

General Session Update from Senator Aaron Osmond

Week 1 – January 27 to January 31, 2014

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Before I give you an update of the week, I would first like to thank you for the opportunity to represent you in the Senate. It is hard work, but well worth the investment of time and effort as long as you remain involved with me and share your thoughts and feelings about the work I am doing on your behalf.

In that spirit, I would like to thank those of you that responded to my recent survey about the session and the bills that I am running. I had nearly 180 responses from constituents and delegates in District 10! To see a summary of those responses, please go www.aaronosmond.com and click on **Important Files**. You can then download the **January 2014 Survey Results** at that location. The results are very important to review. Please take a few minutes to look at them.

Our January Legislative Preview Meeting and My Proposed Bills

I would also like to thank those of you that attended my January Legislative Preview Meeting a few weeks ago. We spent 3 hours going over key policy issues facing the state and reviewing key bills that I am planning to propose during the session. For a list of these bills that I am sponsoring you can do the following:

- Go to www.le.utah.gov. From that site, you may type in "Osmond" in the Bill Search bar at the top of the page (be sure to select the 2014 General Session).
- Or, you may also go to www.aaronosmond.com and search for the file called **Senator Osmond's 2014 Bills** under the Important Files tab.
- Remember, if you have any questions about any bill file I am running, please don't hesitate to contact me or my intern (see contact info below).

Governor's State of the State Address

As you know, Governor Gary Herbert gave his State of the State address last Wednesday. As he pointed out, despite a few challenges, Utah really is doing quite well. We are creating jobs, our unemployment rate is the 4th lowest in the nation, we live in the second fastest growing state, and we are growing in a sustainable way while keep government as small. Here is a link to a pdf of his speech if you would like to read it:

<http://www.utah.gov/governor/docs/stateofstate/2014StateoftheStateAddress.pdf>

The Opening of the 60th Legislature of the State of Utah

The General Session of the 60th Legislature of the State of Utah officially began on Monday morning, January 27th. We began the day with an opening ceremony, which includes a prayer (as we do each morning). Prayers are given by a wide variety of religious leaders and local citizens. If you, or someone you know, would like to offer our opening prayer on the Senate Floor, please let me know. It's a great opportunity.

Opening Remarks and Introduction of Bills

President Niederhauser gave us some very wise and timely opening remarks (here is a link to his address: <http://www.senatesite.com/home/nieder-2014-opening/>). Then, after a few formalities and introductions, we began our Senate work. We "read in" 98 bills, which means the bills were introduced by having their titles and sponsors read and then officially sent to the Rules Committee where they are assigned to standing committees.

Congratulations to Senator Luz Robles!

We did have one unusual event that day. Rep. Juan Carlos Escamilla (Representative from Arizona) came to the Senate floor, and in front of everyone knelt down and proposed to Senator Luz Robles ... and she accepted! Here is a link to an overview of the day's events including a video of the marriage proposal: <http://www.senatesite.com/home/1-27-2014/>.

Appropriation Committees Begin

On Tuesday our committee work for appropriations began. This year, Senate and House Leadership decided to do things differently. Instead of a mix of appropriation and standing committees, they asked us to focus our full energy on re-evaluating our current base budgets. Therefore, this week has now been dubbed the "Base Budget Week". All the appropriations subcommittees met every day of the week (for 3-4 hours at a time in each committee). As a Senator I have been assigned to two appropriations committees: The Public Education Appropriations Committee and the Higher Education Appropriations Committee.

Purpose of the Committees

The work of these committees is to carefully scrutinize the existing budget. Just as you do when you review your household budget, each subcommittee reviews and then determines if the allocated expenditures are achieving the desired outcomes and then we look for any potential savings that could be found within the budget we are responsible for. We look at our budget broken down line-by-line and by individual agency. We compare last year's budget for each agency to their previous five-year trend and look at how last year's appropriated funds were spent. We ask if their expenditure goals were met and deemed successful as well as the very important question of how the agency measures success or failure in their expenditures. We also ask what has, will or could be done to increase efficiency and productivity and possibly cut internal expenditures.

It was a long, but important week. We began each day between 7:00 and 8:00 and finished between 5:00 and 7:00 each night. In between the appropriation meetings I was on the Senate floor or meeting with constituents the rest of each day. We will finish these budget meetings and the move on to regular committee meetings to address specific bills early next week. This extra time to examine the budgets has been very productive, but it will make the rest of the session even more intense because our standing committees have yet to meet.

Couldn't We Get More Done if the Session Were Longer Than 45 Days?

