

**LINCOLN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
CONSENT AGENDA
February 9, 2012**

PUBLIC POLICY

FEBRUARY PUBLIC POLICY MEETINGS

- Wed. 2/1, 8:00 – 9:00 am *Chamber Coffee* meeting of business, civic, and community leaders.
Sponsored by: Black Hills Energy
- Thursday 2/2, morning Public Policy Steering Committee meets to review and prioritize public policy issues.
- Tues. 2/14, 7:00 – 8:30 am ***Business Executive Roundtable I*** meets to discuss common issues faced by business owners and develop/share best practices and approaches toward solutions.
- Wed. 2/15, 8:00 – 9:00 am *Transportation and Public Works Forum*
Featured Topic: The February forum will feature newly appointed Public Works Director Miki Esposito. She will talk about her vision for the department and Lincoln's infrastructure strategy as a whole.
*Sponsored by: The Schemmer Associates
HDR, Inc.*
- Wed. 2/22, 8:00 – 9:00 am ***Public Policy Forum***
Featured Topic: Lauren Kintner, Director of the Governor's Policy Research Office, has been invited to talk about the governor's tax cut proposal and other legislative issues. In addition, Lincoln attorney Dallas Jones will provide a review of workers compensation issues pending before the legislature as well as discuss his work with Nebraskan's for Workers Comp Equity & Fairness.
Sponsored by: IMSCORP
- Wed. 2/22, 10:30 – 1:30 pm ***Small Business Lobby Day at the Capitol***
The 2012 Small Business Day at the Capitol has is a collaboration among various business groups, including the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. Utilize the clout you have as a small business owner. Share your perspective directly with legislators and other government officials. Cost of \$15.00 covers lunch and materials. Seating is limited so registration is required. *Contact Tara Miles at (402) 474-3570 or tara.miles@nebankers.org*
- Tues.2/28, 4:00 – 5:00 pm ***Business Executive Roundtable II*** meets to discuss common issues faced by business owners and develop/share best practices and approaches toward solutions.

LOCAL ISSUES:

Local Taxi Service

Lincoln Chamber staff members have met with two applicants looking to expand taxi service in Lincoln. After hearing feedback from Chamber members and members of Lincoln's lodging and entertainment industry, the Chamber's Public

Policy Steering Committee recommends the Lincoln Chamber support expanding competition in the local market to achieve better service. Current complaints range from wait times, to fare prices, to available service. The process will involve the individual companies who are looking to expand service to apply to the Public Service Commission. If the current provider protests another company entering the marketplace, the applicants will have to appear before the Commission and show a public need for expanded service. At this point, it is unclear if it is appropriate for “the Chamber” itself to testify at the hearing or if it is more beneficial for individual Chamber members who are affected by the service to testify. Staff will continue to work for an appropriate solution and will continue to provide positive support for the effort where appropriate.

Impact Fee Language Changes

The City of Lincoln is looking to make two procedural changes to language in the Impact Fee ordinance. The changes only apply to the Arterial Street Impact Fee Economic Development Refund. The first change would codify into law a practice that has been on-going since Chris Beutler was elected in 2007. Previous to the Beutler administration, a business could apply for a refund before it met all of its performance measures for job creation and salary levels. This could have possibly left the City open to refunding impact fees and having a business either never fully meet the measures or meet them once and fail to keep-up the jobs and salary levels over time. Again, this change would simply write into the ordinance that all performance measures must be met before a refund could take place. The second change deals with the time-frame under which the refunds can take place. Currently, a business who applies for the refund incentive must obtain an occupancy permit within 18 months of the building permit. The city is recommending dropping the 18-month requirement. The City has found that large projects, particularly if located on a “Greenfield site”, can take longer than 18 months to build and occupy. Especially if weather, contractor performance, or site changes take place. The Lincoln Chamber of Commerce is supportive of these changes.

Downtown Fiber Conduit

The City of Lincoln is looking to expand fiber connectivity in downtown. The City’s proposes to use Fast Forward Funds to lay a 4-inch conduit, through which fiber optic cable could be laid and used to service businesses downtown. Chamber members have expressed a need for more reliability and connectivity to better service their needs. The timing of the project is exceptional because of its coincidence with the downtown resurfacing project. With the streets already being scheduled for service work, doing the project now will help alleviate cost concerns if the project were to be undertaken at a later date. The project also fits the criteria for using Fast Forward Fund dollars.

STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE: The Chamber’s Public Policy Committee discussed the fiber proposal. It was moved, seconded and unanimously approved to support the City’s Use of Fast Forward Funds for the project. The Committee’s motion will be included in the Consent Agenda for ratification at the February Board Meeting. Bruce Bohrer was designated to represent the Chamber and LPED at the Mayor’s Press Conference announcing the Downtown Fiber Conduit on February 9th. The Chamber was very pleased to stand with the Mayor and companies such as Nelnet and Nanonation in support of this important project. City Council members have also been positive toward this project and should be recognized for their efforts and support in making this happen, as well.

February Transportation & Public Works Forum

The February forum will feature newly appointed Public Works Director Miki Esposito. She will talk about her vision for the department and Lincoln’s infrastructure strategy as a whole. She will also be joined by members of the Public Works staff to discuss the downtown resurfacing project. That project will resurface all streets between 10th and 17th and K to Q.

Roads Funding Update

The Lincoln Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors committed to making adequate road and infrastructure their #1 priority for expanding and improving Lincoln’s economic development capabilities and business climate. To that end, Chamber staff has worked diligently with elected officials and City staff to commit to more local road funds. Those efforts culminated in 2011 with the City’s decision to reassign the cost of snow removal to the general fund and use wheel tax dollars as they were intended for construction. The change, coupled with an increase in the wheel tax resulted in an additional \$7M in local road funding dollars. The results will be seen immediately. In 2011, prior to the Chamber’s successful efforts, the City oversaw 16 projects covering 7.2 miles of roadway. For 2012, that number will jump to 44 projects covering 17.4 miles of roadway. Going forward, this additional funding should help close the current infrastructure gap and lay the foundation for economic expansion.

Lancaster County Inheritance Tax – Lancaster County officials report they will face a difficult time in closing any gap created by the loss of the inheritance tax dollars. In this fiscal year alone, that amount is approximately \$6M. The Lancaster County board officially opposed the Governor’s tax-cut proposal based on that loss of revenue. During February’s Chamber Coffee County Commissioner Jane Raybould hinted the property tax levy for County residents would increase roughly \$36 dollars for every \$100,000 dollars of valuation to cover the shortfall. The County will hold its mid-year budget retreat on February 9th to discuss the issue further.

STATE ISSUES:

Legislative Session Report

By the end of February, the Legislative Session will be over half over. This means debate on key legislative issues will be taking place during this month.

Your Lincoln Chamber is active on several tax-related legislative proposals geared at further enhancing our job/investment climate. In addition, we are engaged on numerous community improvement and CVB-aligned issues such as Centennial Mall and improving Lincoln taxi-service. Along with our several affirmative agenda items our major defensive agenda will be to defend against the repeal of the Build Nebraska Act, which Omaha senator Brenda Council has introduced under [LB 1098](#)

Our Chamber Coalition of the state’s big three chambers (Lincoln, Omaha, and the State) is again active by way of coordinated action on legislation as well as collaboration among staff and Board leadership.

January was a busy month and we had several good committee hearings on our issues. We also enjoyed the opportunity to hear from Senator Amanda McGill, Senator Kathy Campbell, and Senator Bill Avery at our January Public Policy Forum.

The following are a few crucial issues we are working on under our 2012 State Opportunities Agenda

LB 830 (Hadley et al) – Sales and Use Tax Exemption for Certain Bio-Chips

LCOC Position: Support

Jason Ball testified for LCOC, Greater Omaha Chamber, City of Lincoln, and the State Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and submitted letter of support from NEDA.

Public Hearing: January 25th

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

PRIORITY BILL: YES, Sen. Lydia Brasch

LB 830 is an extremely important bill which will clarify and modernize the State of Nebraska tax treatment of certain bio-chips utilized in the production of vital information for agriculture and food safety. This is an issue for a bio-science innovator founded and still located in Lincoln. They are a world-renowned company that now is part of a larger enterprise with global reach. Nebraska’s current tax treatment imposing use taxes on a major component of their process is a clear cut and pronounced competitive disadvantage for them. This is a priority bill for the Chamber of Commerce and City of Lincoln. We are very pleased that the NE Farm Bureau, NE Cattleman, Bio Nebraska, and the University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources offered their support at the public hearing, too. In addition, the Nebraska Economic Developers Association (NEDA) submitted a letter of support. This legislation has an emergency clause.

