

STATE OF NEBRASKA

John A. Gale
Secretary of State

State Capitol, Suite 2300
Box 94608
Lincoln, NE 68509-4608
Phone: 402-471-2554
Fax: 402-471-3237
www.sos.state.ne.us

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Contact: Amy Bracht
402-471-8675, abracht@nol.org

Diplomatic conference to showcase Nebraska

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Secretary of State’s Diplomatic Conference on Oct. 13 in Omaha will allow a distinguished group of foreign representatives to learn what Nebraska has to offer the world.

The invitation-only event, hosted by Secretary of State John Gale and Gov. Mike Johanns, will highlight the state in areas of agriculture, business, education and technology. The theme of the conference is “Nebraska: America’s International Heartland.”

About 45 officials representing such countries as Canada, Mexico, Britain, France, Germany, Ukraine, Belarus, Japan, China, Indonesia, Vietnam and Ghana are expected to attend, along with about 100 Nebraskans representing agriculture, business, education and government.

“This diplomatic conference is a first in Nebraska. It gives Nebraska a great opportunity to showcase the progressive and dynamic quality of our state and to highlight what Nebraskans can offer to the international community,” Gale said.

“This is a pivotal time for our state to pursue international trade opportunities,” Johanns said. “There is growing interest in our products and gaining entry to international markets has been important to our state’s economic strength.”

Attending the conference at the Omaha Hilton Hotel will be foreign representatives such as ambassadors, consuls general, consuls, honorary consuls, and economic and trade officials. The cost of the conference is being paid by private donations.

The conference begins with a breakfast that features Johanns as the keynote speaker. Following the breakfast, there will be morning seminars that highlight developments in Nebraska.

The featured speaker at the conference’s luncheon will be Dr. Ronald Roskens, president of Global Connections Inc. of Omaha, an international business consulting firm, and an honorary consul general of Japan. Roskens has served as administrator of the U.S. Agency for

International Development and president of the University of Nebraska. His speech is entitled “Romancing the Global Marketplace.”

In the afternoon, participants will have the chance to make site visits in the Omaha area to explore three themes: food and agribusiness, education and health, and national security.

An evening reception at the new First National Bank Tower will end the conference. The reception will feature welcomes by First National Bank President Bruce Lauritzen and Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey.

Gale said he is holding the conference in his role as chief protocol officer of the state, a designation given the secretary of state by the Legislature in 2003. In that role, the secretary is authorized to engage in activities that enhance commercial, educational and cultural relations between Nebraska and foreign countries.

“Having attended several international diplomatic receptions, I came to the conclusion that Nebraska needed to host such an event to highlight its current activities and potential in the international arena, and to complement the governor’s trade missions,” Gale said. “The hope is to make this a regular event.”

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