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## LOOKING BACK & MOVING FORWARD

As the 2021 session adjourned with a frenzy of activity in May, the Business Partnership took a look back at the nearly 200 pieces of legislation passed. Many of our priorities were addressed, including recovery and resilience, workforce, economic development, infrastructure, and childcare. But there is much that still needs to be done during the second session of the 89th Iowa General Assembly, which will convene on January 10, 2022. We've asked area legislators to give us their thoughts on the 2021 session and what they see as priorities in the coming session.

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## SESSION RECAP FROM SENATE LEADERSHIP



### **Bold Agenda to Help Iowans** State Senator Zach Wahls

Democrats came into the 2021 session with a bold agenda that was designed to help Iowans hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to help businesses and their employees build back better, bigger and stronger than ever.

Senate Democrats' COVID Recovery Plan was designed to:

- **Help hurting Iowans.** We believed the state had resources to:
  - Support struggling small businesses with direct grants and forgivable loans.
  - Help cities, counties and school districts bounce back from a tough year.
  - Assist food banks that are serving an increasing number of Iowans in need.
- **Build back better by focusing on critical needs.** Our agenda included:
  - Keeping local small businesses that are part of the very fabric of our communities.
  - Expanding access to affordable childcare throughout the state.
  - Investing in high-speed Internet that will make every corner of Iowa a great place to live, learn and work.

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## FRESHMAN REPRESENTATIVE'S THOUGHTS ON HER FIRST SESSION



### A Perspective on Iowa's 2021 Legislative Session: We need more balance in our state government

State Rep. Christina Bohannon

I am honored to represent Iowa City in the Iowa House of Representatives. For those who don't know me, I live in Iowa City and have been a law professor at the University of Iowa for the past 20 years. There are two aspects to my work as a law professor that provide some context for what I am about to say about the Iowa legislature and business policy in the state.

First, I care a lot about business and economic issues. In fact, a good deal of my research has been about how innovation and competition in business, science, and the arts spur economic growth. This expertise helps to inform my thoughts about the business climate and economy in Iowa. Second, as a law professor, I teach the importance of being able to see and argue both sides of a case. I bring that same perspective to my political and legislative work. I do not believe that either party has a monopoly on truth, and I am a strong supporter of free speech for all perspectives. Although I am a committed Democrat, I believe in a robust two-party system that sparks intelligent debate on legislative issues.

CONTINUE READING

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## LEGISLATION IMPORTANT TO OUR MEMBERS

The governor has signed the following legislation. Any bills that were not finally acted upon during the 2021 session are eligible for consideration during the next legislative session.

### Recovery and Resiliency

- Paycheck Protection Program Relief (HSB 195) – Bill to conform Iowa and Federal tax laws regarding the treatment of forgiveness of PPP loans and exclude Iowa COVID-19 grants from individual and corporate income taxes. Language in this bill was included in the tax reform bill, SF 619.
- Disaster Recovery Housing (SF 619) – Directs IFA to create a disaster recovery housing assistance fund to allocate forgivable loans and grants for homeowners with disaster-affected homes.
- Downtown Loan Guarantee Program (SF 619) – Included in the tax omnibus bill is a downtown loan guarantee program to aid businesses and backs reinvestments and reopening of downtown businesses.

## **Workforce**

- Childcare – The House and Senate passed multiple childcare reform bills that will increase available childcare providers, provide tax incentives for businesses offering childcare, and address the childcare cliff effect.
- Medical Residency Liability Insurance (HF 891) – Included in the DHS budget was language that would provide reimbursements for medical liability insurance for resident physicians.

## **Economic Development**

- Housing (SF 619) – Portions of Governor Reynolds's Housing omnibus bill were included in the tax omnibus bills including addressing the workforce housing tax credit backlog, extending the redevelopment tax credit, and raising the cap on the Housing Trust Fund.
- Manufacturing 4.0 (SF 619) - Iowa Economic Development Director Debi Durham pushed for the adoption of a Manufacturing 4.0 bill to help businesses adapt to new technologies and incentivize growth. Manufacturing 4.0 language was included in the agreed-upon tax reform bill, SF 619.

## **Infrastructure**

- Broadband (HF 848) – Implements a \$100 million, tiered grant fund for broadband infrastructure.
- Flood Mitigation (HF 523) – Amends the definition of essential county purpose to include activities related to flood mitigation.

There were several bills presented during the last session that hurt Iowa's business climate and our ability to attract workforce that we're keeping an eye on for the second half of session. We will continue to work outside of session to make sure these bills do not come up again.

- Tech Censorship (SF580) – Would have clawed back state and local economic development incentives for companies who violated the constitutional rights of Iowa citizens.
- Religious Freedom and Restoration Act (RFRA) (SF 436) – Allows individuals and companies to assert as a defense in legal proceedings that their exercise of religion has been, or is likely to be, substantially burdened.
- Bathroom Bill (SF224) – Requires transgender people in Iowa schools to use bathrooms that correspond to the sex listed on their birth certificates in schools.
- Tenure Prohibition at Regents Institutions (HF496, SF41) – Would have prohibited the Regents institutions from the utilization of tenure.
- E-Verify Mandate (SF339) Required utilization of the e-verify system and created penalties for businesses not utilizing the system.

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The Business Partnership advocates for economic growth policies on the local, state and federal levels. We collaborate with the business community and other stakeholders and partners to develop our yearly policy agendas, to create a consistent voice for the region.

We are a non-partisan organization that does not endorse or donate to political candidates. We support First Amendment rights for all people and encourage elected officials, candidates and citizens to be civil in discussions and debates on policy issues and political opinions. We are committed to leading by

example.

If you have particular projects or issues that you would like addressed, contact **Jennifer Banta**, Vice President, Advocacy & Community Development.



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