LB 872 (Hadley, Cornett, Mello) – Change to Market-Based Apportionment of Corporate Income for Intangibles and Services

LCOC Position: Support

Bruce Bohrer testified for LCOC and submitted a letter of support from NEDA

Public Hearing: January 27th

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

LB 872 is a somewhat complicated but extremely important solution on how to deal with updating current state tax policy related to sourcing of income for intangible and service companies based in NE. Nebraska's current regime for apportionment of corporate income is a direct impediment and disincentive for growth of many Nebraska-based companies selling intangibles or services. In fact, the current "cost of production" methodology leads to an extremely untenable tax position for many Nebraska-based companies. This is an especially egregious situation because our current state tax regime negatively influences job growth decisions. LB 872 was also supported by Nebraska Global, First Data, HUDL, Nelnet, the Nebraska Economic Developers Association, Nanonation and many other companies organized under the auspices of the Nebraska Intangibles and Services Association.

LB 970 (Cornett, McCoy) – Tax Relief

LCOC Position: Support

Lincoln CPA John Cederberg testified for the Chamber Coalition

Chamber Coalition: Yes

Public Hearing: January 26th

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

LB 970 proposes to reduce three separate taxes. First, the individual state income tax would be reduced by lowering current tax rates and expanding current income brackets.

The bill would also reduce the current top corporate income tax rate from 7.81% to 6.70% which would match the proposed top individual income tax rate under the proposal. Finally, the bill proposes to repeal the inheritance tax in its entirety.

The Governor outlined the objectives of LB 970 in his State of the State address, telling state senators that "we can do better than our 29th ranking" [in Tax Foundation Business Tax Climate Rankings] and urged them to provide tax relief for hard working middle class Nebraska families and businesses. In his comments before the Revenue Committee the Governor reiterated his push for repeal of the inheritance act as a continuation of the state's effort to complete the job of repealing "death taxes". The Governor noted that the state's estate tax was repealed a few years ago and the state dealt with the loss of revenue through prioritized spending and tight budgeting. "We didn't whine or cry about it," said Governor Heineman. "We dealt with it the way Nebraska families and businesses do – we tighten our belts and prioritized our spending." Counties from across NE, not surprisingly, are taking exception. What might be a little surprising is that many are controlled (as in Lancaster) by Republicans who don't appear to be near as enthusiastic to move Nebraska to a more competitive tax ranking for our business climate.

The hearing on LB 970 included opposition from several counties and county officials from across Nebraska, including Lancaster County elected officials. Lancaster County Commissioners maintain that they would be forced to raise property taxes if they can't rely on inheritance taxes.

Our Chamber Coalition submitted a letter signed by our three Chairmen that outlined principles and objectives our coalition will adhere to as our state continues to debate ways to make our state more competitive for jobs and investment:

- 1) Nebraska's tax policy should help advance key state strategic objectives (such as lessening the tax burden on individuals, facilitating job growth and investment, and enhancing Nebraska's competitive position and national rankings);
- 2) Nebraska's tax policy should be sustainable, and;
- 3) Nebraska's tax policy should promote fairness and neutrality throughout our overall tax system.

CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU MISSION SUPPORT

LB 859 (Avery) Provide State Appropriation for Centennial Mall Renovation

LCOC Position: Support

Bruce Bohrer testified at the hearing

Public Hearing: January 23rd

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

LB 859 will provide a \$1.2M state general fund appropriation to assist with the much needed renovation of the Centennial Mall. The state funds would be utilized for safety features of the renovation. The Chamber views this bill as a worthy use of state funds; the state has a responsibility to financially participate in the renovation of the Mall. It is the doorway to the Capitol and a gathering place to thousands of school children from across Nebraska as well as visitors from all across the country.

LB 889 (Avery, ET AL) Change Rules of Competition for Taxi-cab Service

LCOC Position: Support

Bruce Bohrer testified for LCOC

Public Hearing: January 31st

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

LB 889 will exempt the requirements for “public convenience and necessity” for the provision of taxi services in primary and metropolitan class cities. The Lincoln Chamber added our voice of support and concern over the lack of competition and inadequate service currently provided in Lincoln. The inadequacy of the service is a public safety concern of bar owners and the city council Internal Liquor Committee. The Chamber and CVB also share these concerns. This issue needs a solution either through legislative action on LB 889 or approval of expanded options through the Public Service Commission. Lincoln Senator Bill Avery is leading this effort but it is noteworthy that fellow Lincoln Senators Amanda McGill, Ken Haar, Tony Fulton, Colby Coash, and Kathy Campbell have signed as co-sponsors on LB 889.

