



Legislative Update

January 24, 2022

This week kicked off the 2022 Legislative Session and they wasted no time getting to work. On Tuesday, the Senate voted to overturn county mask mandates and on Friday morning the House similarly approved the measure effectively ending mask mandates statewide. We have already seen more visitors to the Capitol this year than last with many school groups visiting. Legislators love talking to school groups and welcoming visitors.

Thursday evening Governor Spencer Cox delivered his annual State of the State Address. One of the issues he discussed was water, saying, *"This past year was one of the driest on record, with 98% of the state experiencing extreme drought conditions. Utahns stepped up in a big way, conserving billions of gallons of water to help us through this crisis. Tonight, I encourage you to vote for bills carried by Reps. Robert Spendlove and Ray Ward to prioritize water storage and dramatically improve water conservation in our state."* He went on to say to Speaker Brad Wilson, *"I am 100% committed to helping you accomplish your vision of saving the Great Salt Lake."*

As always, Farm Bureau is very involved in the water discussions that are taking place this year. Friday morning President Ron Gibson reported to the Rural Caucus on the work of the Water Optimization Task Force and the need for continued investment and focus on preserving Utah's precious water resource. UDAF has already received \$20 million of ARPA funding for water optimization projects and they are requesting an additional \$50 million.

Also in the Rural Caucus on Friday, Dr. Ken White, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences at USU, presented about the proposal for a veterinary school at USU. This is big financial request that will produce huge benefits to all of Utah. It is no secret that animal agriculture needs access to veterinarians. With livestock making up approximately 70% of Utah agriculture, accounting for \$1.28 billion annually, this is a critically important issue for Utah Agriculture. Utah is currently ranked 42nd in the nation for per capita veterinarians. With the state's rapid population growth this will only get worse if we don't act now. I will attach a flyer produced by USU with additional information about this request. We would ask that you reach out to your representative and ask them to support the new veterinary school and help them understand the importance of this to Utah agriculture.

One bill we have been working on is SB 68, Trespass Penalty Amendments by Senator Sandall. This bill increases the penalty for trespassing on private lands and adjusts the amount that can be assessed for civil damages when a person is convicted of trespass on private property. The bill passed the Senate Natural Resource Committee and now moves to the full Senate.

For a full list of bills that we are following, [click here](#). This list is updated weekly as bills get introduced. As always, feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns. We look forward to seeing many of you in St. George this weekend at the Western Leadership Conference.

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