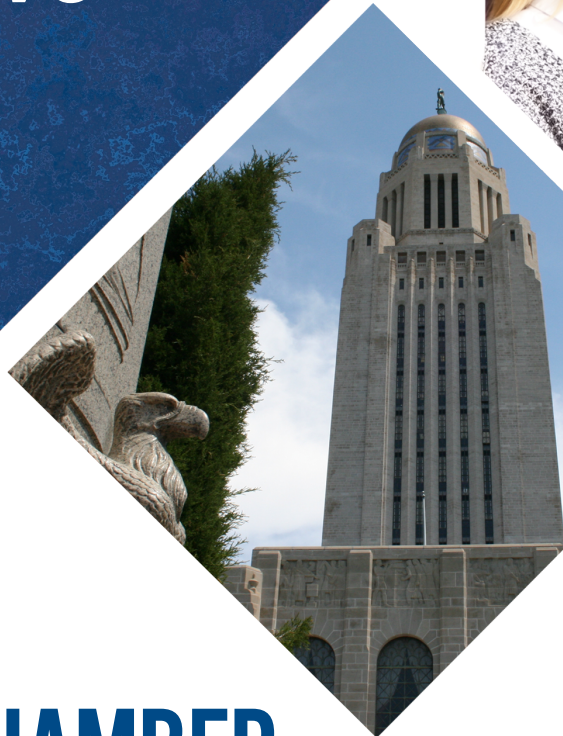


# RESULTS FOR BUSINESS

**2021  
Nebraska  
Legislative  
Session**



Dear NE Chamber Members:



In January, the NE Chamber came to you and state leaders with a bold set of priorities designed to fuel Nebraska's post-pandemic recovery and build a strong foundation for future growth. Our commitment focused on rebuilding – moving out-of-work Nebraskans back into jobs, addressing hard-hit sectors, and taking a hard look at legislative actions that can aid recovery.

Another cornerstone of these priorities were the 15 pro-growth initiatives outlined in the [Blueprint Nebraska](#) report. Developed with input from more than 7,000 Nebraskans across the state, the report identified an urgent need for new approaches to recruit and keep young talent and families, foster more in-state business expansion, and attract more growth companies.

That brings us to today. The 2021 legislative session has come to a close, and it's time to give full attention to our post-pandemic economic competitiveness and opportunity throughout the state.

Amid all the challenges of 2020 and 2021, we are proud to report that the state of Nebraska and Nebraska business is strong. And, we are getting stronger every day, as we demonstrate our resilience, ingenuity and commitment to bold policies that not only lift Nebraska families and businesses out of a pandemic economy, but help us compete and win in the global marketplace.

We have much yet to do, including sharpening our focus even more on workforce, supply chain and federal tax threats. But just as important as the work ahead is recognizing how far we've come.

Between the hard work of our Nebraska employers, relentless advocacy at the state capitol, and bold state leadership, Nebraska truly is back to business.

As always, our success would not be possible without the trust and investment you place in us to be your advocacy partner. Please take some time to review what our work together has achieved in our 2021 Results for Business.



Bryan Slone  
President

How we respond in adversity determines our resilience. We must make bold public policy decisions during the remainder of the pandemic and immediately thereafter to emerge with the type of necessary growth agenda to fuel our economic recovery and ensure the well-being of all Nebraskans.

## NE Chamber Recovery Priorities

1. Address the immediate needs of families, workers, businesses and communities in crisis to preserve Nebraska's rich quality of life and economic advantages
2. Leverage Nebraska's strengths to attract new residents and grow our post-pandemic economy



