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L&T staff report

The Joint Economic Development Council has joined the Liberal Chamber of Commerce, Seward County Chairman Ada Linenbroker, National Beef's Pat Pridie, Northeast Liberal Leadership, Bright Futures, former Liberal City Commissioner Jack Cooley, Wheatridge Park Care Center Administrator Lindsay Durler, and Kids Inc. in endorsing the school bond proposal.

"The purpose of Joint Economic Development Council is to work together as a community to create an environment that enhances our area for business opportunities," the organization said in their endorsement. "Businesses look at many factors when determining their next site locations. The quality of schools and the way the community supports the schools are just a couple of those factors."

The upcoming bond issue has proposed the creation of five new schools to replace Liberal's overcrowded elementaries and middle schools. The intermediates will be converted to elementary schools, eliminating the number of transitions from four to three.

The entire plan totals \$127 million, but with state aid and a half-cent sales tax, local property owners will pay \$36 million of the cost spread out over a 25-year period, or 29 percent of the total. Between the sales tax and state aid, \$91 million will come from sources other than property owners.

"Watching our community rally around this bond issue has been encouraging," the JEDC stated. "The amount of candidness the school board has had with this bond issue process has given the community an opportunity to fix the problems of our district without any more patchwork solutions. This kind of community one-mindedness also helps to attract businesses to our city. When businesses see that bond issues continually get turned down by the public it makes them rethink where they invest their dollars, because they want to risk their money in a community that believes in itself."

Voters will determine if they want to accept the aid and sales tax initiatives in an election April 8. If the bond fails, the district will have to continue to add more portables and other stop-gap measures with no state or sales tax support.

A public meeting to discuss the proposal is scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday at the Rock Island Depot.

EDITOR'S NOTE — To see full endorsement letter, see today's Opinion page.

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