



June 25, 2008

**ARE NEBRASKA'S
FIREWORK
LAWS HOLDING US
BACK?**

Are Nebraska's firework laws really benefiting the state? Are people safer in Nebraska than they are in states like Missouri where you can get the "bigger" fireworks?

If Nebraska's laws aren't making us safer, then are they really costing the state in lost revenue and added expense in law enforcement?

Those are just some of the questions the Platte Institute is exploring as we get ready to celebrate Independence Day.

Look for detailed information on this topic in a *Platte Chat* coming out next week.

**MEDIA
INFORMATION**

If you are a member of the media and would like more information on anything in this e-newsletter, please email Berk Brown at Berk.Brown@PlatteInstitute.org or call (402) 452-3737.

**PLATTE
CHAT**

**GAS TAX INCREASE: WHAT'S OUR
RETURN ON THIS INVESTMENT?**

*Berk Brown
Platte Institute*

By now, most Nebraskans are aware they will be paying three cents more for a gallon of gas at local stations beginning July 1. Thanks to a hike in the fuel tax approved this spring, which brings the total state tax to 26.9 cents a gallon, Nebraska has a higher gas tax than all its neighboring states.

So what does this all mean to the average Nebraskan?

Let's assume John Doe is a Nebraska resident who drives a vehicle with a 15-gallon gas tank. Each time John fills his tank, he is paying \$4.03 in state tax. Let's assume Jane Doe drives the exact same vehicle as a resident of Iowa – where the gas tax is rising to 21 cents a gallon next week. Each time she fills up, she is paying \$3.15 in state tax. If John and Jane each have to fill up their vehicles once a week, the annual tax John pays Nebraska is \$209.56 while Jane pays Iowa \$163.80 – a savings of more than \$45 a year.

The big question John – and all other Nebraskans – should be asking is, "What am I getting for my extra investment of \$45 a year?" A better question might be why John's cousin Jason Doe in Wyoming would pay only \$109.20 in state taxes (more than \$100 less than in Nebraska) for exactly the same amount of gas.

While Nebraska's latest rise in the gas tax comes at a time when there is a roads funding crisis in the state, it is important to remember that the increase which starts next week is to pay for the increased cost of wages and benefits for the Nebraska Department of Roads, not the roads themselves.

Consequently, John Doe shouldn't expect to see the extra 45 cents he will be paying each time he fills up starting July 1, to have much – if any – impact on solving major

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To make a tax-deductible contribution to the Platte Institute for Economic Research and help promote free enterprise in our state, you can do so online at platteinstitute.org or you can send contributions to:

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10050 Regency Circle Ste 120
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How You Can Help

The Platte Institute receives its operating revenue from private donations and private sector grants. It accepts no government funding or government related grants. As promoters of free enterprise ideas we need to operate under these same principles.

An investment in the Platte Institute through a donation is leveraged against the many private sector grant opportunities from foundations and institutes promoting the free market and free enterprise principles that made this country great.

Thank you for your generosity and thank you for caring about Nebraska.

concerns with Nebraska's transportation infrastructure.

So what exactly are we getting for our investment as Nebraskans? Do we feel like we have superior roads compared to our neighbors? If we have road-funding issues now, despite the highest gas tax in the region, how will these problems be resolved without further increasing the tax burden or even seeking funding from sources completely unrelated to transportation?

The phrase, "you get what you pay for," could have easily been coined by a good salesman marketing over-priced goods or services. At the same time, the question, "what am I getting in return for my investment," may have been started by a customer who felt they were paying too much for the goods or services provided.

As John Doe prepares to start paying more at the pump next week he has to be curious about what he is getting for the extra amount he's paying the State of Nebraska. I know I am.

UNITED VAN LINE STUDY SHOWS MIGRATION TRENDS

*Alek Blankenau
Platte Institute*

Most Midwesterners, including Nebraskans, would love to promote their state as a popular migratory spot for interstate movers in the United States. Having people want to move to your state is a testament to the great opportunities and incentives your state provides.

But are Midwest states actually doing a good job in attracting these movers? United Van Lines, the nation's largest household goods mover, has tracked shipment patterns annually on a state-by-state basis since 1977, creating studies which examine nationwide migration. These studies can shed light on the current migratory patterns in Nebraska and our surrounding states.

In the studies, United Van Lines classifies the states as being high inbound, high outbound or balanced. High inbound means that 55% or more of the moves associated with the state are going into the state, and high outbound means 55% or more of those moves are going out of the state. Balanced indicates that the state is between these two distinctions. [MORE.....](#)

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