

# IOWA CHAMBER ALLIANCE

*A unified voice for economic growth*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Iowa Chamber Alliance Presents State and Federal Legislative Priorities**

DES MOINES, IA (December 4, 2008) — Four major statewide priorities with key issues as well as six federal issues important to Iowa's growth were presented by the Iowa Chamber Alliance at a news conference at the State Capital today. The Alliance is non-partisan coalition representing 16 chambers of commerce and economic development organizations throughout the state. The Alliance advocates an economic development agenda to grow the state's economy through support of proactive programs that stimulate economic growth for the state and its residents.

“Although the state of Iowa has been affected tremendously by natural disasters this year – and attention needs to be given to those communities that have been affected – the Alliance will continue to focus on matters that impact economic growth and businesses in Iowa,” said Debi Durham, Iowa Chamber Alliance Chair, and President of the Siouxland Chamber of Commerce. “We believe statewide leadership should address key issues including infrastructure planning and protection, requiring rigorous statewide education standards, strategies for retaining and attracting workforce and lowering commercial property taxes and health insurance costs. The Alliance is committed to creating an environment that is conducive to business success leading to job expansion and increased state and local revenues.”

At the state level, the Alliance has identified four major areas important for Iowa's growth:

- Business Climate
- Workforce
- Infrastructure
- Community Revitalization

At the national level, the Alliance believes the following issues require action by Iowa's Congressional delegation:

- Immigration
- Social Security
- Equality of Medicare Reimbursement Funds
- Affordable Health Insurance
- Right of Secret Ballot
- Energy Policy

## **Improve Iowa's Business Climate**

### Economic Growth

To preserve Iowa's business foundation, the Alliance supports the state's Right-to-Work Law, opposes legislation that would negatively impact this law and opposes all mandatory fees for non-union workers; supports the statute for workers' compensation regarding injuries on the job; opposes mandating prevailing wage rates for public construction projects; opposes mandating wage rates for public construction projects; and opposes adding items that can be negotiated to Iowa's public employee collective bargaining. Tinkering with Iowa's strong business foundation could significantly impact the state's ability to attract a skilled workforce and/or impair business expansion and job creation in the state.

### Property Tax

Because property taxes are not competitive for commercial and industrial properties in Iowa, the Alliance supports tax relief for commercial and industrial properties. Delaying reforms to the property tax system intensifies the tax burden for commercial and industrial payers.

### Income Tax

The Alliance believes the state should adjust, simplify and flatten, the current income tax structure to a two-tiered system. This change would allow the state to maintain its income tax revenue stream while eliminating confusion when marketing the state.

### Entrepreneurship

Iowa's leaders support creating cultures of entrepreneurship in Iowa by nurturing entrepreneurial talent and generating venture capital. The Alliance recommends continuing financial support for research parks and regional business accelerators, extending the existing Seed Capital Fund Investment Tax Credit, which expired in 2008, replenishing those tax credits, and maintaining Research and Development (R & D) Tax Credits.

## **Attract and Retain a Highly Skilled and Educated Workforce**

### Workforce Development

The Alliance supports implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills by setting statewide outcome-based standards in addition to strengthening workforce training, retention, and recruitment to meet future workforce needs. Workforce issues must be addressed from a comprehensive perspective.

## **Rebuild and Improve Iowa's Infrastructure**

### Infrastructure Planning and Protection

Iowa needs a comprehensive plan that includes community protection, environmental sustainability, commercial development and recreational/tourism opportunities to foster growth and economic development. The Alliance supports funding for immediate natural disaster recovery as soon as possible while considering long-term structural and planning needs. The Alliance also supports conducting an extensive evaluation of the infrastructure of Iowa's 72,000 miles of rivers and waterways, and developing a comprehensive plan to reduce the impact of natural disasters in Iowa communities.

### Road Use Tax Fund

The Alliance supports revision of the current Road Use Tax Fund formula to allocate more funds to highly traveled roads and implementation of Time-21 (Transportation Investment Moves the Economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century). While the Alliance supports these initiatives, current expenditures should be carefully scrutinized before considering revenue sources. Continuous investment in Iowa's public roadway system is essential to support economic growth and help attract new businesses to the state.

