

The Lincoln Chamber's key State policy objectives for 2024:

CHAMBER LEADERSHIP – The Lincoln Chamber places great value in our strong working relationships with state officials. We will work collaboratively with local and state partners for the betterment of Lincoln and the great State of Nebraska. We are committed to being a willing partner with Governor Jim Pillen, state senators, state, and local agencies, and all who are interested in expanding business opportunities and strengthening economic vitality.

CATALYST OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC VITALITY – The Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and our affiliate organizations are interested and eager to be involved with advancing big ideas and catalyst opportunities for regional growth, such as the Lincoln Convention Center, securing a secondary water source for our community and southeast Nebraska, and completing a Lincoln beltway transportation loop. The Chamber, the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development and Visit Lincoln all have interests in these “big idea” initiatives and are committed to working with state leaders and other stakeholders to bring them to fruition.

ECONOMIC GROWTH & COMPETITIVENESS – Returning to strong economic and population growth is essential for the competitiveness of our state and the success of our continued recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic. Economic vitality and growth will be the biggest drivers keeping people of all ages in our state. Substantial funding provided to the state under the American Rescue Plan Act and the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act has dramatically assisted our statewide efforts, though inflation has diminished the positive impacts to a great extent. The Lincoln Chamber believes education at all levels will remain a central component in the growth and competitiveness of our state. The Lincoln Chamber will continue to work with all who are interested in growing jobs and investments. The Lincoln Chamber will prioritize support for legislative proposals that enhance economic growth, workforce development and training, develop statewide strategies for Mega Sites and future growth, and build our innovation capacity. Our public energy sector, which is unique to our state, is another central component of successful economic growth, as is our private energy sector. Lincoln and Nebraska should continue to be a welcoming economy that highly values inclusion, diversity, and supports equal opportunity. The Lincoln Chamber of Commerce supports public policy that supports a diverse workforce and community. There should be no room for discrimination of any kind in the workplace.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ECONOMIC VITALITY – The Lincoln Chamber will work to facilitate the new strategic plan for economic vitality for the Lincoln region by supporting public policies and legislative proposals that align with these strategies. Additionally, the Chamber will continue to collaborate with the State Chamber, the Greater Omaha Chamber and other organizations and institutions that support expanded statewide broadband, a more competitive tax system and tax incentives for growing Nebraska.

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 rankings. Governor Pillen is taking steps to continue to improve workforce development and talent retention. Tax relief must include a focus on spending restraint determined by elected officials closest to the programs being delivered; state and local governments must set priorities that align with taxpayers, and local control is an important aspect of responsive government. Without spending restraint from all levels of government, so-called tax relief via state spending turns into a tax shift that does nothing to lower the overall tax burden on citizens. We will work to protect Lincoln taxpayers and our local/regional economy from the undue burden of tax shifts. Nebraska's income taxes have been among the highest in the region and undermined our competition for high quality jobs and investments, as well as talent retention.

STATE TAX REFORM SUCCESS & EPIC TAX OPPOSITION – State leaders recently set a more competitive course on individual income taxes, corporate taxes, and exempting social security benefits from state income taxes by fast-tracking these sound tax policies in 2023. Additionally, in hopes of further alleviating local property tax burdens, state leaders directed over \$300M in newly created state foundation aid to K-12 school districts broadly across Nebraska and will provide greater reimbursement for special education programs in the coming year. The Lincoln Chamber applauds efforts for a more competitive tax climate. At the same time, the Lincoln Chamber will continue to work with partners to assess the impacts of both adopted and new tax proposals. We will draw upon expert economic analysts and will expect policy makers to also be guided by research. The Chamber will continue to oppose the EPIC tax proposal.

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE – The Lincoln Chamber will prioritize efforts to protect the Build Nebraska Act and safeguard the security of the Highway Trust Fund. The Chamber will continue advocacy and coalition building to secure state funds related to Lincoln/Lancaster County’s South and East Beltway projects. The Chamber believes there is a significant funding gap for road infrastructure needs across the state, which has been at least partially funded under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The Lincoln South Beltway, which was funded under the Build Nebraska Act and included over \$70M in directed local funding, will have enormous public safety, road system efficiency, and economic growth benefits. The Chamber will work cooperatively with coalitions to protect against any legislative efforts to undermine the Build Nebraska Act and will support innovative legislative proposals aimed at accelerating road system investments.

STATE BUDGET & GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY – The Chamber will expect efficiency from all levels of government and prioritize support for state spending initiatives to those that leverage private investment, assist with the workforce development needs of business, promote public/private partnerships, and enhance competitiveness for job and investment growth. We will support state leaders who work to promote overall fiscal restraint. State leaders should continue to be prudent in their protection and use of the Cash Reserve Fund. Opportunities exist for strategic investments that both expand economic vitality and are fiscally sound, productive investments. The Lincoln Chamber supports efforts to reform government and make better use of business principles in the operations and evaluation of its effectiveness. The Lincoln Chamber will lend support to government accountability and efficiency efforts.

REGULATORY REFORM – The Chamber recognizes the necessity of regulations to ensure workplace safety and protect public health. We firmly believe that including the views of business helps keep compliance costs in check and results in an improved regulatory system, which is of particular benefit to small businesses. The Chamber will lend support to regulatory relief efforts and improved regulatory analysis in the rulemaking process.

VISIT LINCOLN MISSION SUPPORT – The Chamber will assist Visit Lincoln on state issues the organization identifies as top legislative priorities to assist in bringing more visitors, events, and conventions to the Lincoln area. With the 2013 opening of the Pinnacle Bank Arena and continued build out of the Haymarket – including the Sandhills Global Youth Complex ballfields – the Lincoln Chamber will work in coordination with Visit Lincoln to capitalize on opportunities for growing our market and protecting and enhancing local attractions.

SUPPORT MILITARY SERVICE & ASSETS – The Lincoln Chamber will support proposals that assist with attracting, retaining, and encouraging individuals who have a status or background of military service and who desire to build a career or business in Nebraska. The Lincoln Chamber’s Military Affairs Committee will continue to reach out to employers and military personnel to enhance understanding and build cooperation. The Chamber will be a partner in helping to protect military assets important to economic stability and growth in our community.

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