LB 903 (Cornett, ET AL) Exempt Certain Youth Sports Admissions from Sales and Use Taxes

LCOC Position: Support with Letter

Public Hearing: February 1st

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

The bill redefines admissions in the sales and use tax statute to exempt certain youth sports activities and fees associated with these activities. LB 903 is a response to a Department of Revenue ruling in the late fall that changed what had been the status quo of exempting these admission to youth sports activities organized by non-profits such as the YMCA and the Nebraska Sports Council. We have numerous events in Lincoln, and statewide events largely held in Lincoln, that would be impacted by this. LB 903 should be enacted to restore the playing field so to speak for these youth activities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LB 971 (Harms) Merge Department of Labor into the Department of Economic Development

LCOC Position: Neutral with support for concept and questions/concerns about how the merger will impact economic development operations/advocacy.

Chamber Coalition: YES. Bruce Bohrer testified on behalf of the Lincoln, Omaha, and State Chambers.

Public Hearing: February 2nd

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

LB 971 would begin the process of merging the Nebraska Department of Labor (DOL) with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED), bringing both agencies under one director. According to the Statement of Intent, this merger is based on the recognition that economic success in Nebraska is dependent on businesses, and that businesses rely on a talented, well-equipped workforce. Proponents, including the Governor, say the merger will facilitate a coordinated approach to workforce and economic development. LB971 moves all existing programs, employees, contracts, and services from DOL into DED. The bill does not call for any cuts of current employees or services. The focus of this bill is effective and efficient delivery of services to Nebraska citizens through greater coordination and collaboration in carrying out the State’s workforce and economic development efforts.

We had been trying to work through the Chamber Coalition to develop a united response on this proposal.

Toward that end, the Lincoln Chamber submitted the following:

Draft Principles for DOL/DED Reorganization

- Must ensure statewide economic development continues as a high-priority objective and is not subverted to programs within DOL;
- Must include Deputy Director position with exclusive duties related to economic development as part of the reorganization;
- Statewide tourism promotion must be continued as a high-priority objective;
- Include a built-in statewide review of outcomes, which shall include specific examples of how the merger helped create better coordination and synergy between the previously separate agencies and future review and assessment of how the merger, in practice, helped or hindered the objectives of the agencies;
- Include mandatory legislative review of reorganization at specified future date;
- Greater flexibility in new agency workforce (more exempt positions)

UPDATE: An amendment was offered by Sen. Mello at the hearing on this bill. The amendment moved certain inspection related functions currently carried out by the DOL to the State Fire Marshall's office and also put in place requirements to report back to the Legislature and develop benchmarks for the merger. We are encouraged by the amendment and the statements made by Sen. Harms and Sen. Mello regarding the need to get this right and also recognizing the challenges that are part and parcel of an effort such as this.

[LB 983](#) (Cornett) Remove Limitation on R & D Tax Credits

LCOC Position: Support

Chamber Coalition: Yes

Public Hearing: February 1st

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

LB 983 would strike the limitation on the number of years that a taxpayer can claim the research & development (R&D) tax credits authorized by Neb. Rev. Stat. sec. 77-5803, thereby recognizing and affirming Nebraska's commitment to providing R&D tax credits for projects that may take more than five years to successfully research and develop.

One section of R&D tax credits applies to university-based R&D projects (that credit is equal to 35 percent of the federal R&D income tax credit) and the other applies to R&D projects that are not university-based projects (that credit is equal to 15 percent of the federal R&D income tax credit). Current Nebraska law limits the term of a taxpayer's ability to claim to a total of five tax years.

The Nebraska R&D tax credits is unique in that is a refundable tax credit, which can be paid to a taxpayer (such as a start-up) without an income tax liability. The changes proposed by LB 983 would be operative for all taxable years beginning or deemed

to begin on or after January 1, 2012, under the 12 Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

Build a Healthier Nebraska Initiative – University of Nebraska

[LB 1055](#) (Hadley) Funds for UNK Nursing and Allied Health Facility

[LB 1065](#) (Fulton) Funds for Lincoln Division of UNMC College of Nursing

[LB 1066](#) (Hansen) Planning Funds for Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

[LB 1089](#) (Nelson) Funds for UNMC Cancer Research and Treatment Facility

LCOC Position: Support

Chamber Coalition: Yes

Public Hearing: February 2nd

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

This package of bills represents leveraging some of the most competitive and cutting-edge University programs in cancer research and treatment, health care workforce development, and animal science. These initiatives ask for just over \$91M in funds from the state's cash reserve and will leverage over \$300M in private investment and other fund sources.

The Chamber Coalition of the Lincoln, Omaha and State Chambers of Commerce submitted a "Chairs Letter" in support of this package, noting in the letter that

“From a business perspective, the University of Nebraska is well known as a key component of our current and future prospects for high-impact economic growth. The package of bills that you will be hearing today represents key investments and funding for what we view as productive public investments. We believe the statewide aspect, as well as the public/private collaborations and investments involved in each of these proposals, makes them uniquely important to the future economic health of our state.

