



The Platte Institute's Year End Review

Thank you to many donors and supporters across the state that help the Platte Institute for Economic Research promote free enterprise, limited government, and personal responsibility.

2012 was a productive year for the Platte Institute, with nine policy papers and several conferences. Below please find a summary of some of the more popular 2012 publications, in case you missed them.

*January 2012: **Teacher Selection and Evaluation in Nebraska** by Vicki E. Alger, PhD*[\[1\]](#)

This study examines how teachers are selected and evaluated in Nebraska. There is much room for improvement in how Nebraska evaluates teachers, exits ineffective educators, and attracts better educators. The study set out a five-point plan which emphasizes: 1) Allowing multiple teaching paths to attract better teachers; 2) Incentivize student success through pay structure; 3) Redefine teacher effectiveness in terms of student learning; 4) Make student learning a core measure of teacher evaluations; 5) Bring teacher contracting into the 21st Century.

*March 2012: **LB970 Tax Relief Package***[\[2\]](#)

This special study analyzed Governor Heineman's tax relief package, LB970 which would have repealed the inheritance tax, lowered the corporate income tax, and lowered the individual income tax. Analysis showed Nebraska's economy would benefit from these initiatives in the form of encouraging investment and attracting individuals, businesses, and jobs into the state. It would also stimulate the economy. During the 2012 legislative session an amended version of LB970 that only lowered personal income taxes passed. The unaddressed provisions of LB970, all of which would benefit Nebraska's economy, are left for future legislative efforts.

*June 2012: **An Analysis of the University of Nebraska System** by Richard Vedder, PhD*[\[3\]](#)

This study is an in-depth look at the University of Nebraska System with emphasis on the Lincoln, Omaha, and Kearney campuses. The research focuses on tuition, graduation rates, allocation of resources, and state funds to NU. Analysis shows that while Nebraska students pay lower tuition than most peer institutions, the University's four-year graduation rates are lower than comparable universities. NU suffers from "administrative bloat," with more resources committed to research and other services than classroom instruction. NU is well-funded by the State of

Nebraska, and deficiencies were determined not to be a result of lack of funding.

*December 2012: **Right-Sizing the Cornhusker's Juvenile Justice System***[\[4\]](#)

An analysis of the Nebraska Juvenile Justice System found that while the state's smaller than average delinquent population presents fewer of the systematic pressures faced by larger states, it can often lead to youths falling through the cracks and missing out on proper rehabilitation. To address this the study recommended better truancy prevention, eliminating unnecessary detention, and making appropriate placements in both the juvenile and adult systems. Increasing the effectiveness of diversions and probation in Nebraska will increase successful rehabilitation. While Nebraska's Juvenile Justice System is in an enviable position compared to many other states, "right-sizing" the system could save millions.

Along with the policy publications, the Institute also contributed to the formation of legislation enacted by the Unicameral:

Foster Care Reform

The Platte Institute's study, "Next Steps for Child Welfare in Nebraska,"[\[5\]](#) outlined a series of reforms designed to continue privatization and improve outcomes for children and their families by both the Department of Health and Human Services and the lead agencies. Several of these recommendations were adopted in the Legislature's reform of the system and prevented the state from completely ending privatization and taking back over the system.

Health Care Reform

The Platte Institute has been the leading voice in Nebraska against establishing a state health care exchange and expanding Medicaid in accordance with the President Obama's health insurance law. Platte worked in partnership with health care experts, Michael Cannon and Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute, to provide policy foundations to oppose the bills to establish an exchange. The bills were ultimately stalled in Committee. Governor Heineman ended up aligning with the Platte Institute's position by declining to form a state-based health care exchange and opposing Medicaid expansion.[\[6\]](#)

Energy Reform

In September, The Platte Institute hosted a conference to engage lawmakers, citizens, and energy stakeholders in an open dialogue to address the future of energy policy in Nebraska. Conference participants included experts in renewable energy, ethanol production, natural gas, and public utilities. Just fewer than 100 individuals, including several state senators, attended the event and participated in the discussion to determine how Nebraska can best utilize its energy resources.

Again, we thank everyone who has helped make the Platte Institute's year such a success. We look forward to working with you in 2013.

[1] http://www.platteinstitute.org/docLib/20120109_Teacher_Selection_and_Evaluation_in_Nebraska.pdf

[2] http://www.platteinstitute.org/docLib/20120312_LB970_Tax_Relief_Package.pdf

[3] http://www.platteinstitute.org/docLib/20120605_Higher_Ed_report.pdf

[4] [http://www.platteinstitute.org/docLib/20121218_Juvenile_Justice_Report_\(2\).pdf](http://www.platteinstitute.org/docLib/20121218_Juvenile_Justice_Report_(2).pdf)

[5] http://www.platteinstitute.org/docLib/20120208_Child_Welfare_report.pdf

[6] Nebraska Can't Afford Medicaid Expansion, July 20th, 2012 Available at http://www.governor.nebraska.gov/news/2012/07/11_medicaid.html



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