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**News Release**

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**Secretary Gale to host diplomatic conference**

Foreign representatives will have an opportunity to learn what Nebraska has to offer the world at the Nebraska Secretary of State's Diplomatic Conference on Oct. 30-31 in Omaha.

The invitation-only event, sponsored by Secretary of State John Gale, will highlight the state in the areas of agriculture, business, education and technology. The theme of the conference at the Omaha Hilton Hotel is "Nebraska: America's International Heartland."

Forty-four diplomatic officials from 28 countries are expected to attend, along with some 100 Nebraskans representing agriculture, business, education and government.

"The purpose of the event is to educate foreign representatives on the progressive and dynamic quality of our state," Gale said. "A priority is to promote Nebraska exports and encourage foreign investment in our state.

"This conference is part of my continuing efforts to build strong ties and friendships between Nebraska and the international community."

The conference opens with an evening reception on Oct. 30. Events on Oct. 31 include a breakfast, a morning program focusing on developments in Nebraska, a luncheon, afternoon site visits and an evening reception at Joslyn Art Museum.

Gov. Dave Heineman will deliver a keynote address at the breakfast. Speakers at the luncheon will be Nebraskan Merlyn Carlson, deputy undersecretary for natural resources and environment at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Raymond Martinez, deputy chief of protocol of the U.S. Department of State. U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel of Nebraska will speak at the closing reception.

Representatives from the following countries are expected to attend: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, El Salvador, France, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Ukraine and United Kingdom.

Gale is holding the conference, which is being financed by private donations, in his role as chief protocol officer of the state. In that role, he is authorized to engage in activities that enhance commercial, educational and cultural relations between Nebraska and foreign nations.

This is the second time that Gale has sponsored such an event. The inaugural diplomatic conference was held in Omaha in 2004.

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