

2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT - The most significant impediment to economic growth in the Lakes Area of Northwest Iowa and across the state is a tight labor market. Solving this dilemma requires diverse action:

Workforce Housing Tax Credit—Before being temporarily halted, this impactful incentive resulted in construction of multiple housing units in areas of critical need in the Lakes of Northwest Iowa. The program should resume in FY 2020 and the annual appropriation for credits raised to at least \$40 million.

Workforce Recruitment and Retention – Following the lead of many other states and cities, the Governor and Legislature should explore new means of recruiting and retaining workers. These may include student loan forgiveness and/or income tax credits for professionals in specific in-demand career fields.

Workforce Training—We look forward to the implementation of Future Ready Iowa and the Career and Technical Education bill from the previous two sessions.

Immigration – We support increased opportunities for skilled workers and immigrant entrepreneurs. Reform priorities include streamlining the immigration process for highly skilled workers, raising the caps on H-1B and H-2B visas, improving international student retention through work visas, and identifying steps to make it easier for Iowa's 9,700 immigrant entrepreneurs to grow and maintain businesses in our state.

Most importantly, elected officials should take the lead in defining and championing Iowa as an inclusive state that welcomes newcomers and values the contributions of immigrants and diverse people to our economic tapestry and cultural vitality.

STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES -

The Iowa Economic Development Authority and Iowa Workforce Development are essential for the success of rural economic development and the prosperity of rural communities. After many years without an upward adjustment in their budgets, both departments last year endured substantial funding cuts. To grow Iowa's economy, legislators should invest more resources in these departments. This includes ensuring that regional workforce development offices, critical connection points for transitioning workers, remain open and active.

As well, programs, credits, and incentives that have a proven return on investment and a record of successfully creating economic growth across diverse industry categories need to be protected. Examples include Research Activities Credits, Historic Preservation Credits, the High-Quality Jobs Program, and Workforce Housing Incentives.

PROPERTY TAX BACKFILL – Reduction or elimination of the commercial and industrial property tax backfill will impede the ability of local governments to serve business and residents and jeopardizes funding for economic development. The legislature should fully fund the backfill and resist the temptation for rapid reduction in the backfill amount.

WATER QUALITY - Northwest Iowa is identified with and differentiated by its beautiful and abundant bodies of water. To protect the region's tourism and agricultural industries and unique quality-of-life, the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation supports passage of a statewide sales tax increase of not less than 3/8s of a penny in support of the Natural Resources & Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. Distribution of the resulting revenue should conform to the formula specified in Iowa Code Chapter 461, which reflects both the desires of Iowans and bipartisan legislative agreement.

Mission Statement:

To foster, encourage, promote, aid or otherwise assist in the economic growth and development of Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson and Emmet counties.