



News Release

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Iowa Business Council Focuses on Education and Process Efficiency

Governor Presents Details of Budget Proposal

Des Moines, IOWA – (January 27, 2009). The time has arrived to fundamentally change Iowa's education system while maintaining a commitment to the highest standards, engaging a technology-oriented learning environment that produces 'World Class Learners.' This was the focus of a panel discussion among education experts at the Iowa Business Council's (IBC) 23rd Annual Partnership Meeting held Monday, January 26, in Des Moines. Preceding the panel discussion, Governor Chet Culver shared general details about the FY2010 state budget proposal he will present to legislators later this week. IBC also recognized the 100th Lean Enterprise event in state government and announced the creation of the "Iowa Partners In Efficiency Award."

Echoing comments made by President Barack Obama during his recent Inaugural address, Governor Culver told meeting attendees, "The question is not whether government is too big or too small but, rather, does it work." The Governor spoke about the need for the state to invest in creating jobs and rebuilding Iowa's infrastructure, but stressed that his proposed budget for FY2010 will be less than those for 2008 and 2009. Key points included a 6.5 percent reduction in spending for most state programs, no tax increases, and drawing \$200 million from the state's cash reserves to help cover a projected deficit of over \$700 million. Funds from a potential federal economic stimulus package are not reflected in this budget.

CRITICAL ISSUE CONVERSATION: "EDUCATION EXCELLENCE IN THE 21st CENTURY" – PANEL DISCUSSION

"The new 'average worker' will be asked to competently apply basic math, reading, and science skills in ever-more creative and innovative business environments," said Max Phillips, outgoing IBC Chair and President of Qwest-Iowa & South Dakota. "The Business Council believes that the time has arrived for Iowa to implement a cohesive, statewide master plan for education --- a vision that does not simply overlay a few cosmetic changes on top of the existing structure. Rather, the list of 21st Century skills should become the lens through which we should be developing new academic content and systems for learning."

The *Critical Issue Conversation* panel on *Education Excellence in the 21st Century* was moderated by Benjamin Allen, President of the University of Northern Iowa and Co-chair of the Institute for Tomorrow's Workforce. The panel of experts included:

- Judy Jeffrey, Director of the Iowa Department of Education;
- Scott McLeod, Director of the Iowa State University Center for the Advanced Study of Technology Leadership in Education;

- Max Phillips, President of Qwest – Iowa & South Dakota, Co-chair of the Institute for Tomorrow's Workforce, and Iowa State Board of Education member;
- Sally Shuler, Executive Director of the National Science Resources Center of the National Academies & the Smithsonian Institution; and,
- Dave Wilkerson, Superintendent of Schools for the Waukee Community School District

The panelists discussed how students learn today, both inside and outside the classroom, and the problems educators face trying to access and employ the most current technologies to curricula system-wide. The goal should be creating “world class learners,” utilizing every technological advantage feasible.

Providing a national perspective, Shuler suggested that in order to create world class schools and learners there are specific areas deserving of attention. These include greater investment in the professional development of teachers and education leaders; utilizing standardized, research supported, up-to-date learning tools such as textbooks, laptop computers, and virtual classrooms; and, a supportive environment with a clear five to ten year strategic plan for each school.

Superintendent Wilkerson said, “Don't brush all schools with the same brush. People often don't think their own district or school needs to change. Parents, teachers, and community leaders will not react well if they are told by outsiders that they must do something differently. Instead, these individuals should be included early in the conversation that considers how change might provide their children a better quality education and help bridge the digital learning gap using finite resources.”

The panel participants also discussed the need for stating a vision that clearly defines what a 21st Century education is, what actions need to occur now to start realizing that vision, and how soon such actions will achieve results. “The solution is not simply devoting more financial resources to the existing system, which may not be working,” said Phillips. “Instead, we need to leverage and transform our current investment and resources in the best possible ways. Iowa should not strive to be the high-cost provider. The challenge is to realize the greatest efficiencies and incentive quality management, transforming the current system as much as possible before funding is increased.”

