Connect 2 Business® Matches Job Seekers with Businesses

In early November, Governor Mike Beebe announced Arkansas’s Career and College Planning System, powered by Kuder®, the next phase of Arkansas Works. The State Chamber/AIA is a major partner in this important effort.

Arkansas’s Career and College Planning System is a statewide initiative to equip students and adults with the skills and education required for the opportunities that await them. Similar initiatives have been highly successful in other states.

A critical component of this new initiative is Connect 2 Business® (C2B), a tool that helps adults find employment and students find internships and apprenticeships with local businesses. In turn, C2B provides businesses access to a pipeline of skilled workers, allows businesses to showcase themselves and their career opportunities, and helps students connect the relevance of their coursework to the real world of work.

Getting involved in C2B is easy and free to all businesses in the state of Arkansas. To sign up, visit www.arworks.arkansas.gov and click on Connect2Business®.

For additional information, please contact Susie Marks, Connect2Business® Administrator at (501) 210-4206 or smarks@arkansasstatechamber.com.

State Chamber Partners with ADWS to Address Workforce Issues

The State Chamber partnered with the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services to present three separate events November 3-5 at Verizon Arena in North Little Rock.

On November 3, the “Get in the Game Entrepreneurial Conference” was held. It focused on providing individuals with the necessary information to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors.

The Entrepreneurial Conference was followed by a Career Expo on November 4. Businesses with available jobs set up exhibits. Representatives from local colleges and universities were on hand to discuss educational opportunities, and experts from the Arkansas Workforce Centers offered seminars throughout the day on numerous job-seeking related topics.

The events concluded with the Arkansas Workforce Summit on November 5 – a forum for employers, community leaders, chamber representatives, legislators, government officials, educators, economic developers and workforce development professionals to take action to address the new realities facing workforce development in Arkansas.
**State Chamber/AIA Presents First Leadership Conference**

The Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce Leadership Arkansas program presented its first Leadership Conference – Revived, Refocused, Inspired – in early May at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock.

Speakers for the event included Tony Blair, John Maxwell, Jack Nicklaus, Bill George, Al Weiss, Linda Kaplan Thaler, Kevin Carroll, Mark Sanborn, Liz Murray and Ernie Johnson.

The 10 speakers covered subjects such as leading in difficult times, converging people and purpose, building strong teams by understanding and embracing change, overcoming personal and professional adversity, utilizing the power of passion and creativity, and balancing the needs of customers, employees and company shareholders.

**MED Week Events Held Throughout State**

Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week was celebrated during the fall with a series of events across Arkansas. MED Week is a celebration of the contributions made by minority enterprises and a chance to recognize and honor accomplished minority business owners and advocates throughout the country. Minority business enterprises are made up of African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian American and Pacific Islanders.

MED Week, the largest federally sponsored conference held on behalf of minority entrepreneurs and business enterprises, is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Commerce “Minority Business Development Agency” (MBDA). Since 1983, the U.S. President has proclaimed a National MED Week observance to recognize the outstanding achievements of Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) and to honor those corporations and financial institutions that support minority business development.

MED Week in Arkansas is a partnership with the Arkansas Minority Business Development Roundtable (AMBDR) hosting meetings in each of the state’s congressional districts. The program celebrates and recognizes the outstanding achievements of minority business enterprises and entrepreneurs, as well as individuals and organizations, which have demonstrated leadership and commitment in advancing minority business enterprise.

The State Chamber/AIA, in conjunction with AMBDR, worked with local chambers, universities and city governments in Conway, Jonesboro, Pine Bluff and Fort Smith to host the events. Bobby Jefferson, Deputy Director of the MBDA Regional Office in Dallas, was on hand in Conway, Jonesboro and Pine Bluff to present the Regional Director’s Award to those individuals who have taken a lead role in minority business development in their local communities.

**Women Business Owners Honored at Brunch**

Women business owners in Arkansas were recognized and honored at the “Women in Small Business Opportunity Brunch.”

The event was hosted by the State Chamber/AIA on October 22 in the State Chamber/AIA Conference Room. State Chamber/AIA President & CEO Randy Zook welcomed the attendees. After eating, they had the opportunity to network with one another.

**“How to Win an Election Seminar” Held**

The State Chamber/AIA again partnered with the Arkansas Farm Bureau to present the “How to Win an Election” Seminar.

