

Monthly Update & Review - Senator Aaron Osmond For September/October 2014

Sunday, November 16, 2014

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I hope you are enjoying the change in the weather! The winter months are approaching and the Holidays will soon be upon us! In that spirit I wish each of you an early Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas!

I will try to keep this update brief and to the point. I will share with you just a few updates on key pieces of my legislation and then a few updates from our recent Interim Meetings, and a few other notable items.

Quick Update on a Few of My Legislative Priorities:

- 1) **Public Lands Assessment.** As many of you know, I am planning to run legislation that will require our State Tax Commission to complete an actual assessment of the market value and revenue potential of all public lands held by the Federal Government in the state of Utah (of course excluding National and State parks). The assessment will be based on a comparison of what these public lands would be worth and what they would generate for the state of Utah if they were managed in the same way that we manage our State Education Trust Lands. While we cannot issue a tax bill to the Federal Government, we can require that our state Tax Commission report on the revenue we could have generated if these Public Lands were generating tax revenue. The report will be required every 5 years and will give the citizens of Utah a sense of the financial benefit (or impact) if the state was managing these lands like we do our State Education Land Trust lands.
- 2) **Property Tax Equalization.** I have been travelling the state talking about the urgent need to address the equalization of local property tax. School District leaders across the state are in agreement that we need a long-term meaningful solution to help those districts with high overall taxing effort but low overall property value. When you consider that over 40% of our Public Education costs are funded with local property taxes, you can begin to understand how significant this problem is for some districts (like Jordan District). As you know, my solution is that we need to generate new state funding to begin to equalize local property taxes. My proposal is that we freeze the state's Minimum Basic Rate. As property values increase, any new revenue would be allocated to fund property tax equalization. Another approach we are looking at is to do an adjustment for inflation to the state's Minimum Basic Rate (it has not been adjusted since 1996). Either method generates new money, which can be allocated equally to the most-needy districts (based on their local taxing effort). Please let me know your thoughts about my efforts to equalize taxes. I welcome any additional ideas you may have.
- 3) **Juvenile Justice Amendments.** Over the last year I have become aware of some very concerning cases where youth as young as 15-16 are being remanded to adult court and then sentenced to adult prisons on a 1st offense. I am not comfortable with our state's statutes about Serious Youth Offender laws. I feel like it is taking these troubled children and literally throwing away the key. Not only is their physical and mental safety at risk, the likely hood of repeat offense is dramatically increased if they are not given age-appropriate help and support. I am not saying that there should not be real consequences for their actions, but we should have a goal of their remediation and safety as they pay their debt to society. I am proposing law changes that would protect the rights of children and their parents when a child under the age of 21 is accused of a serious crime and ensure they are given age-appropriate correctional oversight. More details to come soon.
- 4) **Credit Monitoring for Youth.** We have all heard how easy it is for criminals to access and ruin a child's credit score and credit history. Before a parent even becomes aware of the problem it can be too late. Once the damage is done it can take a great deal of effort as well as legal costs to fix the child's credit again. I am recommending that Credit Agencies be required to automatically freeze a child's credit until they are at least 18

years of age. Only a parent/guardian can authorize that a child's credit to be "unfrozen". In this way we can ensure that no social security number can be falsely used by criminals in or outside of our state.

- 5) **National Board Certification Scholarships for Teachers.** During the Great Recession, the Utah Legislature removed nearly \$80 million dollars from the State Budget for the purpose of paying for Teacher Professional Development. We currently provide \$0 for Teacher Professional Development. I am proposing that the State establish a new annual \$5 million grant program to pay the cost of reimbursing a teacher to complete the National Board Certification program. This certification is considered nationally as the most rigorous teaching quality certification available. In fact, this certification is considered at the same level of rigor as a Doctorate program for the Education Professional. It is a multi-year certification process focused on ensuring exceptional student achievements through teaching excellence. Under this grant the state would award grants to teachers to reimburse them for the cost of the program, with majority of the grant given to the teacher only upon successful completion. I feel it is critical that we support our teachers with access to meaningful, measurable, on-going professional development such as this grant would do.

- 6) **Update on Daylight Savings.** For those of you following this bill, here is a quick update on the focus of the bill. I have decided that the focus of this bill will be to keep Utah on "Daylight Saving Time" permanently. This means that when we "spring forward" in April of next year, we will remain on that time all year long. We will no longer "fall back" in November. This means that it will be lighter in the evenings and darker in the morning all year long. I believe this is the best of both worlds: no more changing our clocks and maximizing the evening hours for family time and outdoor recreation. That is the direction I will be pursuing. I welcome your additional feedback.

Well that is a quick summary of a few of my more important pieces of legislation. You can see the full list of my public bills at le.utah.gov. Select "Bills" on the left bar and then select "Senator Osmond" to get a report on all the bills I am planning to run. If you have any immediate questions about any of my bills, please feel free to reach out to me via phone or email.

New Legislative Coordinator for Senate 10

I would like to take this time to announce that I have hired Ian Robertson as my new part-time Legislative Coordinator for District 10. This is not a government funded role. I am paying for the cost of this role personally. Ian's role is to ensure timely constituent responses (via phone and email) and to help me manage my schedule to maximize my available time for my Senate duties. Ian is also helping me to management by legislative load, doing researching, and following up on bill progress. He will also be working with me during the upcoming General Session. I am so grateful for his help!

