



Legislative Update

January 18, 2022

John Adams once said, “The way to secure liberty is to place it in the people’s hands, that is, to give them the power at all times to defend it in the legislature and in the courts of justice.” With this in mind, it is once again time for the Utah legislature to meet for the annual 45-day session. The session will begin Tuesday, January 18 and will conclude March 4. We encourage our members to reach out to your legislators and thank them for their willingness to serve in this important role. Let them know you are paying attention and are willing to engage on issues that are important to you.

The beginning of the session is not the beginning of the legislative process, legislators have been working for months on various bills and issues. Many bills have been discussed in interim committee meetings and with numerous stakeholder groups in preparation for the upcoming session. For example, a typical water related bill has already been discussed over the past several months in the Utah Water Task Force, Legislative Water Development commission and the Interim Natural Resource Committee. The session, in a sense, is the culmination of months of work, and Farm Bureau has been in the middle of that work.

We expect this to be a busy session for agriculture. Considering the current drought, water has been on everyone’s mind. Two weeks ago, the Speaker of the House, Rep. Brad Wilson hosted a summit to discuss the Great Salt Lake and how to deal with the current historic low water level. Similarly, last week legislators in Utah county hosted a summit addressing issues at Utah Lake. Also, last week the Governor released [Utah’s Coordinated Action Plan for Water](#). The goal of this plan is to “establish a statewide water cooperative action plan that prioritizes conservation, storage, agriculture preservation, and use optimization.” The plan represents months of work by several state agencies. There are currently nine water bills that have been released, and we expect eight to ten more to be released in the coming days. These bills address many aspects of water management from conservation to optimizing water use to how the state engineer processes change applications. We have been and will continue to be engaged in discussions on all these bills to make sure they align with Farm Bureau policy. Along with these water bills, it is expected that the legislature will make historic investments in water infrastructure and optimizations efforts, largely funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Other issues we are watching include: Trespass, Brand inspection, Animal welfare, Wildlife depredation, and more.

We will also be engaging on several funding issues that affect agriculture including:

- \$18 million ongoing and \$70 million one-time – Four-year Veterinary School at USU
- \$107 million – Water optimization
- \$3 million – Agriculture infrastructure
- \$50 million – Rural broadband
- \$100 million – Sewer upgrades

Even with all the craziness of the ongoing COVID pandemic, we expect it to be business as usual at

the Capitol. Meetings will be in person with a virtual option for those who for whatever reason cannot attend in-person but wish to participate. We expect most legislators to be at the Capitol in person every day. Last year was the first year that both legislators and members of the public could participate virtually and the system seemed to work very well. If you are interested in a particular bill and want to express your thoughts and/or concerns, you can now simply log onto the committee meeting, hear the discussion and at the appropriate time speak to the committee. This makes it possible to participate without having to commit a full day of travel to the Capitol. We do welcome in person visits; legislators always enjoy seeing their constituents. Farm Bureau plans to have a presence at the Capitol every day of the session and is planning a Farm Bureau 'Day on the Hill' for February 15.

Bills are being released every day and will continue to be released throughout the session. We will post a list of bills that we are tracking on our website at utahfarmbureau.org and will update that list weekly. We will also be sending out weekly email updates and video updates on Facebook.

Please feel free to reach out to your Farm Bureau policy team with questions about specific issues or concerns.

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