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2021 BACK TO BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND GROWTH				
BLUEPRINT NEBRASKA				
Progress made in 2021 Session				
<b>Develop Workforce</b>	Unify and scale innovative workforce programs and resources statewide to create a model public-private partnership approach in the nation.	Revolutionize education from early childhood through post-secondary, leveraging a longitudinal data system and public-private collaboration. Identify educational funding mechanisms to create a vibrant lifelong learning model.	Promote diversity and inclusion and make Nebraska the most welcoming state in the country.	Create and launch a "Choose Nebraska" campaign to target and recruit population and workforce from identified markets.
<b>Enhance Communities</b>	Support targeted investments by communities throughout the state in arts, entertainment, recreation and community redevelopment.	Deliver last-mile broadband in rural areas and make Nebraska a national model for rapid 5G network scale-up.	Develop one of the nation's leading inland logistics and industrial hubs.	Scale current state and regional housing programs, incentives, and initiatives to build an additional 30,000 to 50,000 affordable, livable housing units.
<b>Modernize Government</b>	Modernize Nebraska's overall tax structure to enhance competitiveness and enhance economic growth.	Enhance government efficiency by continuing to transform, restructure, and digitize the provision of state and local government services.	Further optimize Nebraska's tax incentives programs to better target the state's growth sectors. Apply best practices to remain competitive and create efficiency.	
<b>Grow the Economy</b>	Diversify, expand and improve the productivity of the state's agribusiness industry, with a focus on research, technology and food processing and bio-based manufacturing.	Build a pipeline of tech founders and innovators. Connect them to venture capital and high-value investors, and development in entrepreneurship zones, innovation hubs, and tech clusters.	Create a state manufacturing center of excellence focused on industry 4.0 automation. Make the state a leader in advanced manufacturing technology and processes.	Identify, attract, and support the development of fin-tech companies and their work with the financial services sector.

2021 BACK TO BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND GROWTH				
NE CHAMBER RECOVERY				
Progress made in 2021 Session				
<b>Develop Workforce</b>	Break down regulatory barriers and burdens to accessing existing workforce/training resources. Diversify public/private partnerships to provide customized job solutions and greater exposure to career opportunities.	Enact state and federal business incentives and adjust regulatory and tax structures to encourage investment in affordable quality childcare capacity.	Unify state branding and marketing within key public and private institutions. Create a statewide social media campaign with broad support among state stakeholders.	Create a tax structure that promotes the relocation of remote workers to the state.
<b>Enhance Communities</b>	Develop industry consensus around a comprehensive plan for the rapid deployment of broadband to support modern agriculture, transportation and manufacturing in rural Nebraska.	Complete key infrastructure projects, such as four-lane highways from Norfolk to Omaha.	Modify and expand state and local investment in quality of life amenities and vibrant community endeavors.	
<b>Modernize Government</b>	Modernize and expand Nebraska's research and development tax credit regime.	Expand public support and redesign private incentives for entrepreneurial investment and startups.	Establish a permanent funding mechanism to help educators track educational and career outcomes.	Broaden metrics for the evaluation of K-12 education to include outcomes in the form of subsequent employment, qualified trade certifications, 2-year and 4-year post-secondary degrees, and military service.
<b>Grow the Economy</b>	Create programs, grants and incentives to rebuild industries hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, including hospitality, travel and entertainment.	Enact federal and state legislation to provide temporary, targeted liability protections related to COVID-19 for businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions and healthcare workers and facilities.	Develop a state program for attracting the re-domestication of foreign supply chains to the state and targeted incentives for transportation and logistics, pharmaceutical and health care.	Develop a business-to-business (B2B) platform that facilitates communication and networking among Nebraska manufacturers to rapidly expand in-state supply chains and customer bases.
				Build collaboration between K-12, the private sector, and post-secondary institutions to identify career-based, experiential learning opportunities and build efficiency.
				Enact a discretionary incentive or deal-closing fund to recruit and retain jobs, business and investment.

Click on images to view full size charts and print a downloadable version.

# Rebuilding Hard-Hit Sectors

**RESULTS:** Boosted by the aggressive support of the NE Chamber and cross-sector coalitions, several bills that accelerate post-pandemic recovery, especially for the hospitality, entertainment and nonprofit sectors, were adopted.