### Rail Service

The maintenance and expansion of passenger rail services in Iowa will foster economic development and provide an energy efficient, environmentally-friendly mode of transportation, improving the overall quality of life for Iowans. The Alliance supports this and continued investment in the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) Rail Revolving Loan and Grant Fund to help develop infrastructure for rail service to industrial parks.

### **Sustain and Revitalize Iowa Communities**

#### CAT and RECAT Programs (Community Attraction and Tourism and River Enhancement Community Attraction and Tourism Programs)

The Alliance supports continued funding and removal of caps on CAT and RECAT. These matching funds support visionary community projects or destination attractions important to grow local economies, attract visitors and retain businesses and workers for those businesses.

#### Sustainability – A Green Agenda

The Alliance supports funding for the Iowa Brownfield Redevelopment Program at \$3 million per year; raising the cap on the Brownfields and Grayfields Redevelopment Tax Credit Program; and raising the cap on Historic Preservation Tax Credits – or removing the cap for a period of time in areas impacted by natural disasters. Communities need readily accessible funding for environmental site investigations prior to acquiring nuisance Brownfield sites. These initiatives provide good “green” policy for the state by encouraging sustainable redevelopment efforts and the reuse of historic properties.

### **Federal Issues**

#### Immigration

The Alliance supports streamlining immigration processes for highly skilled workers; raising the cap on H1-B visas; improving the international student visa program; allowing employers to recruit immigrant workers to fill labor needs when there is a shortage; and continued investment and strengthening of the employment eligibility confirmation system (E-Verify) to ensure compliance with state and federal laws.

#### Social Security

The Alliance encourages federal officials to refrain from penalizing workers who return to work while still receiving social security benefits.

#### Equality of Medicare Reimbursement Funds

Affordable, high-quality health care is a priority in Iowa. It is vital to the state’s economic development. However, Medicare, the single largest payer for care in Iowa, fails to pay its fair share of health care costs. This impacts private health care premiums small businesses pay. The Alliance supports removing the burden on businesses that provide health insurance by creating a system in which the uninsured can afford health care.

#### Affordable Health Insurance

The Alliance supports cost containment and strategies for decreasing the cost of health care delivery in Iowa. The Alliance endorses state and federal legislation that promotes consumer-driven health care such as Health Savings Accounts, Flexible Spending Accounts and use of wellness programs. The Alliance also supports strengthening and expanding the current employer-based system while developing alternatives for individually-owned health coverage.

#### Maintain the Right of Secret Ballot

Maintaining the right of employees to cast a secret ballot when organizing unions is supported by the Alliance. This will ensure that elections are fair and free of fraud – where employees can cast their votes

confidentially, without peer pressure or coercion from unions or their employers. The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) or Card Check Bill will deny employees this right which would negate Iowa's Right-to-Work Law.

### Energy Policy

The Alliance supports the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which is a comprehensive energy policy including: increasing energy efficiency and conservation; ensuring adequate energy supplies and generation, renewing and expanding the energy infrastructure; encouraging investment in new energy technologies; and ensuring appropriate consideration of the effects of regulatory policies on energy supplies. The Alliance also supports additional actions to ensure the development and deployment of affordable, reliable, energy supplies that promote energy, economic development, and national security.

For more information about the Alliance's positions and legislative agenda, please visit the Web site at [www.iowachamberalliance.com](http://www.iowachamberalliance.com).

### **About the Iowa Chamber Alliance**

The Iowa Chamber Alliance's mission is to put forth and enact an agenda to grow the state's economy through support of proactive programs that stimulate economic growth opportunities for the entire state and its residents. The Alliance members include chambers and economic development organizations in: Ames, Bettendorf, Burlington/West Burlington, Cedar Falls/Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Fort Dodge, Iowa City, Marshalltown, Mason City, Muscatine and Sioux City.

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