

January 11, 1996

visitation rights. As we look at the future of our children we must wonder what kind of a world we will leave them. We recognized long ago that our natural resources are limited. The environmental challenges we face give us the opportunity to find responsible solutions to our problems, solutions that will outlive us, solutions that assure those resources will be available for future generations. Water is Nebraska's gold. We must do all we can to protect it, and we must not surrender our water rights to other states. At the same time, we must continue to work with our neighboring states to avoid the possibility of unnecessary and costly litigation and unworkable court decisions that defy common sense. With regard to water legislation, we must continue the search for a balance among urban, agricultural, recreational and environmental interests to focus on what is best for all Nebraskans. And it is essential that we emphasize local control instead of relying on the state to dictate what must be done. The challenges that we have faced in economic development have yielded some of the most tangible opportunities for Nebraska. We've established the Rural Development Commission and Enterprise Zones. Our overseas trade missions are paying big dividends for Nebraska businesses and agriculture. Nebraska continues to have a low unemployment rate, but this can be a mixed blessing for employers needing to recruit workers. A 1995 survey of nonmetropolitan communities reveal that 75 percent were experiencing worker shortages. It is essential that the help...that the state help local communities address this important issue. It's time to replace Nebraska's brain drain with a brain gain. Our solution is "Work Nebraska," a coordinated employee recruitment effort in the Department of Economic Development and it has four components--a system to link the unemployed and under-employed to job opportunities, a program to help communities recruit employees, an employment condition survey to help determine employment changes and jobs that need to be filled, and a system to direct workers to jobs requiring their skills or to appropriate training programs. Since its passage last year the Nebraska Partnerships for Economic Development Act has generated a great deal of interest. The act made a half million dollars available over two years for economic development projects that serve more than a single community. Because of the tremendous response from applicants and the volume of worthy projects, we're seeking an additional \$250,000 for the next fiscal year to expand the effort. We also plan to add a new component, the Nebraska Cooperative Initiative. The additional money will allow us to