

Legislative Update from Senator Aaron Osmond

September & October 2015

Sunday, October 11, 2015

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It has been a very busy 2 months since my last update. I thank you for your patience as I have worked to respond to your emails and calls about various legislative issues. In this newsletter I will cover my stand on the latest proposal for Medicaid Expansion, our recent Legislative Visit to Southern Utah, and details for my upcoming Planning Meeting where I will present my bill files for the 2016 General Legislative Session.

I hope the following information will be useful to you as a brief summary of my work and activities on your behalf as your representative in the State Senate over the last 2 months.

Quarterly Planning Meeting – Coming Up on Saturday, November 14th

Please consider this newsletter my personal invitation for you to you to my Quarterly Planning Meeting. These meetings have a significant influence in how I will conduct my work as your representative during the upcoming 2016 General Legislative Session. Your feedback means a lot to me. I hope you will join me at this meeting.

Here are the Event Details:

Date: **Saturday, November 14th**

Time: 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Place: Daybreak Community Center (4544 Harvest Moon Dr., South Jordan) – Room B

Note: Refreshments will be provided. **Please RSVP so we can plan accordingly.**

Our Agenda:

We will be reviewing the following topics in this meeting:

- My final stand/vote on Medicaid Expansion in Utah
- Review the key bills I plan to propose during the 2016 General Session
- Other items at the request of delegates/citizens attending

Please feel free to invite your neighbors to join us at this meeting as well. I hope to see all you there!

My Bill List for the 2016 General Legislative Session:

If you are interested in learning more about the bills that I am planning to run during the 2016 General Session, I encourage you to the above Planning Meeting in November. You can see a full list of all the Bills that I am currently planning to run using the following link to our Utah Legislative Web Site:

<http://le.utah.gov/asp/billsintro/SenResults.asp?Listbox2=OSMONA>

Over the last 5 years, I have kept a commitment to fully inform my constituents about my legislative plans. Please feel free to reach out to me via email or phone if you would like more details about any of these bills prior to my Planning Meeting on November 14th.

My goal in all my legislative activities is both transparency and accountability. I am working to represent you. I hope you will take the time to learn about what I am doing. This is a partnership that I take very seriously.

Latest Proposal on Medicaid Expansion – Utah Access +

You might remember we could not come to agreement during the 2015 General Session on Medicaid Expansion.

Over the summer a group of key legislative leaders have been meeting on how we might be able to build a “Utah Plan” that will expand Medicaid to cover the so called “doughnut hole” group who are not currently covered under Obamacare through Medicaid.

Their proposal is a challenging balancing act between our desire to support those who truly need help and the necessity of running our state budget in a way that is fiscally responsible, sustainable over the long term, and fair. The new proposal is called “**Utah Access +**”.

The full proposal can be found at our Senate Site: <http://senatesite.com/utahsenate/medicaid-update/>. I encourage all of you to study the details of this plan and become fully informed of the vote I need to make on your behalf.

Those of you that have followed my votes to date on this issue know that I have expressed the following general high-level concerns about Medicaid Expansion:

- 1) Any expansion of Medicaid directly expands the number of individuals receiving government entitlements, thereby expanding the size of government and related cost to tax payers. This is not consistent with fiscally conservative principles nor the Republican platform that we should seek to reduce the size of government.
- 2) A large majority of the cost of this expansion of Medicaid in our state rests on the assumption that the Federal Government will continue to be able to pay for this cost over time. That is a high-risk assumption based on how our Federal Government manages its fiscal matters. I do not believe that we can count on that long-term assumption (even if those funds are just Federal taxes coming right out of the pockets of the citizens of our state).
- 3) There is an assumption that if the Federal Government is unable to continue to cover the cost of Medicaid Expansion in our state that we, as state leaders, will be able to remove or reduce these new entitlement benefits to manage that cost. This is also a high risk assumption that we will have the political capability to remove a benefit from voters who want their elected officials to continue to fund this benefit, even if it requires higher taxes on the people.

- 4) Finally, the concept that a key portion of the cost of this expansion will be placed on the backs of Health Care Providers is concerning to me: First it is another new tax on business, and Second, it is simply a cost that will eventually be passed down to the insurance premium payers anyway (that is you and me).