The proposals are very important to sustain the current statewide success the University has achieved in these key strategic areas for our state’s long-term growth.”

LB 1080 (Cornett) Provide a property tax exemption and a sales and use tax exemption relating to data centers

LCOC Position: Support

Chamber Coalition: Yes

Public Hearing: February 2nd

Status: In Committee as of 2/2/12

This legislative bill relates to data centers and exempts sales and use taxes on tangible personal property (e.g. components and parts) ‘shipped to’ and ‘assembled in’ Nebraska, but following assembly, shipped outside the state to be placed in to service at a physical location outside Nebraska. The bill also clarifies that such temporary property is exempt from personal property tax.

ROAD FUNDING

LB 1098 (Council) Repeal the Build Nebraska Act and redirect sales tax revenues

LCOC Position: Oppose

Chamber Coalition: Yes

Public Hearing: February 16th

Status:

LB 1098 is a continuation of the effort to fight against needed prioritization of funding for statewide road needs. The Department of Roads already has put together a list of projects it will bring on line over the next ten years with the \$600M+ provided by the Build Nebraska Act. This includes building the Lincoln South Beltway as part of the state expressway system. The Lincoln Chamber will be among the many road funding advocates who will fight against LB 1098.

Department of Roads Officials Praise Build NE Act

DOR Director Monty Fredrickson spoke at our January 18th T&PW Forum reviewing the status of road funding in NE and offering high praise for the Legislature’s passage of LB 84 (2011), the Build NE Act. The Lincoln Chamber’s work and commitment over the past several years helped lead to passage of LB 84, which includes the funding for building the Lincoln South (Expressway) Beltway. This was a high priority consensus item in the initial discussions about key community consensus issues.

February 22nd Public Policy Forum

We’ve invited Lauren Kintner, Director of the Governor’s Policy Research Office, to talk about the governor’s tax cut proposal and other legislative issues. In addition, Lincoln attorney Dallas Jones will provide a review of workers compensation issues pending before the legislature as well as discuss his work with Nebraskan’s for Workers Comp Equity & Fairness. Plan now to attend this highly informative meeting.

Economic Forecasting Advisory Board Meeting Set for Feb. 24th

The most recent meeting of the state revenue forecasters produced unanimous views about the state’s steadily improving economy and a \$113 million dollar upward adjustment to their state revenue *projections*. Now, with several tax cut and spending requests competing in the Legislature, all eyes will be on the Revenue Forecasting Board to see if they might feel the economic forecast is looking even better for Nebraska.

The meeting of the Nebraska Economic Forecasting Advisory Board will be February 24th, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. at the State Capitol.

Chamber's 2012 State Opportunities Agenda –

The Lincoln Chamber's key State policy objectives for 2012:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – The Lincoln Chamber of Commerce will prioritize support for proposals that help facilitate the LPED strategic plan for the Lincoln region. The Lincoln Chamber will work cooperatively with the State Chamber, Omaha Chamber, the Nebraska Economic Developers Association, the University of Nebraska and other organizations and institutions to support legislative proposals and administrative changes that improve the competitive position of Nebraska.

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE – The Lincoln Chamber will prioritize efforts to protect the Build NE Act and the HWY Trust Fund. The Lincoln Chamber will continue protective advocacy to secure state funds related to Lincoln's South and East Beltway projects. The Lincoln Chamber believes there is a significant funding gap for road infrastructure needs across the state. The Chamber supports a review of factors utilized in the allocation formula for distributing state road funds and will support efforts to more equitably distribute funds to areas of growing population and infrastructure needs.

STATE BUDGET & GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY – The Lincoln Chamber will prioritize budget support for our state's continued strong economic growth through funding for roads, and support for other productive expenditures that promote job and investment growth. Investments in these key assets should be maintained and even increased in areas of excellence that bolster private sector job growth. State leaders should continue to be prudent in their protection and use of the Cash Reserve Fund. The Lincoln Chamber continues to believe it is imperative for budget sustainability and taxpayer fairness that state policymakers track the actual results of CIR reforms enacted in 2011. Proper implementation to create competitive state and local governments will position Nebraska on the leading edge of sustainable economic recovery and growth.

TAX RELIEF & SPENDING RESTRAINT – The Lincoln Chamber continues to support lowering the tax burden. Nebraska has moved in the right direction recently in national tax burden rankings. Tax relief must include a focus on spending restraint and prioritization from both state and local governments. Without spending restraint from all levels of government, so called tax relief can easily turn into a tax shift. In keeping with our core statements of policy, the Chamber supports proposals that help Nebraska become more competitive and able to expand jobs and investment to grow our economy. The Lincoln Chamber supports tax relief to help keep and attract jobs and people to Nebraska.

