

General Session Update from Senator Aaron Osmond

Week 2 – February 1st to February 8th, 2014

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We are now two weeks into the 2014 General Session! There are now four and a half weeks left ... with **MUCH** to do!

Key Bills We Reviewed on Senate Floor

We addressed quite a few important bills in committee and on the floor this week. Some of the key bills that passed off of the Senate floor (and will now move to the House) were SB 105 - Financial Discourser Reporting Amendments that deals with campaign and financial reporting requirements; SB 145 that modifies the Public Safety Code regarding criminal background check information; and SB 129 that would make adjustments in the insurance laws to address electronic transaction.

Status of My Bills This Last Week

I have 2 Bills that have successfully passed both the Senate Committee and the Senate Floor and are now off to be heard in the House:

- **SCR 1 - Concurrent Resolution Recognizing the 60th Anniversary of the Inclusion of under God in the Pledge of Allegiance.** There was an interesting dialog about this bill on the floor. Here is a link to the audio: http://utahlegislature.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?clip_id=16462&meta_id=490609 and here is a link to the actual bill file: <http://le.utah.gov/~2014/bills/static/SCR001.html>.
- **1st Sub - SB 103 – Local Control of Classroom Time.** This bill is about authorizing our local school boards with the ability to allocate up to 60 hours of school time for the purpose of teacher preparation time and teacher professional development time. The bill passed out 21 to 6 with 2 absent. Here is a link to the floor debate: http://utahlegislature.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?clip_id=16430&meta_id=490142. Here is a link to the bill itself: <http://le.utah.gov/~2014/bills/static/SB0103.html>.

My Key Bills Coming Up This Week in Committee

Here is a list of some of my key bills that will be heard in committee this coming week. Please listen in on these presentations this week in the Senate Education Standing Committee:

- **SB 103 – Property Tax Equalization.** This bill would freeze the Minimum Basic Rate and distribute funds from growth in property values back to each school district equally based on student count. The funds would go directly to the local community councils who will decide how to spend these equalized funds at the local level only.
- **SB 42 – Early Education.** This bill would fund access to High Quality Pre-K for children from families that have a documented history of Intergenerational Poverty. Such services have been proven to successfully remove the achievement gap from these at risk kids and reduce costs of special education for these children later in life.
- **SB 104 – K-3 Reading Clinic Expansion.** This bill would expand the U of U Reading Clinic from SLC to Ogden to Cedar City. The clinics provide teacher training and direct intervention for K-3 kids that are struggling with reading.
- **SB 131 – Student Leadership Skills.** This bill would expand the funding for grants to schools that would like to implement student leadership programs. These programs have been proven to significantly impact school culture and student behavior that then impact and support academic growth.

Getting Bills Through the Rules Committee – How it Works

The rules committee worked hard during the first week assigning bills to standing committees. We have had a lot of bills this session, more so than usual. By the beginning of the week, we had introduced 326 bills. Here are some comments from Senator Valentine, the Rules Committee chair, about how he expects the process to work this year:

<http://utahpolicy.com/index.php/features/today-at-utah-policy/1686-valentine-number-of-bills-for-2014-legislature-unlike-anything-he-s-ever-seen-video>.

Committee Discussion – How to Handle USTAR Mismanagement

Recently, the Business, Economic Development and Labor Appropriations Committee carefully considered the USTAR initiative and its funding status. USTAR (Utah Science Technology and Research initiative) <http://www.ustar.utah.edu/> has been in place about 7 years and has received over **\$300,000,000** in state funds or bond obligations.

Unfortunately, a recent legislative audit noted a number of concerns with the program. In response to the audit, the committee had multiple meetings with USTAR leaders and reviewed in depth the audit done by the Office of Legislative Auditor General, as well as another audit done by USTAR itself. Committee members also carefully reviewed USTAR materials regarding their mission, performance and its prospects. Surprisingly to me, **the BEDL committee approved ongoing funding** of USTAR. Fortunately, it was contingent upon the passage of a follow-up bill to be sponsored by Senator Shiozawa that would enact significant changes in governance, performance metrics, reporting and audits. The bill will set a sunset date. Hopefully these changes will allow the continuation of the program with their goal of increased research, commercialization and business growth via these research universities while ensuring tax payer money is used wisely and transparently.