The two-day seminar was held November 3-4 in the State Chamber/AIA Conference Room. Attendees learned how to:

- Evaluate the candidacy,
- Clarify issues,
- Plan campaign strategy,
- Create an effective organization and
- Manage the money

The seminar was developed by the American Farm Bureau, an organization noted for its understanding of the political process, with the help of professional political consultants and staff members of the Democratic and Republican parties. The instructors were members of the American Farm Bureau Federation team. Videotaping, a case study and a computer simulation allowed attendees to test techniques, tools and methods.

The seminar was so popular that a second seminar was scheduled for January 2010.
Leadership Arkansas Class III continued its efforts during 2009 with the following sessions:
  • January 22-23, South Arkansas Economy, Magnolia
  • February 23, Legislative Session, Little Rock
  • March 26-27, Economic Development, Fort Smith
  • May 21-22, Northeast Arkansas Economy, Jonesboro
  • June 25-26, Northwest Arkansas Economy, Fayetteville
  • June 26, Graduation, Fayetteville.

The chairman of Leadership Arkansas Class III was program founder Paul H. Harvel. The Curriculum Chairman was Michele Bond of Tyson Foods. Leadership Arkansas Class III was sponsored by Southern Bancorp of Arkadelphia.


Leadership Arkansas
Class III

Leah Acoach-Peterson
Ozark Mountain Poultry, Inc.

Jim Adams
Gar-Bro Manufacturing Company

Pat Anderson
Simmons First National Bank

Adam Arroyos
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Gary Bennett
Harps Food Stores

Jimmy Bolt
City of Arkadelphia

Jimbo Boyd
First Bank of the Delta, N.A.

Randy Breaux
Baldor Electric Company

Matthew Carter
Warner, Smith & Harris, PLC

Kurt Castleberry
Entergy Arkansas, Inc.

Brad Chilcote
Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson Architects

Winston Collier
Simpson Law

Karl Connor
BP America, Inc.

Jeannie Farr Anson
National Center for Toxicological Research (NCTR)

David Fern
Charles Schwab & Co., Inc.

J.T. Ferstl
Affiliated Real Estate Appraisers of Arkansas

Rae Ann Fields
Bryant Area Chamber of Commerce

Cathy Foraker
AT&T

Paul Goss
Golden Living

Kathryn Gough
Office of Congressman John Boozman

Janet Grard
Arkansas Information Consortium

Ann Green Williams
The Economic Development Alliance of Jefferson County

Carol Gresham
Arkansas State University - Mountain Home

Marsha Guffey
UALR AIEA

David Hamilton
Seiz Sign Company

Steve Harrelson
Arkansas Legislator

Barbara Harvel
U.S. Marshal’s Museum

Joe Hilliard
Cromwell Architects Engineers

Craig Hull
Hull & Company Commercial Real Estate & Consulting

Tammy Hutchins-Frye
Arkansas National Guard

Rose Mary Jackson
Arkansas State University - Beebe

Sarah Jennings
Southern Arkansas University

Jordan Johnson
CIWR

Joyce Judy
Arkansas Employees Federal Credit Union
Leadership Arkansas Class IV kicks off with Retreat/Tourism Session

A total of 45 individuals from throughout the state were selected to participate in Leadership Arkansas Class IV.

The class kicked off with a Retreat and Tourism Session September 13-15 in Hot Springs.

Additional sessions during 2009 included:
- State Chamber/AIA Annual Meeting/Governmental Session, October 19-20, Little Rock;
- Central Arkansas Session, December 3-4, Conway.

C. Tad Bohannon, a partner with the Wright, Lindsey & Jennings law firm, is serving as Leadership Arkansas Class IV Chairman.

Leadership Arkansas Class IV is sponsored by Southern Bancorp.

State Senator Shane Broadway (left) explains the legislative process to members of Leadership Arkansas Class IV during their Legislative Session at the State Capitol in October.

Leadership Arkansas Class IV

Richard Alderman
Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson, Architects

Leila Alston
Baptist Health

Leslie Blackwell
American Cancer Society

Dee Brown
Brown Engineers, LLC

Lori Brown
Arkansas Children’s Hospital

John Burgess
Mainstream Technologies, Inc.