See How Your Senator Voted on COVID-19 Liability (LB139)



## COVID-19 Liability Protection Act (LB139)

PASSED & SIGNED

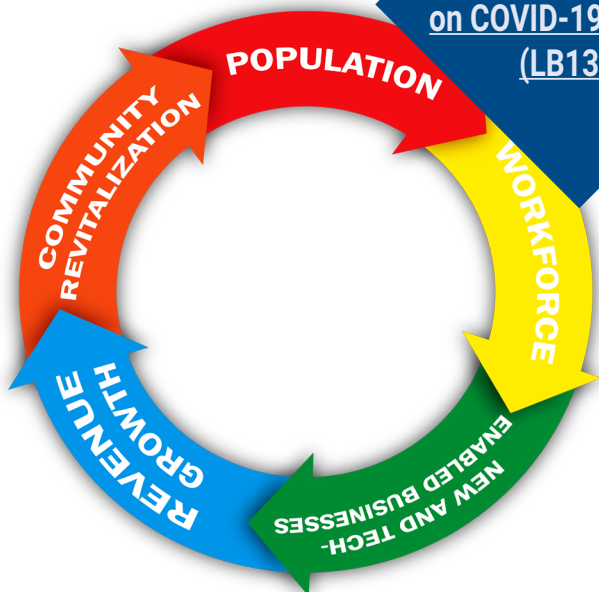
Under **LB139**, those who must keep their doors open to respond to pandemic needs or for their livelihoods have reassurance that they will not suffer an onslaught of costly, meritless lawsuits, as long as they follow federal health guidance. Bad actors are not protected.

### NE CHAMBER BUILDS LB139 COALITION

Organized by the NE Chamber, more than 60 schools, churches, businesses, healthcare facilities and political subdivisions joined a coalition in support. Many joined the NE Chamber testifying in support of the bill in Judiciary Committee. After substantial negotiations with senators on the Judiciary Committee, the bill was amended and advanced to the floor in May. It was prioritized by Senator Julie Slama and passed into law.



COVID-19 Liability Protections Policy Brief



## Shovel-Ready Capital Recovery and Investment Act (LB566)

PASSED & SIGNED

**LB566** provides grants to qualified nonprofit organizations to assist with capital projects delayed due to COVID-19. A total of \$15 million was prioritized and allocated in the state budget passed in May, with a pledge to steer additional federal COVID-19 relief funds to the cause.

# American Rescue Plan Funding



## SLATED FOR 2022 LEGISLATIVE ACTION

About \$1 billion in American Rescue Plan funds are headed to Nebraska. The Governor and legislature are planning to allocate these funds in early 2022.

*The NE Chamber is already advocating for business and manufacturing needs, as well as economic strategies that set Nebraska up for growth in a competitive global economy. Local chambers of commerce and economic developers across Nebraska crafted a proposal with additional recommendations to be submitted to policy leaders.*

Included in the joint chamber proposal and slated for consideration in 2022:

### Small Business Stabilization Fund Act (LB598)

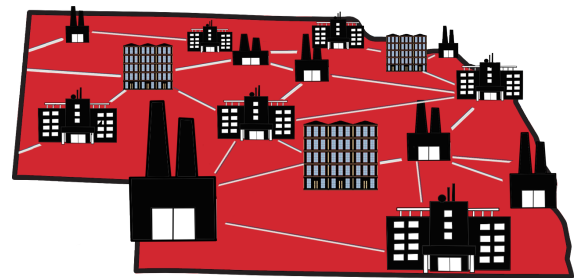
**LB598** would offer grants of up to \$12,000 to Nebraska businesses with \$1 million or less gross revenues and suffering 50% revenue losses resulting from natural disasters or declared emergencies.

### Event Cancellations Grant (LB629)

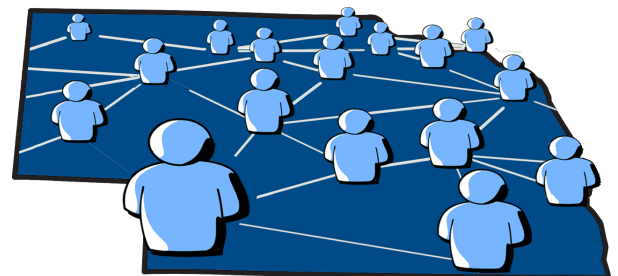
**LB629** creates an \$8 million grant program for event venues suffering due to cancellations from COVID-19.

### Expanded Broadband

The joint chamber proposal recommended prioritizing another \$60 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds for broadband expansion through FY2023.



Our NE Chamber members represent more than 400 different types of businesses in more than 150 communities across the state.



Over 60 local chambers of commerce and dozens of state trade and professional associations have joined the NE Chamber work to keep businesses successful and our communities growing.

