

## Free program helps employers encourage employees to vote

The best way to ensure a business-friendly climate in Oklahoma is to keep employees informed and encourage them to vote, speakers told Kingfisher Chamber of Commerce members at the organization's quarterly luncheon Wednesday.

Kris Rush, director of the state chamber's Prosperity Project, and her husband Dick, former state chamber CEO, explained the six-year-old nonpartisan program that "empowers employees to make informed decisions at the polls."

"The mission of the state chamber is to make Oklahoma the state of choice for business," Dick Rush said. "To do that, we have to elect pro-business candidates who understand what it takes to grow the economy and create jobs."

The Prosperity Project is an online program that provides free nonpartisan election materials designed to get employees registered to vote and keep them informed.

The project is sponsored by the state chamber and chamber "champions," businesses who invest an additional amount with the state chamber to fund the program.

The project centers around a website at [okprosperity.com](http://okprosperity.com), which collects information about every state candidate and every issue impacting businesses and makes that information available through a user-friendly interface.

"Once the June 9 filing deadline passes for state offices, we send out surveys to all the candidates for every office," Kris Rush said.

Once information is available, website users only need to type in their address to look at side-by-side comparisons of candidates for every office that will appear on their election ballots, she said.

The site also posts pro and con arguments for every state question and biographies of all appellate court judges whose names will appear on retention ballots, she said.

"We're not advocating for particular candidates, just providing information," Rush said.

The project also provides free materials to employers trying to educate their workforce, including breakroom posters, payroll stuffers and email voter registration drives.



PIONEER GENERAL Manager Richard Ruhl, right, a state chamber director, visit with Dick and Kris Rush. (TIMES-FREE PRESS Staff Photo)

"Everything you need to start the conversation at your workplace is available from us for free," she said.

Rush said companies who use the program report 90 percent of their employees register and vote in national elections, compared to the 61 percent nationwide average.

Richard Ruhl, Pioneer Telephone Cooperative general manager, is a member of the state chamber board of directors and an advocate of

the Prosperity Project.

"It's amazing how it's caught on," he said. "Pioneer used it during the presidential election and our employees really appreciated having access to information."

Rush handed out signup forms for employers interested in participating in the program, but said employers could also signup at the website.