For these key reason, I continue to struggle to find a way to support the passage of Medicaid expansion in our state. I will continue to research this new plan and remain willing to explore solutions that could meet the need of those individuals who are remain without health care coverage. At this point, based on what I understand, I will not be able to support this new plan.

I do anticipate that the Governor will authorize a Special Legislative Session during our Interim Day on October 21st to discuss and vote on this new plan. Before that time, I would ask for your feedback and thoughts about this proposal and how I should represent you as my constituents in this important decision. **ACTION:** Please email me with your thoughts or text me at aosmond@le.utah.gov or 801-888-8742.

Southern Utah Legislative Visit

As part of my responsibilities as a Legislator, I am expected to vote on issues that affect our rural constituents and rural parts of our state. Rural Utah is a critical part of the unique attraction and economic potential of our state. With 5 national parks and dozens of state parks, our state offers high-interest attractions to tourists who enjoy outdoor adventures. We literally attract thousands of visitors every year and generate over \$7.5 billion a year in direct economic benefit from tourism. In addition, rural Utah holds billions of dollars in economic potential from mining, drilling, and agricultural opportunities. Rural Utah also represents access to one of our most precious assets, and that is fresh water. All of these issues become even more sensitive when trying balance public lands vs private lands and Federal vs Utah management of these lands.

In September, the Legislature took the opportunity to hold our Monthly Interim meetings down in Southern Utah to learn about the issues and opportunities facing rural Utah from the experts who live there. We all packed into buses and drove down through Price, down to Green River, Dead Horse Point State Park, then to Moab, then back up through the San Rafael Reef, Goblin Valley, to Castle Dale, and then up through Ephraim/Manti and then back home to Salt Lake City. As we traveled different locally elected officials got on the buses with us and explained what we were seeing and the issues facing their communities. We also had a chance to stop at these sites and explore the beauty of our great state! Truly we live in a both a unique and special place in our country!

The tour was enormously valuable to me personally. I learned about the unique challenges facing our mining business in the state, how important the coal industry is to consistent electricity, how hard the coal industry is working to keep the air clean, the efforts of oil and gas exploration to extract while preserving the environment, the importance of our tourism economy, and how fast that tourism economy is growing. I also learned about how hard our local county officials are trying to work with both state and federal land management organizations. The challenge of preserving the natural beauty of our state and access to that beauty when bureaucrats from the state and the Feds make it so difficult for them. In some of our rural counties over 80% of the land is owned by the Federal government! It is hard to fund these counties on the state tax dollars they can generate on state lands.

This is just a high level summary of what we did and what I learned over this 2 day tour of our beautiful southern Utah. Unfortunately the news covered this event much more negatively, as if it was a waste of money and time. I was so disappointed to read some of the coverage. If you have any concerns with my participation in this event,

please call me and I will gladly answer any questions you may have about the event, the costs, and its importance in helping me to understanding the issues we address as a legislator each year.

Conclusion

Well, that's enough information for now. I can hardly believe that the Utah General Legislative Session is only 3 months away. This is the time each year when the ramp up in preparation for the session really begins in earnest. I hope that you will be patient with me as I seek to answers your emails and phone calls. My Legislative Coordinator (Ian Robertson) and I will do our very best to get back to you as soon as we can.

Staying Connected

Finally, remember that you can connect with me at the Utah Senate wherever you live on social media by visiting our cloud site at www.senatecloud.com. I am also on Facebook (facebook.com/aaronvosmond) and Twitter ([#avosmond](https://twitter.com/avosmond)).

I can also be reached by email at aosmond@le.utah.gov or by phone at (801) 888-8742. You're also welcome to join me at the Capitol on Interim day. Our next interim day is next week on **Wednesday, October 21st**.

If you'd like to meet with me in person outside of interim or the legislative session, you can reach Ian Robertson, my Legislative Coordinator at irobertsonslc@gmail.com or 801-888-8742, He'll help us get in touch, set up a meeting or answer any question you might have.

Talk to you soon!

Sincerely,
Aaron

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