

## **2009 Final Draft Legislative Agenda of Priorities**

### **Agenda Item I: Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**

TIF is still considered the single most important tool available for economic development in rural Iowa. It adds millions of dollars to the future tax base each year, and we would oppose efforts to limit its use. We also believe that local control needs to be maintained. However, a loophole in the legislation allows for a no bid-letting situation. We ask that you protect TIF but close this loophole in the legislation so that competitive bids must be submitted for consideration for all projects. We also ask that you consider amendment of TIF that would allow local government entities to exempt school districts from participation in TIF via a simple exclusion in the required 28-E agreement.

### **Agenda Item II: Value-Added Agriculture Products & Processes Financial Assistance Program (VAAPPFAP), Community Economic Betterment Account (CEBA) and the Iowa Values Fund**

We have requested since the 2005 legislative session that these programs (VAAPPFAP & CEBA) be viewed independently of the Iowa Values Fund (IVF) revenue stream and that each program be considered as individual line items within the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) budget. Internal funding of projects on a case-by-case basis through the IVF limits the necessary, discretionary, spending ability of IDED staff for their use in technical assistance, project creation and job incentive programs so critical to rural growth in Iowa.

These programs were not funded the last three years and continue to rely on the repayment of loans from the previous budget pools for operation. These programs should not be totally dependent on the repayment of loans as their only funding stream.

We ask that funding for CEBA and that VAAPPFAP be restored, funds transferred to IDED for its determination of award and oversight.

### **Agenda Item III: Highway 34 Bridge**

We request that our State Legislators support the efforts of the IDOT and SWICO to obtain the balance of funding required to complete construction of the project no later than 2013.

### **Agenda Item IV: Highway 71 Improvement Taskforce**

The Southwest Iowa Coalition requests that the improvements to the road surface of Highway 71 from Atlantic to Clarinda be completed. The unimproved portion of the road from US 34 to Clarinda needs to be included in the current IDOT 5-year program. This is a very rough riding section of road that needs immediate attention as over-the-road (OTR) truck traffic coming from Kansas City and further points are avoiding this main transportation route when ever possible.

### **Agenda Item IV: TIME-21**

The Southwest Iowa Coalition strongly supports investments in infrastructure that contribute to sustaining and enhancing opportunities for economic development within the State of Iowa. Members recognize that Iowa must address long-term funding that will be dedicated to maintaining its entire road system. SWICO recognizes that our rural areas are struggling to maintain county and rural roads vital to our rural economies.

Because The Southwest Iowa Coalition understands that the TIME 21 proposal would leave the existing Road Use Tax Formula unchanged for existing revenues and would only change the Road Use Tax Formula for new revenues generated its membership did resolve:

The Southwest Iowa Coalition supports the TIME 21 Proposal and appreciates the Legislature's passage of the bill, and requests that the Legislature now fully fund TIME 21 to enhance economic development in the State.

### **Agenda Item VII: Regional Rural Development**

We again ask that you support the implementation of entrepreneurial activities in rural Iowa by carefully considering legislative language within economic development funding streams, which will ensure flexibility so that they are accessible to grassroots, regional initiatives instead of requiring conformity by

them to pre-designed state agency specifications. We live here, we work here and we believe we know best how to use state funding wisely in our own region.

## **Federal Legislative Priorities**

### **Agenda Item II: Renewable Fuels**

We believe any incentives for renewable fuels should apply only to domestically produced fuels.

### **Federal Agenda Item III: Highway 34 Bridge**

SWICO delegates have lobbied for more than 15 years to secure funding for the Highway 34 Missouri River Bridge Project. We want to thank our Federal Legislators for the approximately \$34 million of funding that has been designated to this project to date and request your continued support in funding this now \$130 million project. This project is now officially on the IDOT's 5 year program with construction currently scheduled to be completed by 2013. It is critical to the enhancement of economic development in S.W. Iowa that this project be completed and remains on schedule.

### **Federal Agenda Item II: Mandatory Price Reporting**

In order for independent livestock producers to access accurate market value information for their commodities, mandatory price reporting by meat processors is necessary. Although legislation in this regard is now in place, the system is far from satisfactory in the way that it is functioning. We ask our federal senators and representatives to revisit the legislation and make necessary changes that will ensure that reporting is actually occurring and done so in a timely manner.

### **Federal Agenda Item III: FSA Fruit and Vegetable Requirements**

Considerable effort is being made in the southwest Iowa area to encourage the production and consumption of locally produced food products. Typically, producers of these food products are raising various types of fruits and vegetables on small acreage plots. However, significant problems can arise for producers enrolled in the Farm Service Agency programs who wish to establish fruit and vegetable production on their farms. We ask our federal senators and representatives to consider granting waivers for small-scale production of fruit and vegetables on farms enrolled in the FSA program.

### **Federal Agenda Item IV: Farm Bill**

We are encouraged by the drafts being circulated and conversations with Congressional staffers that the Farm Bill has included valued provisions for improved rural development opportunities. We continue to be users and beneficiaries of such programs as VAPG, RBOG, RBEG, IRP, B&I and other programs administered by USDA-Rural Development. We are also very encouraged about proposed legislation that could create the Rural Collaborative Investment Program (RCIP) to support rural regions working cooperatively to improve their geographic areas and a new micro-enterprise lending and technical assistance program, as well as provisions addressing improved rural telecommunication infrastructure, alternative energy and support of bioscience initiatives.