CVB MISSION SUPPORT – The Chamber will support legislative proposals that assist the Convention and Visitors Bureau in executing its mission of bringing more visitors, events, and conventions to the Lincoln area.

FEDERAL ISSUES:

Though we have seen some movement recently on a few federal issues, such as Congress again taking up the issue of a long-term HWY funding bill, we remain a little bit skeptical of the ability of Congress to find consensus. With the national elections pending, political grandstanding will unfortunately get in the way. The Lincoln Chamber will continue to work on federal issues, such as funding for roads and concerns over the anti-business actions of the National Labor Relations Board, through our involvement in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

House Committees Working on Infrastructure Funding

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure is marking up the surface transportation portion of [H.R. 7](#), the "American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act of 2012." On February 3rd, the House Ways and

Means Committee marks up the surface transportation revenue title, [H.R. 3864](#). You can view the U.S. Chamber's [statement on the introduction of the House surface transportation proposal here](#).

Lincoln Chamber Urges Congress to Prioritize Transportation

The Lincoln Chamber and several Lincoln businesses signed onto a letter organized by the U.S. Chamber's Americans for Transportation Mobility working group. The text is as follows:

Members of Congress,

As Congress embarks on a new legislative session, we, the undersigned companies and organizations, urge you to **Make Transportation Job #1** in 2012 and pass federal highway, transit and safety legislation that, at a minimum, maintains investment levels before the current law expires on March 31. The long-delayed reauthorization of federal highway and public transportation programs is a major piece of unfinished business that can provide a meaningful boost to the U.S. economy and its workers and already has broad-based support.

To grow, the United States must invest. There are few federal efforts that rival the potential of critical transportation infrastructure investments for sustaining and creating jobs and economic activity over the short term.

Maintaining—and ideally increasing—federal funding for road, bridge, public transportation and safety investments can sustain and create jobs and economic activity in the short-term, and improve America's export and travel infrastructure, offer new economic growth opportunities, and make the nation more competitive over the long-term.

Program reform would make the dollars stretch even further: reducing the time it takes transportation projects to get from start to finish, encouraging public-private partnerships and use of private capital, increasing accountability for using federal funds to address the highest priority needs, and spurring innovation and technology deployment.

We recognize there are challenges in finding the resources necessary to adequately fund such a measure. However, with the economic opportunities that a well-crafted measure could afford and emerging political consensus for advancing such an effort, we believe it is time for all involved parties to come together and craft a final product.

In 2011, political leaders—Republican and Democrat, House, Senate and the Administration—stated a multi-year surface transportation bill is important for job creation and economic recovery.

We urge you to follow words with action: **Make Transportation Job #1** and move legislation immediately in the House and Senate to invest in the roads, bridges, transit systems that are the backbone of the U.S. economy, its businesses large and small, and communities of all sizes.

Senator Nelson Information –

For a review of federal issues Senator Nelson is working on and a review of his positions, podcasts, video clips, statements, etc, go to:

[Ben Nelson, U.S. Senator for Nebraska: Press](#)

Senator Johanns Information –

For a review of federal issues Senator Johanns is working on and a review of his positions, podcasts, video clips, statements, etc, go to:

[News Room - U.S. Senator Mike Johanns for the State of Nebraska](#)

Representative Fortenberry Information –

For a review of federal issues Rep. Fortenberry is working on and a review of his positions, podcasts, video clips, statements, etc, go to:

[Press Releases | Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, Representing the 1st District of Nebraska](#)

LINCOLN PARTNERSHIP FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Jobs in Lincoln -- The Lincoln metropolitan area once again has the second lowest unemployment rate in the United States. Lincoln's rate of 3.6 percent trails only Bismark, ND. In terms of overall jobs, Lincoln has over 170,000 jobs including 3,000 more than at the same point over the previous year.

EAS – Jason Ball continues to participate as a mentor in the Gallup Entrepreneurship Acceleration System (EAS) program. Jason is facilitating program participation and discussion with nine Lincoln companies (see listing below). Gallup has developed an EAS program with a focus on the strengths and experience of the Gallup organization – data collection and development of a person's natural strengths. The program is identified as an opportunity for an entrepreneur or small business to benefit from the Gallup expertise in behavioral economics – the same type of training large, well-known clients of Gallup have used. Jason meets with the leadership of each company monthly and facilitates discussion around Gallup's Clifton Strengthsfinder, Q12 and Business Growth Survey tools. The program runs through December.