You may reach him at the following contact points:

Ian Robertson

Senate 10 Legislative Coordinator (Senator Osmond)

801-888-8742 (Cell Phone)

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Prior to this role, Ian worked as an intern for the City of Sandy. Please join me in welcoming Ian to this role. He is a fun and energetic individual who is dedicated to helping our state as an involved citizen. Please feel free to reach out to him. He will ensure that I am responding to your requests/questions as needed!

Brief Summary of Recent Interim Meetings

I have decided to focus this section on only those committees that I directly attend or support. On occasion I will share information from other committees that will or could impact us in significant way that I feel you need to know. Otherwise I will limit my comments on those meetings I attend.

The Education Interim Committee

The Education Interim Committee reviewed draft legislation that would create a pilot program that would allow middle and high school students to enroll in college courses and purchase instructional materials at a subsidized rate. While I don't serve on the Education Interim Committee, I do serve on the Standing Committee that will hear these issues and bills during the upcoming General Session in 2015. More details to come soon.

The Economic Development and Workforce Services Committee

I Co-Chair this committee with Rep. Becky Edwards. Our committee had a very large agenda. Among the many items we discussed was the daylight saving time issue. Last session, we passed HB 197, which required the Governor's Office of Economic Development to conduct meetings where the public and businesses could comment on the impacts of changing or exempting Utah from daylight saving time. Then the office would report the results of those meetings to this committee. The results of the meeting comments showed that basically, industries like golf, skiing and tourism are opposed to removing the time change because of economic impact, while the general public feels like it would be a good idea in terms of convenience, health and safety. Here is a link to our discussion. It gives good context to the bill I am referencing above: http://utahlegislature.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=17811&meta_id=525041.

The Education Task Force

I am a member of this Task Force. Our focus during our recent meeting was "How much revenue could be generated from an incremental change in one of the state taxes"? In response to this question, representatives from the Legislative Fiscal Analyst's Office presented a matrix showing estimates for the Income Tax, Property Tax, Sales Tax, and Gas Tax. The incremental tax change and estimated revenue amounts are as follows:

- Income Tax: Increase 1% to 6% - \$585 million
- Property Tax: Increase \$100 per residence & business - \$120 million
- Property Tax: Freeze the Basic Rate at 0.001535 - \$12 million
- Sales Tax: Increase 1% - \$515 million
- Gas Tax: Increase one cent to \$25.5 cents per gallon - \$10 million

Estimates are based on economic indicators and revenue estimates used to build the FY 2015 budget. These estimates will change as the 2015 General Session approaches and economic indicators are updated.

This matrix will be updated in the coming months to include the additional information requested by the Education Task Force as well. Here is the link so you can see what it looks like now: <http://le.utah.gov/interim/2014/pdf/00003869.pdf>.

Departure of Senator John Valentine

Senator John Valentine has been in the Legislature for the past 26 years. He has been an invaluable asset to the state of Utah. I would like to express my deep appreciation to him for the council, guidance, and mentoring that he has given to me personally. I can state unequivocally that Senator Valentine is a true statesman. He is totally committed to the principles of freedom. Senator Valentine has now officially retired his senate seat and accepted his appointment at the Tax Commission. I wish him the very best! His replacement Al Jackson, another fine conservative, will take his place.

- Here are some of Senator Valentine's thoughts on past 26 years of service: http://www.heraldextra.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/legislature/valentine-s-look-back-at-years-in-utah-s-legislature/article_5e675f0d-48ef-5165-9151-6a7b8d16caa8.html.
- And here are some other highlights of his senate career: <http://www.senatesite.com/home/valentine-tax-commission/#more-10888>.

Public Lands

A new poll this month says the majority of Utahans agree that the state should be able to control the land within our boundaries. <http://utahpolicy.com/index.php/features/today-at-utah-policy/3662-exclusive-poll-utahns-support-taking-control-of-federal-lands-in-the-state>. This is very relevant to my bill to assess the value of our state's Public Lands held by the federal government. Remember, these lands do NOT include our State or National Parks.

Charitable Giving

Did you know that Utah came in first in this study on charitable giving. The article has some other interesting observations as well. http://washingtonexaminer.com/guess-which-states-donate-the-most-and-least-to-charity/article/2554490?utm_campaign=Washington%20Examiner:%20Opinion%20Digest&utm_source=Washington%20Examiner:%20Opinion%20Digest%20-%2010/08/14&utm_medium=email.

Important Supreme Court Cases Affecting Utah

While our Amendment 3 "Kitchen V. Herbert" same-sex marriage case will not be heard in the Supreme Court, there are several other cases that the court will hear that will affect our state's laws. Perez v. Mortgage Bankers Association is one case that most states will pay close attention to. The question in this case is whether a federal agency must provide a "notice-and-comment" period before it can make a major change to an agency rule. This is important because federal agencies decisions regulate state and local governments and many times there is not much opportunity to comment on changes to rules and regulations that would have significant impact on our local practices and laws. The ramifications of this case were discussed earlier in the month in our own Commission on Federalism. Utah will be submitting an amicus brief for this case. Here is a link to some of the other cases that the Court will hear if you are interested: <http://www.governing.com/news/headlines/gov-scotus-cases-state-local-government.html>.

Scam Alert – Be Careful

Please be aware of the following scam is targeting Utah citizens. This Deseret News article uncovers a scam acting as the IRS calling to collect phony taxes due: <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865612000/Utahns-losing-thousands-of-dollars-to-phony-IRS-calls.html?pg=all>. Be careful.

Well my friends that is enough for now. I hope you found this information useful. Please feel free to reach out to me or Ian to answer any questions you may have.

I am truly honored to represent you.

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.