Committee Discussion – Utah Air Quality Situation

An equitable solution to air quality is also a big discussion this session. There are many bills being run with that could contribute to the solution, but no significant results will happen without individual lifestyle changes by most of us. Here are some thoughts on that by Senator Weiler. <http://www.senatesite.com/home/cleaning-utahs-air/>. My personal opinion is that we need to implement cautious but meaningful measures that will reduce air pollution from all sources, corporate and individual. I will be carefully reviewing each piece of legislation to ensure that balance is maintained.

Following Bills through the Process

If there is a bill you are particularly interested in you can follow its specific progress and have notifications emailed to you. Here are the steps:

1. From the main web page, (<http://le.utah.gov/#iframe>) type in the bill number to the search box.
2. From there you will be taken to the bill's specific page.
3. Underneath the bill's title, click on 'status'
4. Then select which of the four tracking options you would like to receive
5. Then add your email and click 'subscribe.'
6. You can subscribe for tracking updates on up to up to 150 bills and will be notified when any action is taken.

Base Budgets Now Approved

During our work this week each of the appropriations subcommittees approved their base budgets. That means that each committee now has a fiscal starting point. Now the appropriations committees will focus on requests and allocations for any additional funds. It has been a long process getting each of the budgets to this point, but is critical to insure careful expenditures and look for ways to streamline or reduce expenditures. The appropriations committees will meet four more times to determine their final recommendations and then those appropriations bills will be put together to become the final budget.

My View of This Year's Base Budget Review Process

Spending all of last week digging deep into the budget was an eye opening experience for me personally. In the past, appropriations subcommittees have focused on how to spend new money. Taking this time has helped us find quite a bit of money in non-lapsing fund accounts (money that is not spent and so is just carried over into the next fiscal year's budget). This money could be reallocated and spent elsewhere. It is our job as a legislature to make sure that the tax money you are assessed is spent as prudently as possible. Taking time to carefully examine and look at ways to realign those expenditures helps us accomplish that task. Here is an overview on the week's activities from Senator Hillyard, our executive appropriations

chair on the process. <http://utahpolicy.com/index.php/features/today-at-utah-policy/1707-hillyard-says-budget>. This is great article on what we have been doing and why.

Want To Review The Base Budgets Yourself?

If you would like to see the bills that contained the base budgets approved by the subcommittees, you can find them on the website. <http://le.utah.gov/#iframe>. SB 1 is Higher Education, SB 4 is Business, Economic Development and Labor, SB 5 is the budget for Executive Offices and Criminal Justice, SB 6 contains proposed budget numbers for Infrastructure and General Government, National Guard, Veterans' Affairs and Legislature budgets are addressed in SB 7, and SB 8 is the Social Services base budget.

Utah Budgeting versus the Federal Government Budgeting – What a Stark Contrast!

I am proud of the way Utah budgets. I wish Washington could learn from us. Last month a \$1.1 trillion spending bill was passed. The official title of the bill is the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014. It was termed a "short-term" funding bill because it will only fund obligated federal expenditures through this September. It is an increase of \$45 billion over FY 2013 funding. The actual text of the bill is over 1500 pages of fine print. **The House passed this budget after having it for only 2 days!** This trillion dollars was not the only recently authorized federal expenditure. Nearly another trillion in spending was approved by the president this week in the Farm Bill alone!

PROBLEM - Federal PILT Funding at Risk for Utah

One key element in the Spending Bill that we as Legislators have been watching closely was the PILT funding. **PILT stands for "payment-in-lieu-of-taxes"** and is given to states who have a great deal of land owned by the federal government. The money is meant to compensate for the inability to collect property tax. Since about two-thirds of Utah is owned and controlled by the federal government, every county in the state receives some PILT money. In some of the rural counties the funding is critical – in fact, 90% of the land in Kane County is federally controlled, so they have a very limited tax base. In all Utah receives about \$35 million in PILT funds. The budget measure was supposed to be added into last month's \$1.1 trillion bill, but in the end it was not added!