Some have suggested that we could get more done if our session were longer, but I agree with President Niederhauser when he said that he was glad our time allotment is defined in our Constitution so that we can't just decide to extend our session time like other states have done. I am confident that having a part-time legislature with a limit to the time we can work is a major contributor to the efficiency with which we are able to run the State. In fact, other states are recognizing that big government is more of a problem than a solution. For example:

- Here are some links to articles from some other states that are actually trying to reduce the size of their legislatures or make them part-time: <http://www.theadanews.com/local/x1724061064/Enid-lawmaker-proposes-downsizing-Legislature>
- This article says that in Michigan their goal is to "prohibit the state Legislature from meeting for more than 60 regular session days a year, cap lawmaker salaries at \$35,000 and allow for no more than 250 legislative staffers." http://www.mlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/01/michigan_part_time_legislature_ballot.html

These articles make so proud of Utah! We only meet for 45 days (including Saturdays and Sundays), lawmakers are only paid for the days they attend official meetings and there are only five full time staffers for the entire Utah Senate (but we do hire some extra temporary help during session). Keeping government small is important. I am glad other states are recognizing what we already know.

Budget Priorities and Education Funding

This article: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2014/01/24/how-states-spend-their-cash-in-5-maps/> shows the overall percent of each state's budget that is spent on corrections, highways, hospitals and public health, education and public welfare. It was interesting to me that **we are number four in the nation** for the percent of our budget that we spend on education. The three states that spend a higher percentage spend only one percent more of their budget than we do. Poling results consistently show that education is the highest priority for the citizens of Utah. The legislature sanctions that priority by allocating such a high percentage of the budget to education. We need to be cognizant that the money we spend is for

quality education for our children. This week of drilling down into the details of the budget helps to make sure that it is happening.

Senator Hatch Visit

On Friday, Senator Orrin Hatch addressed the Utah State Senate. He allowed us time for questions and was queried on federal regulations of the sale of medical devices, immigration, PILT money and free trade. Senator Hillyard asked him why members of congress were excluded from ACA (Obamacare). If you would like to hear what he said, here is a link:

http://utahlegislature.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?clip_id=16352&meta_id=488721

Key Issues to be Debated This Session

There are several key issues we will be addressing this year. I am sure you are aware of many of them. Funding quality education; evaluating alcohol policy; improving air quality; Medicaid Expansion; paying for transportation improvements, and much more. They are all subjects that will take a great deal of consideration. I value your input and thoughts on these issues.

Thoughts on Protecting Amendment 3 – Utah Definition of Marriage

May I offer a few thoughts on the Amendment 3 issue? Judge Shelby's rejection of Utah's definition of marriage is being reviewed by a higher court. Many of our Legislators who are lawyers have actively participated in preparing Utah's legal response to Judge Shelby's decision. It is likely that Utah's response will argue that Utah's definition of marriage is legal and constitutional based upon appropriate state jurisdiction over marriage and religious liberty.

This issue is very divisive with strong emotions on both sides. As your legislator, I strongly support the Legislature's and Utah's efforts to defend the definition of marriage adopted by the people of Utah in their constitution. Winning in court, however, will require strong legal arguments: judges will not be swayed by impassioned legislative statements, whether made orally or in legislation.

It is also important to separate this issue from the people involved. As your legislator, I respect our gay and lesbian citizens and their families and understand their commitment to their beliefs. I would urge you, and all the members of our community, to actively show respect for everyone involved with this issue, regardless of their position or their comments. As Governor Herbert said in his State of the State address, "there is absolutely no room for hatred and bigotry in our state". I absolutely agree.

Keeping Track of Bills and Committee Meetings

As you can see, this has been a busy week and there are six more to come. You can keep track of what we are doing each day on our state legislative website <http://le.utah.gov/>, or via our daily posts on the Utah Senate Blog located at:

<http://www.senatesite.com/home/>, or you can follow a play-by-play of floor and committee action through our **Twitter** handle **@UTLEGTracker**. In fact, we are the first state in the nation to tweet legislative action in real time. Here is a little information on this new way you can keep track of the minute by minute happenings:

<http://www.senatesite.com/home/twitterfirehose/>.

Other Ways to Follow The Utah Senate

There are actually A LOT of ways to follow what we are doing every day and to engage with the Senate. Our staff at the Senate has made it easy for you. From this link <http://senatecloud.com/> you can find all our social media sites, the senate YouTube channel, Flickr for pictures, the senate's blog and more. Take a look and tell me what you think!

Roster for the Entire Legislature:

Also, just in case you are interested, here is a link to a roster for a pdf with all phone numbers and addresses for each member of the legislature, here's that link: <http://utah.ptfs.com/awweb/main.jsp?flag=browse&smd=1&awdid=1>

My Senate Intern – Cody Garcia

I am pleased to announce that I have been assigned a fantastic intern to help me with my Senate load during the session. His name is Cody Garcia. Cody is a Sr. at Utah Valley University, but he lives right here in South Jordan! If you need to get a hold of me, get answers to questions on bills, or just find out what's going on, you can reach him as follows:

Cell Phone: **801-888-8742**

Email: cgarci@le.utah.gov

Well, that's it for now. Thanks again for your support. I am sincerely grateful to represent the wonderful people of District 10.

Sincerely,

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SUBSCRIPTION NOTE: If you would prefer not to receive these updates, please let me know and I will remove you from the list. However, please be patient. The process to remove you from the list is manual and this is a very busy time.