Tim Cain
Ash Grove Cement Company

Kathleen Carey
Cardinal Health

Pat Carroll
Crossland Construction

Chris Chastain
Crittenden Regional Hospital Foundation

Rhonda Cline
AT&T Arkansas

Brooks Davis
Simmons First Bank of Searcy

Hunter Goodman
Arkansas Coalition for Excellence

Clay Gordon
Nabholz Construction

Robert Gunnels
Southern Arkansas University Tech

Eric Hutchinson
Hutchinson Financial, Inc.

Blake Jackson
Cromwell Architects Engineers

Myron Jackson
The Design Group

Felicia Johnson
Coldwell Banker VCI

Steve Kinzler
Polk Stanley Wilcox

Brian Kratkiewicz
Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods

Jim Lambert
Conway Regional Health System

Leigh Ann Lammers
Southern Bancorp

Roberts Lee
Meador, Adams & Lee Insurance

Coby Logan
Daily & Woods, PLLC.

Andy Marshall
First Security Bank

Joseph Masters
Fidelity Mortgage Group

Sherrye McBryde
Arkansas Affiliate of Susan G Komen for the Cure

Julie McCallister
Engineering, Compliance and Construction, Inc. (ECCI)

Marie Miller
Williams & Anderson PLC

Dom Mjartan
Southern Bancorp

David Moore
Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company of Arkansas, Inc.

Connie Nelson
Arkadelphia Area Chamber of Commerce

Clay Partridge
First Arkansas Mortgage Company

Cathy Reid
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

John Robbins
DataPath, Inc.

Kelly Robbins
Arkansas Independent Producers & Royalty Owners Assoc.

Melissa Simpson
Arkansas Insurance Department

Robert Skinner
The Bryce Company LLC

Robert Smith
Friday, Eldredge & Clark, LLP

Sandra Smith
Southern Arkansas University

Denise Stewart
Girl Scouts - Diamonds of Arkansas, Oklahoma & Texas

Mary Wells
Arkansas Department of Health

Cole Williamson
American Data Network

Whitney Yoder
Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce
WHO WE ARE
Leadership Arkansas is a program designed to take a statewide view of the economic and political challenges that face our great state. Leadership Arkansas offers leadership opportunities that expand the impact of community leaders across the state. Created by the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries of Arkansas, Inc., Leadership Arkansas builds a sense of statewide community by identifying and training individuals with the passion and commitment to become personally engaged in issues, programs and activities aimed at building a Better Arkansas.

WHAT WE OFFER
To build a strong, diverse statewide network of leaders with a shared commitment to connect our communities and to make Arkansas a better place in which to live and prosper.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS
Leadership Arkansas’s mission is to build a strong, diverse, statewide network of leaders with a shared commitment to connect our communities and to make Arkansas a better place in which to live and prosper.

One of the many ways the organization is working to accomplish that mission is through its annual class program. Class members will be chosen to participate in a stimulating and thought-provoking educational program that consists of a series (six) of day-and-a-half sessions held in locations throughout the state. These sessions include programming on issues critical to Arkansas, leadership skills assessment, and relevant information on Arkansas’s history, demography, diversities and opportunities.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR CLASS V
Participants are required to attend at least 80% of the program sessions, including the entire opening session, which is mandatory. The opening session is scheduled at the same time as the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/AIA Annual Meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class V Retreat</th>
<th>(Mandatory attendance)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session I</th>
<th>State Chamber/AIA Annual Meeting</th>
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<tr>
<td>November 9</td>
<td>Little Rock</td>
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<tr>
<th>Session II</th>
<th>South Arkansas Economy</th>
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<tr>
<th>Session III</th>
<th>NW Arkansas Economy</th>
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<tr>
<th>Session IV</th>
<th>Manufacturing/Economic Development</th>
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<tr>
<th>Session V</th>
<th>NE Arkansas Economy</th>
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<tr>
<th>Session VI</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Jonesboro</td>
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TIMELINE
Applications Due         August 8, 2010
Class Selection          September 5, 2010
Applicant Notification   Mid-September 2010

COSTS
Application Fee          None
Tuition                  $2,000
Limited scholarships are available.
PINNACLE MEMBERS

New Pinnacle Members
Announced for 2009

The State Chamber/AIA is pleased to recognize the following Pinnacle members who are new or upgraded their status for 2009:

Peak:
- Nucor/Nucor-Yamato

Crown:
- Altria Client Services, Inc.
- Cherokee Casino West Siloam Springs
- Delta Dental of Arkansas
- Delta Natural Kraft
- Experian
- Fidelity National Information Services
- Mid-America Packaging, LLC
- Nice-Pak
- RebeccaRice & Associates
- Russellville Steel Co. Inc.
- Transplace

The Pinnacle Program is an active group of member firms and organizations whose senior representatives provide financial support and leadership to the State Chamber/AIA. Pinnacle members actively participate in our grassroots action network, testify before legislative committees when needed, work on State Chamber/AIA policy committees or lead the organization as board members.