Thank You Congressman Bishop!

Congressman Bishop helped to get the disbursement back via the Farm Bill, but it only has a one-year funding extension as opposed to five years of funding that most of the other programs in the bill obtained. Senator Okerlund is running a resolution asking Congress to establish reliable multi-year funding of PILT money. Here is a link to the resolution. <http://le.utah.gov/~2014/bills/static/SCR006.html> and here is more information on the problem and how it impacts Utah. http://www.parkrecord.com/summit_county-news/ci_25038056/congress-includes-pilt-funding-farm-bill.

Education Funding – Most Critical Funding Discussion

I sit on both the Public Education and the Higher Education Appropriation Committees. Between these two budgets we allocate nearly 72% of all State Budget resources. For most Utahans funding quality education is consistently deemed the most critical budget issue. As a legislature, our job is to make sure the money is being used efficiently. One of the ways we do this is through the audit process. Examining audits of an agency, allows us see best practices, potential cost cutting measures and then make recommendations and alterations that will stretch tax dollars further.

Recent Audit of Utah's School District Expenses

An audit on operational areas in Utah's school districts was just completed this week. Here is a link to the audit. http://le.utah.gov/audit/14_02rpt.pdf. This was useful in that it highlighted some successful cost-saving measures that a few districts have taken and made recommendations that other districts could follow. Practices like GPS bus scheduling, centralized meal preparations and energy monitoring and conservation practices have saved districts money allowing them to spend it in other needed areas. Careful and consistent auditing is another critical component to the budgeting process.

Our Utah Government Website

Utah's official government website, Utah.gov <http://www.utah.gov/index.html> is continually receiving awards for innovation, accessibility and transparency. Most recently the site received the **Mobile Web Award** from the Web Marketing Association for having the "best mobile government website" because our site adapts so well to mobile devices!

In Memorial - Sargent Cory Wride and Derek Johnson

I revere and honor law enforcement officers and their willingness to dedicate their lives through their career choice to the protection of our freedom and our way of life. Here are some news stories about the recent loss of Sargent Cory Wride who was taken from us by senseless violence:

- <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865595718/The-way-Sgt-Cory-Wride-lived-his-life-made-him-a-hero-sheriff-says.html>.
- <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865595467/Family-of-fallen-officer-remembers-a-life-of-service-to-his-family-faith-and-community.html>.

On Thursday, we also took a moment to honor another fallen officer, Derek Johnson. Here is a link to his story and his family's sacrifice: <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/politics/57506657-90/johnson-draper-sgt-enforcement.html.csp>.

Coming Up to The Capitol?

If you decide to come to the Capitol during the session, please let me know. I would welcome the time to say hello to you! If you do come to the Capitol please take a moment to see the Utah Iconography exhibit on the Capitol's 4th floor. The exhibit references people, places, and things that could be considered icons in Utah. They represent actual places, buildings, and people but also reference ideas and experiences that are part of Utah life. Here is some more information about the exhibit: <https://utahstatecapitol.utah.gov/index.php/explorethecapitol/artinthecapitol>.

A Local South Jordan Artist on Display at the Capitol – Edward Fraughton

A personal friend and world-renowned South Jordan artist, Edward J. Fraughton has also kindly loaned two bronzes currently on display in the 4th floor gallery: The American Monarch, a classic portrait of a North American bison, and a portrait bust of the late and prolific artist, Arnold Freiberg (painter of The Prayer at Valley Forge being among his many accolades). An additional bronze by Fraughton of President Lincoln is also on display in Governor Herbert's ceremonial office through session.

Well, that's it for now. Need to start working on my many bill presentations coming up this week.

All my best to you and your family!

Sincerely,

Senator Aaron Osmond
11466 Country Knoll Road
South Jordan, UT 84095
801-897-8127 Cell
aosmond@le.utah.gov
www.aaronosmond.com

Intern Contact Information

Cody Garcia
Cell Phone: 801-888-8742
Email: cgarcia@le.utah.gov

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