# Recharging Workforce

**RESULTS:** Understanding the need for bold action in workforce development and growth, the NE Chamber vigorously supported six measures to help attract and move thousands of trained, skilled workers into the Nebraska workforce. So far, five are already law.



## Overriding Objectives

1. Support in-state job creation only
2. Support economic development needs of all Nebraska communities
3. Build a robust pipeline of skilled workforce into Nebraska
4. Attract new residents and families

## RECRUITMENT & RETENTION



### Exempting Military Retirement Income (LB387)

PASSED & SIGNED

**LB387** exempts 100% of military retirement income from Nebraska income tax.



### College Tuition Breaks for Active Reservists (LB4)

PASSED & SIGNED

**LB4** raises undergraduate tuition credits for reservists from 50% to 75% of costs and no longer excludes those with more than 10 years of military service.



### Unemployment Benefits for Work-Authorized Immigrants (LB298)

ADVANCED FROM GENERAL FILE; SLATED FOR 2022 LEGISLATIVE ACTION

**LB298** makes DREAMERS, work-authorized aliens, eligible for unemployment insurance. With NE Chamber backing, the bill was prioritized and passed in first-round debate in 2021. It will retain its priority status until debate commences in 2022.

# TRAINING

## Customized Job Training Cash Fund (LB391/LB380)



PASSED & SIGNED

**LB391** puts \$2.5 million of the state biennial budget toward the Formal Customized Job Training Cash Fund created in LB1107 in 2020 as a part of Imagine Nebraska, the state's new mainline economic incentive program.

## Educational Savings for Apprenticeships (LB564/LB432)



PASSED & SIGNED

**LB564** makes apprenticeships an eligible expenditure from personal educational savings accounts. The bill was amended into a larger tax relief package (**LB432**) brought by the Revenue Committee, which was passed and signed into law.

# CHILDCARE

## Expanding Childcare Assistance for Working Families (LB485)



PASSED & SIGNED

**LB485** expands access to state childcare assistance, better allowing families to transition off the program as they advance in their careers.

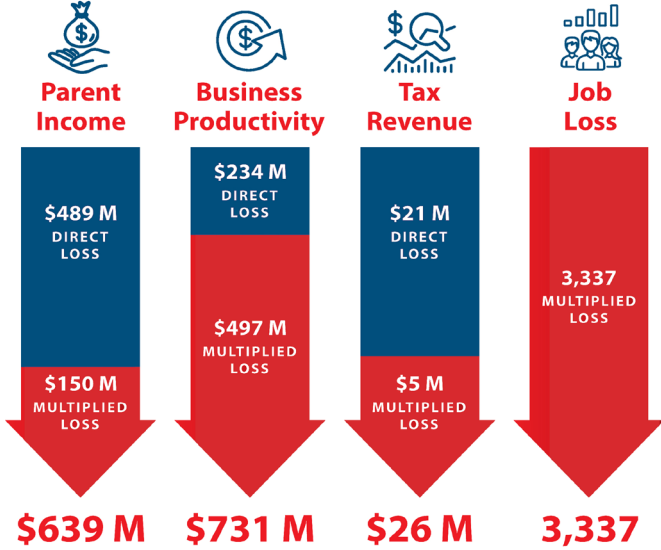
See How Your Senator Voted on Workforce-Related Appropriations (LB380)

## Nebraska Direct and Indirect Losses Due to Childcare Gaps

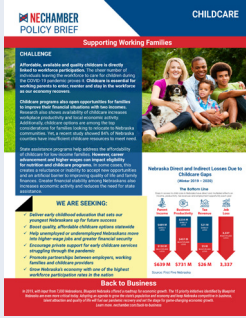
(Winter 2019 – 2020)

### The Bottom Line

Gaps in access to child care in Nebraska have direct and multiplied effects on income, productivity, tax revenues and employment opportunity each year



See How Your Senator Voted on Child Care Assistance (LB485)



Back to Business Childcare Policy Brief

# Pursuing Competitive Tax Strategies

**RESULTS:** Emboldened by support from NE Chamber members, Nebraska legislators pushed through some of the most significant tax reform and relief in three decades. That progress is expected to form a strong foundation for more comprehensive reform in 2022, one of 15 initiatives identified in the Blueprint Nebraska report to help stimulate significant economic growth over the next decade.