Levels of investment include $5,000 (Crown), $10,000 (Peak), $25,000 (Summit) and $35,000 and up (Apex). Benefits of Pinnacle membership include: recognition in State Chamber/AIA printed publications, e-publications and on our website; special recognition at all State Chamber/AIA events; preferential seating at State Chamber/AIA events, such as the Annual Meeting and the Arkansas Congressional Dinner; prominent coverage in the annual membership directory, and networking opportunities with other high-level Arkansas business and industry leaders.
Welcome to the following new members who joined the State Chamber/AIA in 2009:

- 1011 Web Solutions
- AAR Aircraft Services-Hot Springs
- ABC Financial Services, Inc.
- Absolute Wildlife Solutions Inc.
- Ace Signs of Arkansas LLC
- Action Mechanical Contractors
- ADESA
- Advantage Communications, Inc.
- Aerial Patrol Inc.
- Alcoa Arkansas Remediation
- All Computing Net Inc.
- Altria Client Services, Inc.
- Alvarado dba Global Synergies
- American Composting, Inc.
- American Data Network
- Arkansas Association of Health Underwriters
- Arkansas Automatic Gates
- Arkansas Digital Systems, Inc.
- Arkansas Forest Association
- Arkansas Mutual Insurance Company
- Arkansas Research Alliance
- Arkansas Society for Human Resource Mgt., Inc.
- Arkansas SkillsUSA
- ArCom Systems, Inc.
- Arthritis Foundation, Arkansas Chapter
- Ashley Enterprise Media
- Augusta Area Chamber of Commerce
- Bankers Life & Casualty
- Bangy Equipment Co.
- Benefit Administrators Group
- Bentley Plastics
- Beverly’s Construction
- BizTek Connection, Inc.
- B&K Moulding Supply
- Block USA
- Bowman Insurance Agency
- Brenner Distributing, Inc.
- Brown Janitor Supply
- Bryce Corporation
- BT Environmental, Inc.
- Cadena Fitcher Construction
- Cameron
- Capitol Glass Co. Inc.
- Career Solutions
- Cargill Value Added Meats - Retail
- Camman Inc.
- CaseStack
- CDIP Strategies
- CertaPro Painters of Central Arkansas
- Joe Chacko, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney
- Change Agents, Inc.
- Chenal Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center
- Cherokee Casino West Siilcon Springs
- CINTAS
- The Circumference Group, LLC
- City of Wrightsville
- Clark Contractors, LLC
- Clearwater Paper Corporation
- CME, Inc.
- Colonial Life
- comCables, LLC
- Comfort Systems USA (Arkansas) Inc.
- CommerceTitle & Closing Services LLC
- Cone Solvents
- Construction Group Architects, PLC
- Cornerstone Insurance Group Inc.
- Costner Excavating Inc.
- Craig Douglass Communications, Inc.
- Credit Guard
- Critter Control of Central Arkansas
- Dr. Sports Training and Therapy of Little Rock, LLC
- Days Inn & Suites
- Delta Natural Kraft
- The Dickinson Agency, LLC
- DoubleTree Hotel
- Dukes Capital Management
- Dwight Stroud & Associates, LLC
- Eagle Courier Service
- El Dorado Chemical
- Enjoy Arkansas Fundraising
- Ergon Asphalt & Emulsions, Inc.
- Expierian
