



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Platte Institute: Nebraska's First Free Market Think Tank

(Omaha, Neb.) Local Omaha and regional business leaders have been invited to attend a luncheon at the Omaha Press Club that is scheduled for Monday, February 4, to formally present the Platte Institute for Economic Research, Nebraska's first Free Market think tank. Platte Institute, in its abbreviated title form, is a non-partisan, non-profit research and educational institute. It is been founded on the belief that protection of the freedoms and quality of life that Nebraskans enjoy is best served by encouraging free enterprise initiatives, promoting individual responsibility and dialogue. The institute's staff and scholars will study public policy issues and develop proposals to increase economic opportunity while protecting individual rights of Nebraskans. Platte Institute will then promote those findings by publishing timely studies, briefing papers, and other educational materials which help policymakers, the media, and the general public gain a better understanding of current Nebraska issues.

Roger P. Lempke, recently retired Adjutant General of the Nebraska National Guard, has been named as Platte Institute's executive director. Lempke led the Nebraska National Guard through its largest series of deployments since WWII. He also has twenty years of executive experience in the private sector. Lempke states, "I see tremendous opportunities to engage key issues at this critical time in Nebraska's economic history for the betterment of all citizens." According to the Tax Foundation, Nebraska residents are burdened with one of the top 10 highest state-local tax ratings in the Union. Likewise, the Foundation's 2008 State Business Tax Climate Index ranks Nebraska in the bottom 10 when it comes to "business-friendly" states.

Platte Institute was formed to do rigorous academic research on issues effecting Nebraska's economic opportunities. Pete Ricketts, Director and President of the Platte Institute, initiated action to form the non-profit organization after learning that most states already have similar

organizations. Ricketts noted: “Until recently Nebraska has been one of a half dozen states that doesn’t have a free market think tank. In my conversations with state legislators, one of the biggest needs they have is finding quantifiable information with which to make an informed decision. From here on, Platte Institute will fill the information vacuum with high quality, rigorous research of our state policies.” Of the states bordering on Nebraska, only Wyoming lacks a similar organization.

In addition to Ricketts, a former US Senate candidate and director and former Chief Operating Officer of Omaha based TD Ameritrade Holding Corporation, other board members include: Warren Arganbright, an attorney, agriculturist and businessman from Valentine; Mike Groene, a territorial sales manager for an agricultural equipment company who co-founded the Western Nebraska Tax Payers Association in North Platte; and Gail Werner-Robertson, a prominent Omaha business owner who is active in local and state government affairs and philanthropy. Ms. Robertson is also the founder of the GWR Sunshine Autism Foundation.

Funding for Platte Institute will come from donations and private grants. No local, state, or federal government funding will be used. Organizationally, the State Policy Network, a national capacity-building service for America's state-focused think tank community is providing resources and guidance to Platte Institute during its start-up phase. Go to www.spn.org for more information.

Platte Institute has set an aggressive agenda. According to Lempke: “We have contracted through Creighton University and the renowned Midwest economics professor Ernie Goss to provide something timely and useful for this legislative session related to taxes and tax policy.”

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ATTENTION NEWS DIRECTORS AND ASSIGNMENT EDITORS:

Media interested in covering the remarks and press availability for the Platte Institute event are invited to attend –

- Monday, February 4, 2008 from 11:45 am to 1:00 pm at the Omaha Press Club, 1620 Dodge Street, 22nd Floor.
- Roger Lempke, Executive Director for the Platte Institute will be available immediately following the program for interviews.

For more information and/or scheduling coverage of this event, please contact James Taylor, Lovgren Marketing Group at 402.397.7158 or email: jtaylor@lovgren.com