See How Your Senator Voted on Income Tax Relief (LB432)



## Business Income Tax Parity (LB680 / LB432)

PASSED & SIGNED

**LB680** begins the process of bringing the highest corporate tax rate (now 7.81%) in line with the highest individual income tax rate (6.84%) paid by pass-through businesses. The bill was included in **LB432**, a larger income tax relief package, which was prioritized by the Revenue Committee. The measure was adopted and will achieve the first half of the goal.

*Tax parity provisions were at risk of being stripped from LB432 on two separate occasions.*

*Amendment 1132 would have stripped the corporate tax provisions from LB432 completely and left no opportunity for more competitive corporate tax rates.*

*Amendment 1157 would have divided the comprehensive reform bill into separate measures requiring separate votes, with the intent to defeat the tax parity measure.*

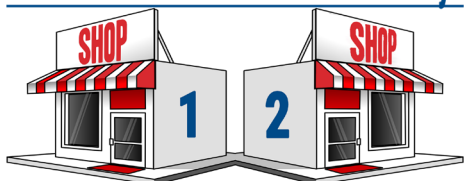


## Business Income Tax Credit for Property Taxes Paid (LB181)

PASSED & SIGNED

**LB181** allows pass-through businesses to claim at the entity level the income tax credit for property taxes paid to school districts adopted in 2020 (LB1107).

Businesses can form in one of two ways



**A Corporation**

Taxes are paid at the entity and shareholder level

**A Pass-through**

Taxes are paid through the individual owners' income taxes



## Property Tax Request Act (LB644)

PASSED & SIGNED

**LB644** requires political subdivisions to provide notice to taxpayers via postcards when their property tax request increases by 2%, plus real growth in property valuation.



## Local Limits on Annual Property Tax Increases (LB408)



DEFEATED BY FILIBUSTER

**LB408** limited property tax revenue growth for local political subdivisions to that of the prior year, plus real growth and up to 3% annually or 9% over three years. The amended bill added several exceptions and credit for reductions in state aid to education, plus the ability for a governing board to override the limit for three years or longer by public vote.

See How Your Senator Voted on Local Property Tax Limits (LB408)

## Sales Tax Exemptions for Business Inputs (LB595)



PASSED & SIGNED

**LB595** provides sales and use tax exemptions on enzymes and yeast used in manufacturing ethyl alcohol and broadens the definition of agricultural machinery and equipment already exempt from sales and use tax.

## Social Security Income Tax Exemption (LB64)



PASSED & SIGNED

**LB64** phases in a 50% exemption of social security benefits from Nebraska income taxes over five years, with the intent to reach 100% exemption after another five years with future legislative approval.



1%  
STATE CORPORATE  
INCOME TAX  
0.3% - 0.7%  
WAGES

Source: <https://www.kansascityfed.org/documents/112/PDF-09q2felix.pdf>

**High corporate tax rates directly impact workers and consumers**

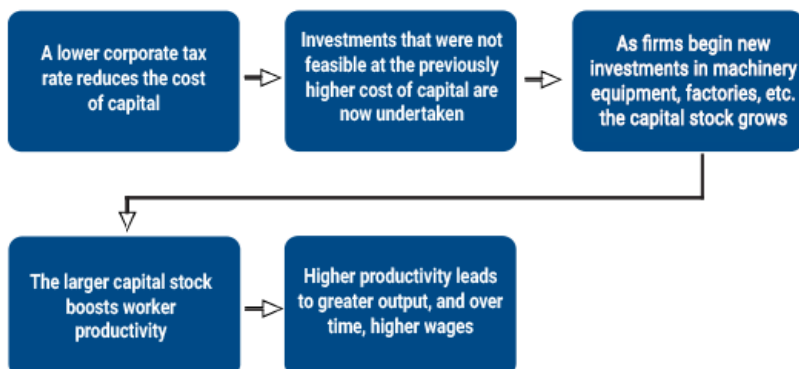
Several academic studies and a Federal Reserve analysis<sup>1</sup> in 2009 show a direct correlation between higher state corporate income taxes, lower earnings and higher consumer prices.