The nine Lincoln companies that Jason worked with were:

- Bison Inc.
- Source One
- Ark Financial
- Firespring
- Milestone Local Surfaces
- Technical Maintenance and Service Co.
- The Coffee Shop
- Turbine Interactive
- Serving Angst

Companies are currently being recruited for 2012.

Building and Site Fund – The Partnership is working with the Lincoln Airport Authority and the City of Lincoln on an application to the State of Nebraska for grant funds under the new Nebraska Building and Site Fund. Lincoln was one of three cities selected to move to final application out of seven original applicants. The program is available to assist with the development of speculative sites to be prepared for potential new projects. The plan follows the Airpark Development Plan released by the Partnership and Authority last year.

Marketing Plan – The Partnership has set its marketing strategy for 2012, focusing on partnerships and target industries. Lincoln is focusing on agriculture, food and manufacturing this year with significant presence at the Industrial Assets Management Council. For the first time ever, the organization will hold one of its forums in Nebraska with the Fall forum scheduled at Omaha. These companies and consultants focus on a number of industries including those targeted by Lincoln and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Additionally, the Partnership is going to a plastics trade show, a data center event, will support the University at BIO and the International Food Technology Expo and will invite targeted executives to the community for familiarization tours..

Digital Media – Investors, members and other interested parties may keep up with the most recent happenings through the Partnership either at the website, www.selectlincoln.org or at twitter, @selectlincoln. All Partnership staff are now posting at twitter.

Building and Site Data Base -- The Partnership is working with the City of Lincoln and Realtors Association of Lincoln to complete a “facelift” of the community’s building and site database. The site was one of the first GIS-based sites in the U.S. when launched in 2004. However, new technology is creating opportunities for an upgrade. The Realtors have already voted to commit additional funds to the Partnership for 2011-2012.

Next Key Dates

LPED Investors – February 7, 2012 at 8 a.m. (Note: Catherine Lang, the newly appointed director of the proposed joint department of economic development and department of labor for Nebraska is scheduled to speak)

LPED Board – Feb. 7, 2012 at 9 a.m.

LCEDC Board Meeting – March 13, 2012 at 8 a.m.

OPERATIONS/YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP

Chamber Events

Wednesday, February 1 | 8:00 a.m.

Chamber Coffee

Lincoln Chamber of Commerce | 1135 M Street

Wednesday, February 1 | 12:00 noon

Ambassador Lunch

Lincoln Chamber of Commerce | 1135 M Street

Thursday, February 2 | 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

YPG Netquirting

Art & Soul | 5740 Hidcote Drive

Monday, February 8 | 12:00-1:00 p.m.

YPG Membership Orientation

Lincoln Chamber of Commerce | 1135 M Street

Thursday, February 9 | 11:30 a.m.

Annual Lunch featuring Keynote Speaker Dr. Frank Luntz

The Cornhusker Marriot- Grand Ballroom | 333 S Street

Thursday, February 9 | 3:30-5:00 p.m.

YPG Board Matching Event

Lincoln Chamber of Commerce | 1135 M Street

Friday, February 10 | 7:30 a.m.

Small Business Network

Hallow Candle | 3302 O Street, Suite C

Wednesday, February 15 | 7:30-8:30 a.m.

YPG Netperking

SensoryEffects | 4343 NW 38th Street

Wednesday, February 15 | 8:00 a.m.
Transportation and Public Works
Lincoln Chamber of Commerce | 1135 M Street

Wednesday, February 15 | 12:00 p.m.
Face the Chamber
Lincoln Country Club | 3200 S. 24th

Thursday, February 16 | 12:00-1:00 p.m.
Behind the Scenes of Lincoln's Tourism Industry – YPG lunch
Lincoln Chamber of Commerce | 1135 M Street

Tuesday, February 21 | 11:30-1:00 p.m.
YPG Mega Committee Meeting
Lincoln Chamber of Commerce | 1135 M Street

Wednesday, February 22 | 8:00 a.m.
Public Policy
Lincoln Chamber of Commerce | 1135 M Street

Thursday, February 23 | 4:30-6:30 p.m.
Business After Hours
Blue Blood Brewery | 500 W South Street

Chamber Communications & Marketing Activities

Upcoming Event and Program Promotions
Face the Chamber
Women in Business
Business After Hours

Registration information for all events can be found at www.lcoc.com

Lincoln's Young Professionals Group

Lincoln YPG was founded in 2007 and just celebrated a five year milestone. YPG has provided opportunities for future leaders to emerge.

