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Senator Ernst joins Iowa Chamber Alliance to discuss 2016 federal priorities

Ernst speaks to federal policy landscape impacting Iowa's economic growth

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA (February 19, 2016) – At a breakfast with Iowa business leaders, economic development professionals, and elected officials present, US Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) highlighted federal issues impacting Iowa's economy. In conjunction with Ernst's remarks, the Iowa Chamber Alliance (ICA) unveiled the organization's federal policy priorities – "*Economic Growth and Opportunity Agenda*" for 2016.

"Our Iowa businesses see first-hand the negative impact Washington has on everyday lives and businesses. It's difficult enough building a business without the burdens imposed by a government that doesn't understand—or even worse, ignores—businesses' challenges. That is why it is so critical that Washington hears directly from our business owners," said Senator Ernst. "In 2016, we must focus on stopping harmful regulations like WOTUS, pursuing regulatory relief, and combating the out-of-control tax and spend climate that consumes Washington and hurts our businesses."

Dee Baird, ICA Chair and President & CEO of the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance (CRMEA) kicked off the event on behalf of the Alliance.

The Alliance urged Iowa's congressional delegation to support and work to advance issues that:

- Improve and foster a positive business climate conducive to growth and innovation;
- Encourage manufacturing and workforce education and training; and
- Elevate free trade with Iowa's global trading partners.

"These issues are at the forefront for Iowa businesses and the economic development community and stand to shape the future course and condition of the state's business environment," said Baird. "The federal issues we've outlined this year are foundational and, if affected in Washington, will greatly benefit Iowa's economic growth."

2016 FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES

Federal Budget Policy & Tax Reform

The Alliance encourages a return to a more predictable, reliable appropriations process and

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opposes the growing debt and pattern of federal spending that exceeds revenue. Additionally, the Alliance urges Congress to adjust federal spending in relation to gross domestic product and reform entitlement-program spending in order to sustain general fund solvency and foster overall economic growth.

Federal Regulation

On the regulatory front, the Alliance encourages a high-level of transparency during the rulemaking process with ample public input and a cost-benefit analysis prior to a final rule to better ascertain the cost to business owners.

Workforce Development and Education

The Alliance supports two key workforce development and education areas to foster and grow an employable workforce with the skills and education required to meet the needs of the 21st Century.

- *Immigration Reform*
The Alliance supports modernization of E-verify, as well as increased opportunities for a skilled workforce and immigrant entrepreneurs. Other reform priorities include streamlining visas for high-skilled workers, raising the cap on H1-B visas, improving international student retention through work visas and allowing immigrant workers to fill labor needs as shortages arise.
- *Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014*
WIOA aimed at connecting workforce with economic development strategies to better align core federal programs. The Alliance recommends support for WIOA provisions and the necessary resources for Iowa to devise and execute labor and economic development programs that make the most sense for our state.

Transportation, Infrastructure and Broadband

Iowa needs a predictable funding stream in order to design, build, operate and maintain existing and future infrastructure. The Alliance encourages Congress to address the recurring revenue shortfalls in the Highway Trust Fund and urges the consideration of all new and innovative finance mechanisms that will enable all states to finance, plan, fix and build critical projects necessary to compete in the global marketplace.

For aviation, Congress must pass a long-term reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which will modernize and reform aviation policies. Navigable rivers are of great economic importance to Iowa – flanked on both sides by the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. ICA strongly urges the prioritization of commerce conducted via inland waterways when authorizing and funding the Water Resources Reform and Development Act.

In telecommunications, the Alliance supports modernization of the Telecom Act of 1996 to update federal law for the Internet age. Future iterations of the federal communications policy must offer a “light touch” regulatory model, which will encourage private sector investment in U.S. broadband infrastructure.

Research and Development

Federal investment in research and development for advanced manufacturing, industrial production and technology to improve efficiencies is not at an adequate level when compared to other countries. The Alliance urges the federal government and agencies to promote policies that boost research and development in the sciences and emphasize the importance of workforce training to keep pace with innovations on the world stage.

Energy and the Environment

The Alliance supports a comprehensive energy plan that anticipates our country's current and future energy supply and demand. The nation's long-range, comprehensive energy plan should also promote the expansion of renewable and alternative energies such as bio-based fuels, wind and solar, as well as consider nuclear energy as a component toward the quest for adequate and clean energy.

Environmentally, the Alliance strongly urges that all regulatory proposals to alter existing environmental statutes, such as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and National Environmental Policy Act, be evaluated and weighed against economic impacts and job losses, as is currently required under major environmental laws.

International Trade

International trade is significant for Iowa's economic growth. Iowa companies and farming operations depend on fair access to foreign markets and competition on a level playing field. The Alliance strongly encourages free trade agreements that create a robust, healthy economic environment for international commerce; eliminate trade barriers abroad; and ensure that domestic markets remain open.

Flood Relief

Flooding throughout Iowa and the Midwest is becoming more frequent and devastating. The Alliance asks for a delay on implementation of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act to aid property owners and allow time for an affordability study to consider the development of alternatives such as the flood property buyout program for multiple loss properties and other innovative programs. The Alliance supports a flood insurance program that is affordable for businesses and homeowners that is balanced with National Flood Insurance Program resources. Any flood program should respect property owners who built according to code and followed all applicable laws.

2016 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

At the state level, the Alliance outlined key state policy recommendations and other strategic initiatives that are crucial to fostering healthy economic growth. These recommendations include:

- Competitive and fair taxes.
- Strong fiscal management of taxpayer dollars.
- Necessary investments in the full spectrum of infrastructure.
- Forward-looking programs to encourage entrepreneurship and attract investment.
- Predictable and responsive regulatory environment.

Both the ICA federal and state priorities may be found at:

http://www.iowachamberalliance.com/en/policy_issues/policy_issues/federal_policy_priorities/.

ABOUT THE IOWA CHAMBER ALLIANCE

The Iowa Chamber Alliance is a not-for-profit coalition of the 16 largest chambers of commerce and economic development organizations throughout Iowa. Its 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.

Iowa Chamber Alliance Members

Ames Chamber of Commerce/Ames
Economic Development Commission
Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce
Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce
Greater Burlington Partnership
Greater Cedar Valley Alliance & Chamber
(Waterloo and Cedar Falls)
Greater Des Moines Partnership

Greater Fort Dodge Growth Alliance
Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce
& Industry
Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce
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Corridor Economic Development Corporation
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