**State tax codes matter most when federal taxes are high.**

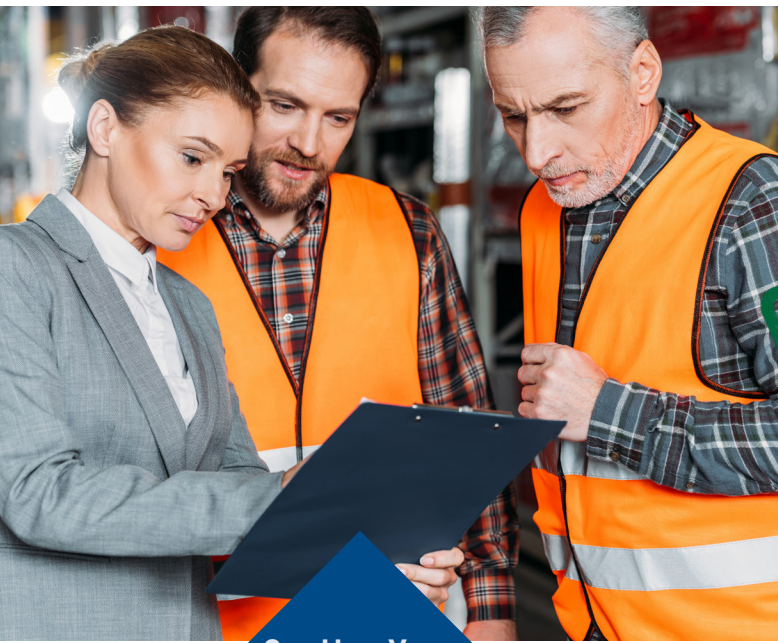
As proposals to increase corporate taxes circulate in Washington, D.C., consistent and competitive state taxes are weighed more heavily by businesses looking to expand or relocate.

### How Lower Business Tax Rates Raise Worker Pay

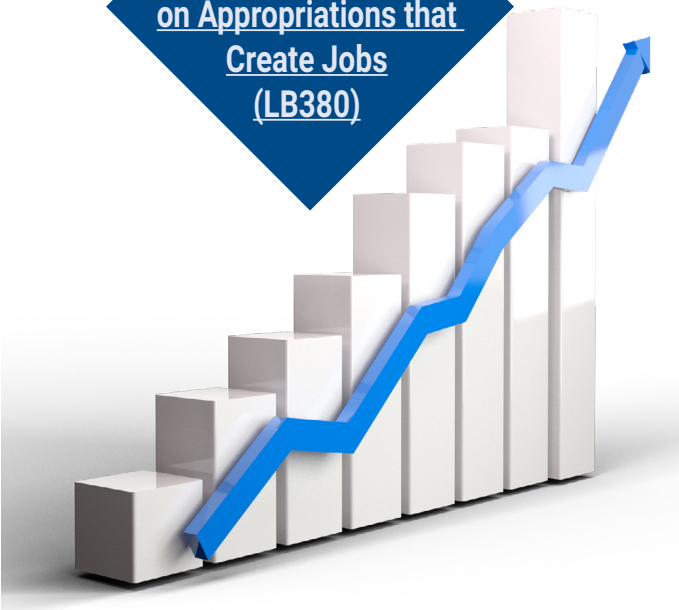


# Unlocking Job Creation and Community Growth

**RESULTS:** The NE Chamber's work to elevate community growth and job creation as a statewide priorities paid off this session, with several key economic development initiatives included in the state's two-year budget and prioritized by key legislative leaders for consideration and passage in 2021.



See How Your Senator Voted on Appropriations that Create Jobs (LB380)



## Expand Business Innovation Act (LB526 / LB380)

PASSED & SIGNED

An additional \$9 million annually allocated to the Business Innovation Act in **LB526** to support entrepreneurial investment, scaling up the startup community, market research, new product development and commercialization was adopted as part of the state budget (**LB380**). A total of \$15 million will now be dedicated annually to the program, which has a proven record of delivering a nearly 10-to-1 economic return on investment for the state.



## Restore Funding for Local Economic Development Districts (LB208 / LB380)

PASSED & SIGNED

**LB208** fully funds local economic development districts at \$1 million annually in the state biennial budget (LB380), after cuts in years past reduced funding by 66%.



