



# Legislative Update

February 21, 2022

We enjoyed seeing some of you on Tuesday for our Farm Bureau Day on the Hill. Those who were able to attend heard from several of our rural legislators, Congressman Burgess Owens and USU President Noelle Cockett.

With just two weeks of the legislative session left, we are starting to see some urgency by legislators to get their bills prioritized and on committee agendas so they can move through the process before we get to the hard deadline of midnight of March 4. Any bill not passed prior to that time will fail. We are still waiting to hear which funding requests will be funded. We are continuing to work with the Executive Appropriation Committee members to emphasize the importance of several requests to agriculture and rural Utah. We don't expect the final budget to be approved until the final week of the session.

## **A few bills to note for this week:**

**HB 410, Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement** – This bill, sponsored by speaker Brad Wilson, was released on Wednesday and was heard in the House Natural Resource committee on Friday morning. This bill creates the Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Program and allocates \$40 million in grant money to enhance waterflow in the lake and surrounding wetlands, protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat and develop water plans for the lake and its tributaries. Legislators were flown over the Great Salt Lake by the National Guard this week to show the low water level and highlight the need to act now to protect the lake. The bill passed the House Natural Resources Committee on Friday.

**HB 232, Utah Lake Authority** – This bill was originally introduced last year but due to concerns from several organizations including Farm Bureau, it was held and worked on throughout the summer. The bill replaces the Utah Lake Commission with the New Utah Lake Authority. The Utah Lake Authority will have a greater ability to raise money and participate in projects to protect and preserve the lake. We were particularly concerned about protecting existing water rights within the lake system. The bill in its current form is very clear that the authority has no control over water rights; that remains with the State Engineer. The authority will focus on cleaning up and improving the lake for recreation and local economic benefits. The bill passed the full House on Friday and heads to the Senate.

**HB 242, Secondary Water Metering** – This bill will require metering of all pressurized secondary water connections. Several agricultural irrigation companies also provide secondary water to town residents, and this bill will require them to meter those pressurized connections; it does not include the agricultural connections. The Legislature is expected to include \$200 million of ARPA funding to help pay for the cost of these meters. The grant program will pay up to 70% of the cost with the remaining 30% to be paid by the water provider that can be paid by in-kind labor. Data shows that when meters are installed on secondary water systems water use is reduced by as much as 30-35%. The bill has passed the House and has moved to the Senate.

**HB 256, Farm to School Program** – This bill creates the Farm to Fork Commission and tasks them with identifying barriers that prevent local agricultural producers from accessing the school lunch program and providing help to local producers to gain access to school lunch programs. The bill has passed the House and is headed to the Senate.

As always, feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns.

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