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PLATTE CHAT

Tracking Nebraska's Federal Stimulus Money

Jimmy Conway
Platte Institute Intern

Will the "Good Life" in Nebraska be better when the state receives \$1.6 billion of the federal stimulus money, which doesn't include tax benefits for individuals or businesses? Where is all that money going? State administered funding is primarily for programs that create and maintain jobs, support education, provide human services and health care assistance to help vulnerable Nebraskans, and make infrastructure investments in transportation, the environment and sustainable energies, according to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

The distribution of Federal Funds are broken down into three main areas for Nebraska; services industry, infrastructure and stabilization. \$547 million dollars are going to increased federal support for various services. \$525 million is for infrastructure improvements and \$518 million is for the stabilization of Nebraskan. Each area is then broke down by funding of programs within their specific area.

- Out of the \$547 million dollars going towards the service industry, \$224 million is going to be spent on education, \$164 million is for labor cost, \$136 million goes to Health and Human Services and \$23 million will be allocated to the law enforcement.
- \$525 million on improving Nebraska's infrastructure breaks

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down to \$269 million for transportation, \$106 million for energy (specific purposes of home weatherization, conservation, and public awareness) \$67 million for improving drinking and water waste systems, \$41 million for community development, \$36 million to Environment, \$6 million to government agencies and the technology programs are pending with available funds.

- The Fiscal Stabilization Fund receives \$518 million and \$234 million goes to the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund- Education, \$232 million goes to Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), and the last \$52 million goes to the General Purpose Stabilization Fund.

To read full descriptions of programs and more in-depth break down of funds visit <http://recovery.nebraska.gov/>

Nebraska has a great website that allows you to see a description of each program and how much funding they are receiving. The website even includes a detailed summary of the allocations to the state of Nebraska approved by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The ARRA summary can be found at the website here: <http://www.recovery.nebraska.gov/>

No-Smoking Law Should Be No-Worry for Nebraska Businesses

*Kelly Dunlap
Platte Institute Intern*

Nebraska business owners might be concerned that the Nebraska Clean Air Act will drive away regular customers. The Act, which became effective on June 1, 2009, bans smoking in almost all indoor public places, such as bars, office spaces and restaurants with the goal of improving public health throughout the state. Some businesses have voiced concerns that customers who once enjoyed the freedom to smoke at their facilities will now opt to stay at home.

In October of 2006, the University of Nebraska at Lincoln published a report in response to the January 2005 Smoke-Free Ordinance in Lincoln. The report indicates that there was no evidence for a decline in the restaurant industry's sales revenues, but there was, however, a 6% decline in the sales revenues of "drinking places."^[1] If these statistics are any indication of Nebraska's statewide response to the Act, the future looks somewhat grim for certain business owners.

Fortunately, national research presents a different picture. If

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Nebraska follows in the footsteps of states that are currently smoke-free, business owners have little to fear. Nebraska joins 15 other states that have enacted a state law requiring workplaces, restaurants, and bars to be smoke free.^[2] Economic studies of these states reveal that the law does not have a negative effect on business revenues. Research examining the impact on states, such as California, North Carolina and Massachusetts, has repeatedly found no significant variation in sales prior to and after the implementation of the statewide law.^[3] According to the 2006 Surgeon General's Report, "evidence from peer-reviewed studies shows that smoke-free policies and regulations do not have an adverse economic impact on the hospitality industry."^[4]

In the near future, extensive research of Nebraska citizen's response to the law should give a more accurate indication as to the fate of the state's hospitality industry. Until then, Nebraskans have good reason to believe that the Clean Air Act is a win-win; citizens will soon reap the benefits of cleaner air and business owners need not worry about its affect on their bottom line.

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- [1] http://www.bbr.unl.edu/documents/smoking_report.pdf
 [2] <http://www.no-smoke.org/pdf/mediaordlist.pdf>
 [3] <http://www.no-smoke.org/getthefacts.php?dp=d19|d32>
 [4] <http://caonline.amcancersoc.org/cgi/reprint/57/6/367>

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