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FRED MORGAN

Captain Morgan

Former rep takes reigns of The State Chamber

BY DEAN ANDERSON
PHOTO BY MARK HANCOCK

Serving in both the public and private sectors, Fred Morgan has always had a keen eye when it comes to business in Oklahoma.

That's one of the reasons for his elevation to president and CEO of the state's top business advocate, The State Chamber.

A small businessman and attorney, Morgan most recently served as general counsel and senior policy adviser to the Oklahoma State Senate Leadership. Hired in January and getting onboard in February to prepare for the March 31 retirement of former President and CEO Dick Rush, Morgan hit the ground running.

"It was fast and furious," Morgan says of his first few days on the job. "It was pretty whirlwind."

He has a long list of people he wants to meet with over the next few months. Tulsa and several rural communities are scheduled stops as he reinforces the message that the chamber represents business in all of Oklahoma.

Morgan was a State Chamber darling during his six terms as a state representative, earning the organization's Rookie of the Year honor. He was consistently ranked as one of the highest pro-business legislators in the House and had a hand in last year's passage of HB 1603. The bill, authored by Senate President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee and signed into law by Gov. Brad Henry, represented Oklahoma's most recent efforts in comprehensive lawsuit reform.

Savings estimates resulting from the legislation run in the \$50 million to \$75 million range in the Oklahoma health care system alone. That effort earned him recognition again by the chamber and helped earn him the job.

"I think the board showed wisdom in selecting Fred as the next president and CEO," Rush says. "I have witnessed his abilities as a champion of business for our state. There is no doubt in my mind that the members and staff of this organization will be in great hands."

Morgan says much of his time will be spent this year on the chamber's efforts to reform the worker's compensation system.

"We're usually ranked by most people who study our system as being in the lower 10 of the 50 states, while right across the border in Arkansas, they're ranked in the top 10," he says.

Morgan expects the job to be a challenge.

"It's a different chapter for me ... it's a challenge, and it involves me being able to use some of the skills and contacts I've been able to develop over the last 16 years in state government," he says. "It's an organization that I think is ready for some change, and I always liked – whether I was in the Legislature or whether I was in the business community – to make things change through public policy."

"This is a job where you can really change the business climate and the economic climate of Oklahoma." 