- Fiber Resources Inc.
- Fidelity National Information Services
- First Community Bank
- Focus Laboratories
- Friendship Community Care, Inc.
- Goldstar Couriers
- Goss Management, LLC
- Graphic Packaging
- Haldex
- Harbor Environmental & Safety
- Haugrave Consulting Engineers, Inc.
- Henderson State University
- Hewlett Packard Company
- Hickorythorn Investments Inc.
- Highpoint Manufacturing
- Hodge Fabrication Inc.
- Holiday Inn Express
- IHP Industrial, Inc.
- Images Printing
- Impact Management Group Inc.
- Innovative Markets, Inc.
- Integrity Office Solutions
- Intrust Bank, N.A.
- J.B. Molds, Inc.
- Jaime’s
- James Electric, Inc.
- Joel’s Photography, Inc.
- Kanneer Company, Inc.
- Kharma Consulting, Inc.
- Kilgore Saw Company
- Lacuna Bridge Technologies
- Lay Commercial Mortgage Company, LLC
- Lightning Electric, Inc.
- Little Rock Valve & Fitting
- LS Power
- Maple Leaf Canvas
- McConnell & Son Inc.
- McCormick Asphalt Paving & excavating Inc.
- McCourt Manufacturing
- McGhee’s Moving & Storage, Inc.
- The McEarty Companies
- Michelle Staging with Style
- Mid-America Packaging, LLC
- Mr. Plastic
- Mullenix & Associates, LLC
- Myers Supply & Chemical
- N Out Screening Services
- National Erosion Control
- Neurosurgery Spine Center
- Nocus Productions
- Nice-Fak
- Nordex USA Inc.
- Northwest Arkansas Naturals
- Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport
- Odom Pechham Architecture, Inc.
- Ouachita Technical College
- Outdoor Cap Co., Inc.
- The Oxford American
- Oxford Graphics
- PACO Steel & Engineering Corp.
- PacTech Corporation
- Paschall Strategic Communications
- PeriSeal Inc.
- Plinth Technology
- Premier Lighting Group Inc.
- PrestoLite Wire LLC
- Procyon Solutions, Inc.
- Progress Arkansas
- PWF Industrial Supply, Inc.
- QualChoice
- Quest Diagnostics, Inc.
- R&R Creative Marketing, Inc.
- Rebecca Rice & Associates, Inc.
- Reddy Ice
- Rich Mountain Community College
- The Riggins Group
- Roto-Rooter Inc.
- Royal Overhead Door Inc.
- Russellville Steel Company Inc.
- Schnidler Elevator Corporation
- Snell Prosthetic and Orthotic Lab
- Snyder Environmental & Construction Inc.
- Southern Apparel & Promotions, LLC.
- Southern Coaches Inc.
- SpesTech, Inc.
- Stallion Transportation Group
- Strayer University - Little Rock
- Success In Fitness, Inc.
- Sugar Creek Foods International Inc.
- Summit Bank
- Sunotest
- Superior Creative
- Tannenbaum Lodge
- The Technology Edge Inc.
- Tejas Technologies, Inc.
- Texarkana Regional Airport
- That French Salon
- Tim’s Signs
- Tire Curing Bladders, LLC
- The Todd Agency
- Trade Fixtures
- Transplace
- Triumph Fabrications-Hot Springs, Inc.
- Tronik Technology
- UAMS BioVentures
- University of Central Arkansas
- Unique Benefit Solutions Inc.
- United Way Heart of Arkansas
- US Steel
- V. Wright Consultants
- Water International, Inc.
- The Todd Agency
THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