YPG has had many accomplishments over those five years including:

- grown to over 800 members and 1900 contacts in the YPG database
- “Rocked the Vote” for the passage of perhaps the most important issue to face Lincoln in a decade and now in a year we will fill the seats in the Pinnacle Bank Arena
- Helped to create a statewide young professionals network in partnership with the Omaha YPC and the Connecting Young Nebraskans organizations
- held events to benefit local philanthropic organizations

- Matched over 45 young professionals into volunteer leadership roles on various non-profit and philanthropic boards of directors
- Hosted over 200 membership events for networking, entrepreneurship, policy, and professional development

YPG appreciates its base of great corporate sponsors and volunteers who have helped to make this success happen.

YPG is working currently on having programming meetings with volunteers to determine the next big initiatives to make the YP voice heard.

Lincoln's Specialty Care

Lincoln's Specialty Care- The 2012 Lincoln Physicians Directory is now ready and copies are available for \$10. Health news and the updated interactive database is now available online at www.LincolnDocs.com. The directory is produced jointly with Lancaster County Medical Center and with help from all major hospitals and investors of the program

MEMBERSHIP

Membership recruitment and retention have started the year strong. The 23 new members joining in January helped the organization grow to another all-time high of 1,543 members. The President's Council continues to lead our volunteer effort and have set a goal of helping recruit 100 new members this year. Planning has already begun for our Annual Staff Membership Drive in March. Volunteer and staff referrals contributed almost half of the new recruits this month.

Added to the strength of our renewing membership, this should produce growth in the first half of 2012. A large portion of renewal invoices are mailed to members in January each year. Many of these have already been processed for another year's membership, and those contacted about renewal applaud the Chamber for its work and recent events.

CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

Organization

The 2012 Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) will be holding their 8-team 2012 GPAC Baseball Championship Tournament in Lincoln, Nebraska, at Haymarket Park and Sherman Field. The 2012 tournament is May 3-5. After being approached by Nebraska Wesleyan University, the Convention and Visitors Bureau pulled together staff at LPS, Haymarket Park and the City of Lincoln to discuss the possibility of hosting this event for the first time in Lincoln. Thanks to all involved in working through a very busy time for baseball in Lincoln in the month of May!

2012 will be a busy year for NSAA tournament bids, with NSAA Boys and Girls Golf being the first to be bid this year. 7 classes of boys and girls golf were up for bid and 6 communities presented bids to the NSAA. The staff of the CVB presented bids to host numerous events and Lincoln was awarded Class A boys, Class B girls and Class C boys for future years. Dale Hardy with the Lincoln Parks and Recreation was instrumental in helping present our city courses in Lincoln for use.

We are keeping an eye on 12 bills in the Legislature that have tourism impact across the state. Bruce Bohrer has done a tremendous job keeping an eye on those that have impact on Lincoln. NACVB, as well as NETA are two statewide tourism organizations looking at impact on communities across the state.

There is a steady interest in the arena development, as well as the attached festival/parking space for events in 2014 and beyond. Without having much advertising out there for the new arena, the CVB sales staff has been able to communicate facility renderings and event potential to those interested.

We continue to have an interest in seeing Celebrate Lincoln grow and have an impact on increasing visitors to our community in 2012. Staff has met with members of the planning team on ways that we can get the word out statewide and regionally of the great entertainment offered June 8-9 in downtown Lincoln.

Jeff attended a meeting with Centennial Mall planners to discuss this exciting project. As a link between UNL and the State Capitol, this renovated corridor has enormous potential as a destination for education and tourism interests. The State Capitol remains one of the top attractions in the state. In a 2010 study, 96,814 people visited the State Capitol, 54% of which were from out of state. This is truly Nebraska's Centennial Mall!

Sales/Marketing

The CVB issued 34 sales leads in January with the potential of 14,617 hotel room nights. A total of 19 events, for 8,215 room nights, were booked in January for an estimated economic impact of \$2,349,490 to the city of Lincoln. Throughout the month, the staff conducted 51 visits with clients, completed 6 event visits, contacted 38 prospective organizations and reached out to 158 events which currently or previously met in Lincoln. Services were provided to 16 organizations hosting their events in the Lincoln community.

Kara Hesser attended the Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) tradeshow in Kansas City, MO January 24-26, 2012. Here she had face-to-face meetings with 29 potential event organizers from around the country. This tradeshow is designed for religious conventions and connecting destinations with those meeting planners. This tradeshow has resulted in five strong lead possibilities with additional follow-up from this tradeshow continuing in the upcoming months.