## Workforce Revolving Loan Fund & Enhancements for ImagiNE Nebraska (LB380)

PASSED & SIGNED

A \$10 million appropriation in the state budget kickstarts the revolving loan fund that allows economic incentive recipients to access loans for workforce training and infrastructure development against their future tax credits.



## New Markets Job Growth Investment Act (LB682)

PASSED & SIGNED

**LB682** reauthorizes for 15 years the New Markets Job Growth Investment program, which allows federally licensed lenders to raise private capital from qualified investors to support small businesses growth. This bill was also designated a Speaker Priority.

## Imagine Nebraska Job Creation Clarification (LB18)



PASSED & SIGNED

**LB18** is a technical fix to Nebraska's new mainline economic incentives program. It affirms that only jobs located in Nebraska and subject to Nebraska income taxes are eligible for benefits, replacing a previous requirement that only jobs filled by Nebraska residents are eligible.



## Nebraska Advantage Microenterprise Tax Credit (LB366)



PASSED & SIGNED

Procedural changes to the Nebraska Microenterprise Tax Credit passed in **LB366** encourage greater utilization of the program for firms with fewer than five employees. The measure advanced as a Speaker Priority.



[Back to Business  
LB18 Residency Fix  
Policy Brief](#)

[See How Your  
Senator Voted  
on Job Creation  
Clarification  
\(LB18\)](#)

## Development of Community Amenities (LB39)



PASSED & SIGNED

**LB39** encourages targeted state and local investment in community arts, entertainment and recreational amenities through a turnback of sales tax from retailers near sports venues to help pay off construction bonds. In addition, 30% of the revenue generated is directed to a "Support the Arts" Cash Fund, offering community arts grants.

**Communities within 50 miles of the Nebraska border often pull talent from**



# Connecting Communities and Markets

## Accessible Broadband

**RESULTS:** Strong support from business and industry helped propel legislative debate toward a comprehensive plan for ubiquitous broadband to help fuel technology advances and innovation in agriculture, transportation, manufacturing and education.



### Broadband Bridge Act (LB388)

PASSED & SIGNED

**LB388** provides \$20 million in grants annually through FY2023 to increase access to high-speed broadband across the state, especially in underserved areas. (See [page 4](#) for ongoing NE Chamber broadband initiatives.)

See How Your Senator Voted on Broadband Expansion (LB388)

## Transportation

**RESULTS:** With momentum provided by NE Chamber and local chamber support, three bills that help Nebraska become one of the nation's leading inland logistics and industrial hubs, attract re-domestication of foreign supply chains, and complete key infrastructure projects became law, while one is cued up for action in early 2022.



### State Transportation Progress Reports (LB579)

PASSED & SIGNED

Under **LB579**, the Nebraska Department of Transportation will provide an annual, in-depth report to the legislature regarding the ongoing construction, funding, and planning of the Nebraska Expressway System.



### Nebraska Highway Bond Act (LB542)

Advanced from Committee; Slated for 2022 Legislative Action

**LB542** provides bonding authority for roads projects when necessary. The bill was prioritized and advanced out of committee. With potential federal infrastructure action on the horizon, the bill is poised for debate in early 2022.

# Municipal Inland Port Authority Act (LB156)



PASSED & SIGNED

**LB156** allows cities to establish an inland port for shovel-ready commercial and industrial projects, with multimodal transportation connectivity.

# Nebraska Rural Projects Act (LB40)



PASSED & SIGNED

**LB40** provides \$10 million in matching grant funds to nonprofit economic development corporations for rail-access industrial and business parks in communities or counties with 100,000 residents or less.

**RESHORING POLICY BRIEF**  
Heartland Stability when the U.S. Needs it Most

**CHALLENGE**  
Global trade tensions, geopolitical risks, and supply chain disruptions have increased the need for American-made products, especially for businesses of local business parks, regions, and states. While many businesses are looking for ways to diversify their supply chains, the U.S. has a significant advantage in manufacturing and logistics. As a transportation and logistics hub for the U.S., with a strong and diversified manufacturing base, Nebraska is well-positioned to attract and support high-quality, high-value, high-growth projects.

