

*Media Release:*  
**Gov. Ricketts, Nebraska Trade Leaders  
Outline Principles for NAFTA  
Modernization**

**LINCOLN** – Today, Governor Pete Ricketts and Nebraska’s leaders in international trade outlined principles for North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) modernization ahead of planned negotiations on the agreement. Negotiations between the United States, Canada, and Mexico are scheduled to begin in Washington, D.C. on August 16, 2017.

“We urge the President and his team to prioritize growing market access, especially in the areas of agriculture and manufacturing, during their discussions on NAFTA modernization,” said Governor Ricketts. “It is crucial that these discussions at a minimum maintain the provisions that have helped make Canada and Mexico Nebraska’s top trading partners. Both of these markets are vital to growing Nebraska. The President has delivered before, and I’m confident he and his team can deliver during the upcoming negotiations.”

The Governor outlined three principles he is urging the Trump Administration to follow as they sit down at the negotiation table:

- **Maintain market access:** Negotiations should focus on growing market access with our North American partners, especially in the areas of agriculture and manufacturing. Any changes should protect access to these markets as well as access for international firms who do business and invest in Nebraska.

- **Reduce tariff & non-tariff barriers:** While NAFTA provides tariff-free trade for a variety of Nebraska commodities, there are still opportunities to reduce or eliminate tariffs on dairy, poultry, eggs, and wine as well as other non-tariff barriers on products, such as ethanol, and regulatory issues.
- **Reflect technological advances:** A modernized NAFTA should reflect technological advances made since the original agreement was put in place in 1993. For Nebraska, many of these advances have come in the areas of biotechnology and crop science.

Members of the Governor's trade council also issued statements ahead of NAFTA negotiations:

"Nebraska's economic growth is largely dependent on free and fair trade with foreign nations. In 2015, Nebraska exported \$8 billion of goods – a 238% increase from a decade earlier. Of that amount, more than \$6 billion of Nebraska exports were manufactured goods, and it is estimated that more than 270,000 jobs in Nebraska depend on trade. The State Chamber supports continued elimination of export barriers and expansion of trade opportunities so Nebraska businesses can create more good jobs in our state," said Barry Kennedy, President of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

"From an agricultural perspective, it is imperative that NAFTA negotiations stand firm on the principle of maintaining and even expanding the market access our agricultural products have with both Canada and Mexico. Those efforts must include reduction and elimination of tariffs, elimination of non-tariff trade barriers, as well as improvements in regulatory equivalency between NAFTA trade partners. It is also important that a modernized NAFTA agreement update food safety rules, create opportunities for inclusion of new standards for both crop and livestock biotechnology, and eliminate

provisions to limit restrictions on common name products produced in the U.S. Improvements in these areas will help make NAFTA a model for future U.S. trade agreements,” said Steve Nelson, Nebraska Farm Bureau President.

“Agriculture is Nebraska’s number one industry, and robust exports of both agricultural and manufacturing products are vital to the strength of our economy. As the leaders of Nebraska’s public, land-grant university system, which has a rich history of driving economic growth in our state and beyond, we think it’s critical for U.S. negotiators to look for ways to expand agricultural and manufacturing trade so we can continue to build a strong economy in Nebraska and across the country,” said University of Nebraska President Hank Bounds, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Chancellor Ronnie Green, University of Nebraska at Kearney Chancellor Doug Kristensen, and University of Nebraska at Omaha and University of Nebraska Medical Center Chancellor Jeffrey Gold, M.D.

“Nebraska is the top U.S. state for red meat exports and trade is integral to our business. Nebraska producers exported \$1.126 billion in beef and beef products last year, and product equivalent of 2,600 head of cattle is exported nationwide from our state every day. There is no question that NAFTA is responsible for much of this success, as Nebraska’s beef producers depend on access to top markets like Canada and Mexico. Any potential renegotiation of NAFTA must protect the market access and scientific standards that the agreement has provided for Nebraska’s beef industry for the past 24 years,” said Nebraska Cattlemen President Troy Stowater.

“With Nebraska’s farmers and ranchers being leaders in corn, red meat and ethanol production and Mexico and Canada being our leading trading partners, we encourage the administration to build upon access for corn in all forms,” stated David Merrell, chairman of the Nebraska Corn Board.

“Open trade as provided by the NAFTA agreement with Mexico and Canada is extremely important to our Nebraska pork producers. These family farmers depend on stable, free trade agreements with countries around the world as an important economic piece of their livestock operations,” said Al Juhnke, Executive Director, Nebraska Pork producers Association

“The US sorghum industry has long-standing trade relationships with agricultural businesses in Mexico. We support the Governor’s efforts and the principles he is putting forward as they will help strengthen those existing relationships as well as expand partnerships into new areas of Mexico,” said Mike Baker, Chairman of the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board.

“World growth in market demand for bioscience technologies in health, food, fuel and farming creates new opportunities for growth in the life sciences industry, adding high-wage jobs in Nebraska and expanding our economy. Bio Nebraska stands with Governor Ricketts core principles and encourages President Trump to seek a mutually-beneficial NAFTA modernization process,” Phil Kozera, Executive Director of Bio Nebraska Life Sciences Association.

“Many of NBDC’s small business clients have been exporting their products to serve customers in Mexico and Canada. It is vital to Nebraska’s small businesses – and a growing contingent of small business exporters – that these markets remain, at least, as open as they have been in the past,” said Catherine Lang, State Director for the Nebraska Business Development Center.