



From the Office of Secretary of State

John A. Gale

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Please consider this op-ed by Secretary of State John Gale for your publication. It is the third in a three part series about Sec. Gale's recent trip to China.

China increasingly important to Nebraska

Just recently I returned from a two week visit to the People's Republic of China. It was my second visit to that country in four years. Both trips were organized by the Confucius Institute at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and Xi'an Jiaotong University. The delegation from Nebraska, which I accompanied, traveled from Beijing to Xi'an and then to Shanghai.

Comparing both trips, I could see what has changed in four years, and what has stayed the same. For instance, construction is still a staple of Beijing's skyline. Building of commercial and residential high rises is unceasing. There were as many construction cranes dotting the landscape this time as there were in 2010. Literally, millions of people are moving from farms into the cities and as a result, development of residential high rises is a top priority.

Not only is the landscape evolving and becoming more modern, but that country is becoming more open to outside visitors and is quickly growing its economy. Both of those factors are of utmost importance to Nebraska. China is now the third largest market for Nebraska products. It is also one of our quickest growing markets.

How quick? From 2009 to 2013, exports with China alone grew 181 percent while Nebraska's overall exports grew 52 percent by comparison. Currently, China has a population of 1.35 billion and despite a decades-long program to reduce birth rates

it remains a challenge to feed that many people. Nebraska is uniquely poised to help meet those needs. Many Nebraska businesses know this and are moving quickly to take advantage. In addition to providing food to China, Nebraska is home to many companies that provide the types of equipment or services that China needs to develop in the areas of transportation, logistics, and agriculture. During his tenure in office, Governor Heineman has made commendable progress with his trade missions to China, his reverse trade missions, and the opening of a trade office in Shanghai.

Aside from the economic benefits, Nebraska has also made impressive strides in expanding educational and cultural exchanges with Chinese visitors and students. The majority of international students studying at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are Chinese. In addition, the relationship with Xi'an Jiaotong University and other universities in China has permitted students from UNL to study abroad in China and has also facilitated ongoing exchanges involving professors from Nebraska and China.

Indeed, the establishment of the Confucius Institute at UNL has served an important role in not only offering support to students from China, but also educating Nebraskans about Chinese culture and language. The institute regularly hosts classes as well as a variety of cultural events and festivals open to anyone who wants to learn more about China.

America's relationship with China is, without a doubt, a complex and delicate one, yet one filled with huge potential for both countries. We recognize this. We've been fortunate here in Nebraska to build significant and hopefully lasting connections with China that will continue to provide benefits to Nebraska for decades to come.

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