



Legislative Update

March 9, 2021

The 2021 session of the Utah Legislature is officially over; both the house and senate concluded their business around 11:00 Friday night. It was an historic session in many ways. The Capitol felt empty most days due to COVID concerns, it was the first time virtual participation was allowed and it will certainly not be the last. By the end of the session, many people had become quite comfortable participating from home, commenting in committee hearings and watching floor debates on their computers.

While we are happy to have completed a very successful session, we want to remind our members that the past seven weeks was just the culmination of a long process. Policy development begins with our members as they surface issues and concerns many months before any bill is debated in the Legislature. Our county Spring Issue Surfacing meetings will soon be happening across the state where new issues will be raised, and the process can begin as we look forward to next year. Farm Bureau has long been respected for our grassroots policy development and the sound, well vetted, policies that it produces. We encourage the participation of all of our members to help make our policy development the best it can be.

Let's look at some of the highlights from this year. Each year the Legislature must pass a balanced state budget, and this year was no different. This year's budget was approximately 23.5 Billion dollars and it included a significant increase in funding for education and nearly 100 million dollars in tax cuts. Agriculture fared very well receiving funding for several important programs including:

- Ag in the Classroom \$150,000 - ongoing
- Agriculture Water Optimization Fund \$3,000,000 - one time
- Veterinary Diagnostics Lab, \$250,000 - ongoing
- See the attached spreadsheet for a more complete list

Farm Bureau tracked 51 bills this year. Some of those we wanted to pass, some we did not. Many of them were amended along the way as groups negotiated and tried to resolve concerns; a bill is never finished until the final signature. Almost all the bills we tracked ended in a good place. Many of you helped by reaching out to your legislators and asking for their help on specific bills, for which we thank you.

This week the legislature passed HCR 21, Concurrent Resolution Recognizing the 100th Year Anniversary of the Department of Agriculture and Food by Rep. Kohler. We helped invite all the living past commissioners of Agriculture to attend the vote and be recognized. Cary Peterson, Leonard Blackham, LuAnn Adams, Kerry Gibson, Logan Wilde, and current Commissioner, Craig Buttars, all attended. It was good to visit with these great men and woman who have served our industry so well. Utah Farm Bureau expressed our appreciation to UDAF for being such a great partner over the past 100 years.

Other notable bills that passed this week include:

- HB 94 Microenterprise Home Kitchens, allows people to use their home kitchen to prepare food for sale under certain conditions. Many people already do this, but now they can do so legally.
- HB 170 Vehicle Registration Amendments, directs the state to send notification when your vehicle registration is about to expire, they had stopped doing this a few months ago.
- HB 404 Utah Immigration Center, creates an office within GOED to help businesses apply for and bring in foreign workers. The immigration process is complicated; hopefully this office can help.
- SB 147 Regulation of Egg-laying Hens, requires all egg producers with more than 3000 hens to be "Cage Free" by 2025. Utah egg producers asked for this bill and are well on their way to being cage free. It is a compromise bill with the animal rights community.

It has been our pleasure to represent agriculture and work with the many good men and women who have been elected to serve their constituents in the legislature. While we don't always agree with each of them,

they are true professionals who serve with dignity and respect for all. Many people play vital roles to ensure that the session is a success. Hundreds of Highway Patrol men and women provided security, legislative staff works countless hours behind the scenes, and the interns somehow keep track of their legislator and get them to the right places as the right time. Regardless of what you may read on social media or in the news, Utah has a political system that works. Washington could learn a lot from Utah.

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

Ron Gibson, President, Utah Farm Bureau Federation



2021 Budget Approved Funding		Ongoing	One time
Economic Development			
HB 356	Rural Economic Development Tax Increment Financing	280,000	50,000
Heritage and Arts			
	Farm Country at Thanksgiving Point		200,000
Agriculture			
	Agricultural Water Optimization Fund		3,000,000
	Grazing Improvement Program		1,000,000
	Invasive Species Mitigation Account Project Funding		1,000,000
	Predator Control Vehicles		90,000
	Project Wool Tax Revenue Short Fall		122,500
	Utah Veterinarian Diagnostics Lab	250,000	250,000
	Watershed Restoration Fund to Rangeland Improvements	2,000,000	
	Food Hub		112,500
	Pollinator Amendments	70,000	210,000
HB 296	Soil health Amendments	190,500	28,400
	State Fair operation Support		\$200,000
Higher Education			
	Agriculture in the Classroom	150,000	

Environmental Quality			
	Agriculture Voluntary Incentive Program		2,000,000
SB 199	Water Amendments (Secondary Metering)	2,000,000	
Natural Resources			
	Great Salt Lake Ground Water Studies		750,000
	Monroe Mountain Data Gathering		400,000
	Utah Lake Authority		9,800,000
Public Land Policy Coordinating Office			
	Integrated Water Planning and Land Use Planning		270,000
	Amending State and County Resource Management Plans		500,000
	Protection of Utah Natural Resource and Public lands		5,000,000