

A New York radio station once called me to ask why Nebraska's statistics of well-being are off the charts. While I was tempted to simply reply "detasseling" (that's a much longer story for another column), I referred to our rich agriculture heritage, the character of our people, and small business entrepreneurship.

Nebraskans do the things that so many public officials like to talk about: work hard, work smart, create jobs, and - in the process - strengthen our local and state economy. When problems come along, Nebraskans work together to fix them and move forward.

In recent weeks, I've had the opportunity to review the operations of a number of dynamic small businesses across the First District, while assisting another with a problematic regulatory situation. In Seward, I visited a young business that designs specialty parts for use in the utility industry. Their products, many of which are sourced from Nebraska steel and fabricated in Columbus, are used in energy distribution lines across the nation. The owner, touting the benefits of working with "Made in America" materials, told me: "We choose not to deal with countries like China."

Earlier this week in Fremont, I visited a family lumber business that began in 1923. Over the years, the lumberyard has had to adapt to market needs and change business models. Today, much of its business consists of homebuilding – one wall, truss, and staircase at a time. (see the Fremont Tribune story of our visit [here](#) ). In Blair, another family-owned operation, a manufacturer of specialized farm equipment, shared its story. You can find the company's one-of-a-kind spreaders and balers on the dairy farms of Wisconsin and Minnesota, the wheat fields of Turkey, and many places in between.

Through perseverance, innovation, and the labor of dedicated and hardworking employees, these businesses are thriving. While building on relationships with other area businesses, they provide good job opportunities in their communities and strengthen the local economy. It is no coincidence that Nebraska recently ranked among the top states for business in terms of regulatory climate and growth in science, engineering, and technology jobs. America should look to this model of small business entrepreneurship and specialized manufacturing as a key to economic recovery.

In the meantime, we must ensure governmental policy is guided by the concept of collaboration

for the health and wellbeing of citizens. Another successful Nebraska company, Lester Electrical, is a word-leader in the field of industrial battery charger manufacturing. The Lincoln business last fall approached my office with a concern. The Department of Energy (DOE) was seeking to enforce a new energy regulation on batteries for golf carts. Upon careful analysis, it was found the new energy standard would achieve very minimal energy savings while threatening the viability of production of the chargers in the U.S. The implementation of the rule likely would move production overseas, cost jobs, and achieve no net benefit for the environment.

Last week in the House of Representatives, I sponsored an amendment to an appropriations bill that would prevent this DOE regulation from taking effect. It is a bit uncommon to offer such a narrow amendment, but it needed to be done. The amendment was adopted with bipartisan support and will be part of the bill moving forward. As an additional measure, I have also introduced stand-alone legislation to remedy the situation.

While it is clear that reasonable levels of regulation are needed to protect and conserve our natural resources and ensure a safe working environment, the regulatory culture should work to assist the growth of America's small businesses. Nebraskans are moving ahead – creatively and constructively - in a new American economy. Our governmental policies work best as a partner to that success.