The following members and organizations sponsored State Chamber/AIA events in 2009. Sponsorships included Leadership Arkansas, Lobbyist Luncheons, Washington Fly-In and Congressional Dinner, Small Business Awards Luncheon, Annual Meeting and “Door-to-Door” Regional Meetings.
While other programs may focus on a single aspect such as leadership, strategic planning, or process management, the Governor’s Quality Award (GQA) Program focuses on helping you develop an integrated management framework that addresses all the factors that define your organization, its operations and its results. Utilizing GQA can help you:

- Jumpstart change initiatives
- Energize improvement strategies
- Focus your organizations on common goals
- Assess performance against the competition
- Align your resources with your strategic objectives

By taking advantage of the training opportunities the GQA program provides, you can receive help to identify, leverage and enhance your key strengths.

Applicant Training Seminars are available for businesses writing an application for a Governor’s Quality Award or for those interested in learning how to use the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria to self-assess their organization.

Examiner Training not only teaches your employees how to assess the applications of organizations that have applied for a program award, but gives them a remarkable perspective on how they can personally contribute to the success of your organization. They will learn how organizations across the state excel. Attending the examiner training will provide up to 5.1 ASQ recertification credits.

Challenge Seminars are industry-specific and regional. Manufacturing, healthcare, and business/finance seminars provide relevant industry training in workforce, leadership, customer focus and more.

Benchmark Tours are opportunities for applicants to tour past Governor’s Award winners and learn their best practices.

If you would like to apply for an award with the GQA, there are four levels at which to apply:

- Governor’s Award for Performance Excellence
- Achievement Award
- Commitment Award
- Challenge Award

For further information about the GQA Program, contact Executive Director Sue Weatter at 501-372-2222. Additional information about all opportunities the program provides is also available on the GQA website at www.arkansas-quality.org.

**Fifteen Arkansas Organizations Receive Governor’s Quality Awards**

Fifteen organizations from throughout the state were presented Arkansas Governor’s Quality Awards during the 15th Annual Awards Celebration for the Governor’s Quality Award Program in mid-October at the DoubleTree Hotel in Little Rock. More than 275 business and civic leaders from throughout Arkansas attended the celebration. Governor Mike Beebe provided opening remarks and assisted in presenting the awards.

Taking top honors by receiving the Governor’s Award for Performance Excellence was White River Medical Center in Batesville.

The Achievement Award was awarded to Drew Memorial Hospital in Monticello. Organizations receiving the Commitment Award were: Actronix, Inc., Flippin; Ash Flat Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center, Ash Flat; AXIS, Paragould; Freight Systems, Inc.,...
North Little Rock; Garland Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Hot Springs; Langston Companies, Inc., West Memphis and Saline Memorial Hospital, Benton.

Organizations receiving the Challenge Award were:
Community Health Centers of Arkansas, North Little Rock; Glad Manufacturing, Rogers; Hutchinson Financial, Inc., Little Rock; Osceola Communication, Arts and Business School, Osceola; St. Anthony’s Medical Center, Morrilton and White River Rural Health, Augusta.

The goal of the Governor’s Quality Award Program is to encourage Arkansas organizations to engage in continuous quality improvement, which leads to performance excellence, and to provide significant recognition to those organizations. Created as a not-for-profit organization, the program is dedicated to assist in building a strong infrastructure for Arkansas businesses.

The Chairman of the Board of the Governor’s Quality Award program is Cal Kellogg, Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer for Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Organizations and companies interested in participating in the program should contact Governor’s Quality Award Executive Director, Sue Weatter with the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce by calling 501-372-2222 or go to www.arkansas-quality.org.

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AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

Statewide Organizations

The State Chamber/AIA has expanded its presence in Arkansas by affiliating with the following statewide organizations:

Governor’s Quality Award Program

The Governor’s Quality Award Program formed a working partnership with the State Chamber in 2008 and has an office in the State Chamber/AIA building. They work together to accomplish the program’s vision of contributing to the success of Arkansas organizations and the communities they serve.

The GQA Program offers training opportunities to learn how to use the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria to assess strategy and process alignment for increased performance. Those that choose to apply for an award receive an evaluation of their management systems in a written feedback report citing strengths and areas for improvement and are recognized by the Governor at an annual awards ceremony.

This process is used by all types of businesses, healthcare, schools and government agencies, and all kinds of organizations, including non-profit.

Arkansas Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE)

ACCE is a professional, statewide organization of Chamber of Commerce executives in more than 100 Arkansas communities as well as business and professional organizations interested in or allied with chamber of commerce work in Arkansas.

The purpose of ACCE is to enhance the professional development and managerial skills of its members; to keep its membership appraised of statewide and national trends that affect the membership’s ability to operate effectively within their individual communities; and to maintain liaisons with state agencies and business organizations including the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, State Chamber/AIA, American Chamber of Commerce Executives and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The State Chamber/AIA is actively involved with services to local chambers including:

- Association management for the ACCE
- Strategic planning sessions
- Personnel selection assistance
- Volunteer leadership training
- Board retreats and goal setting
- Board orientation
- New executive support
- Governmental relations
- New facility planning
- Assistance with developing new programs
- Assistance with starting new chambers
- Membership development
- Total resource campaigns
- Chamber library

Arkansas Economic Developers (AED)

AED is an association of professional and volunteer economic developers in the state of Arkansas whose purpose is advancing, through professional and educational efforts, the quality of life in Arkansas by the development of employment opportunities through economic growth and community development.

Membership in AED provides an opportunity to participate in numerous activities that center around efforts to educate the economic developer in a rapidly changing field.
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