The Business Council believes that maintaining any comparative advantage that Iowa currently enjoys with its education system will require meaningful reform that:

- institutes a coordinated, standardized, forward looking pre-K thru 12 core curriculum that ensures equalized delivery and resources;
- aligns the offerings of colleges, universities, and technical schools with the preparatory education provided by the pre-K thru 12 system as well as the needs of the business workplace;
- requires accountability and internationally-based performance measures along with higher, merit-based teacher compensation and improved professional development;
- encourages greater administrative efficiencies on a regional and statewide basis; and,
- produces culturally aware and ethically-oriented graduates who have mastered key skills related to reading, writing, problem solving, math, and science.

The Business Council also advocates for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) initiatives such as the Corridor STEM Initiative in Cedar Rapids, the Iowa Board of Regents Math & Science Education Collaborative, and the Iowa Math & Science Coalition. Each of these efforts seeks to generate new interest and create enthusiasm among students, teachers, and parents for STEM-oriented courses and related careers.

Council members and the panel of experts acknowledged the efforts of the General Assembly over the past three years to bolster access to early childhood education in Iowa. Ultimately, statewide participation by four and five year-olds in these programs will result in more productive adult employees and dedicated citizens who miss work less frequently, get involved with community and charitable activities, and support the local tax base.

LEAN IN STATE GOVERNMENT

The Business Council's Annual Partnership Meeting program also recognized individuals who utilize Lean Enterprise to pursue greater efficiency in state government.

For the past six years the Business Development & Process Team of the Iowa Coalition for Innovation and Growth (ICIG), a collaboration of IBC and the Iowa Chamber Alliance, has worked to institutionalize the philosophy of Lean Enterprise within state agencies. In 2006, the Iowa Department of Management received an appropriation to create the Office of Lean Enterprise, which has now assumed administrative responsibility for all future Lean events in state government.

During the month of January the Office of Lean Enterprise, led by Teresa Hay McMahon, coordinated and conducted the 100th Lean Event in state government within the Iowa Workforce Development Unemployment Insurance Tax Collections Office. The Council recognized this milestone and honored McMahon, Governor Culver, and others for their dedication to implementing Lean throughout Iowa's executive branch.

IOWA PARTNERS IN EFFICIENCY AWARD

IBC also announced that, starting in 2010, the Business Council and the Lean Government Collaborative will co-sponsor an annual "Iowa Partners In Efficiency Award." This award will recognize the employees or work units in any political subdivision of local, county, or state government who, through the use of Lean tools and techniques, significantly and measurably increase productivity and promote innovation that improves the delivery of public services to the benefit of the citizens of Iowa and the private sector.

Newly elected IBC Chair and President of Pella Corporation, Mel Haught, closed the evening by reiterating the Council's intention to remain bold and aggressive in facing Iowa's economic and educational challenges. "I look forward to leading this group of active CEOs who are committed to identifying and addressing the major issues that are important to enhancing Iowa's overall economic vitality," said Haught.

ABOUT THE IOWA BUSINESS COUNCIL

The Iowa Business Council is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, self-funded organization whose 23 members are the top executives of 19 of the largest businesses in the state, the three Regent university presidents, and Iowa's largest banking association. Founded in 1985, the Council's purpose is to focus the personal commitment of its members in active leadership roles on major initiatives that offer opportunity to enhance Iowa's economic vitality and improve the lives of Iowans. Council members identify major economic issues, evaluate options, and assist in implementing solutions through collaborative public/private partnerships. **Collectively**, IBC companies and institutions employ more than 210,000 Iowans and, in just the last ten years, have invested over \$15 billion worth of capital in the state. **Annually**, the Business Council represents more than \$250 million in financial contributions and volunteer hours given to numerous charitable causes around Iowa, and lead in technology innovation with over \$2.5 billion in spending and procured grants for research and development. For more information, please visit the IBC Web site at www.iowabusinesscouncil.org.

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