**WE ARE SEEKING:**  
 • High-paying jobs for Nebraskans and new families  
 • Economic growth for all regions of the state  
 • Investment, technology and growth in Nebraska's strongest sectors

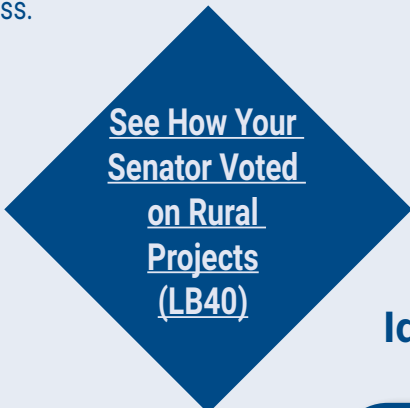
**2021 U.S. Supply Chain Trends Identified by Site Selection Consultants**

- 83%** Expect U.S. Foreign Direct Investment to stabilize or grow after years of decline
- 80%** expect revival of projects in 2021

**Top 5 sectors seeking locations to expand:**

1. Biotech and Life Sciences (67%)
2. Advanced Manufacturing (48%)
3. Transportation & Logistics (42%)
4. Food and Beverage Processing (40%)
5. Software and IT (23%)

**Back to Business**  
Reshoring Policy Brief



## 2021 U.S. Supply Chain Trends Identified by Site Selection Consultants

**83%**

Expect U.S. Foreign Direct Investment to stabilize or grow after years of decline

**80%**

expect revival of projects in 2021




**Top 5 sectors seeking locations to expand**

1. Biotech and Life Sciences (67%)
2. Advanced Manufacturing (48%)
3. Transportation & Logistics (42%)
4. Food and Beverage Processing (40%)
5. Software and IT (23%)

# Curbing Threats to Competitiveness

**RESULTS:** When measures are proposed that hurt economic competitiveness and threaten job creation, the NE Chamber takes action.

- In 2021, the NE opposed 33 bills that included mandates on business and costly measures for employers, often in coordination with other business organizations.
- A total of 24 remained in committee this session with little prospect for legislative debate.
- Three were prioritized by senators, but were indefinitely postponed or effectively defeated on the floor.
- Three more were indefinitely postponed in committee or withdrawn.
- Two advanced from committee and could be debated in 2022.



[See How Your Senator Voted on LR11CA and LB258](#)



## Consumption Tax Constitutional Amendment (LR11CA)

BILL FAILED

Constitutional amendment **LR11CA** would eliminate state income, sales, property and inheritance taxes and replace them with a consumption tax. The NE Chamber opposed the bill due to member concerns about enforcement, creating competitive disadvantages for Nebraska businesses, and overburdening low-income Nebraskans and retirees.



## Paid Sick and Safe Leave Mandate (LB258)

BILL FAILED

**LB258** would mandate employers with four or more employees to provide paid sick and safe leave. The NE Chamber joined with many other business organizations to oppose the bill in committee and on the floor. The bill was prioritized but did not garner enough votes to advance during first-round floor debate.



## COVID-19 Protocols for Meat Processors (LB241)

BILL FAILED

**LB241** would mandate a variety of facility, health and paid leave provisions related to COVID-19 beyond current federal and state requirements at meat processing facilities with 100 or more employees. The bill advanced through first-round debate but failed to gain enough support during second-round debate.

## Our Mission

A trusted partner to our members, the NE Chamber promotes and protects Nebraska's free enterprise system by ensuring a competitive business climate, economic growth and greater prosperity for all Nebraskans. We deliver market and workforce growth, as well as tax, legislative, and regulatory solutions that address the challenges of owning and growing a modern-day business.

## Our Commitment

NE Chamber members are committed to building public, private and nonprofit partnerships in pursuit of bold initiatives that increase opportunity for all Nebraskans and move the state forward economically.

We recognize our work must transcend politics, geography and the inertia of the status quo. We also realize game-changing progress is not possible without the tough work of building consensus. Such work requires mutual respect and a genuine search for common ground.

We acknowledge this discussion and process is necessary for swift action that sustains and expands Nebraska's economic opportunities and competitiveness across the U.S. and internationally.

Unlock the benefits of NE Chamber membership today!



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