



Legislative Update

January 28, 2026

Week One (January 20–23, 2026)

The 2026 General Session began last Tuesday. In just one week, lawmakers introduced over 600 bills and resolutions, a sign that this year's policy discussions will be as busy as ever. Appropriations subcommittees convened throughout the week, hearing presentations from state agencies, universities, and other organizations while beginning to evaluate requests for funding. These first weeks of the session lay the foundation for the final appropriations decisions that will shape Utah's next budget year.

Appropriations Hearings

On Friday, January 23, Utah Farm Bureau Vice President Tyson Roberts and Vice President of Public Policy Terry Camp appeared before the Economic and Community Development Appropriations Subcommittee to testify in support of a request for appropriations sponsored by [Rep. Carl Albrecht](#) for the Utah State University [E-Commerce Accelerator](#). The Accelerator program helps small businesses, especially those in rural and agricultural communities, build and expand their online presence through hands-on technical assistance and digital marketing support. To date, the program has achieved:

- 50 total completions
- 39 agricultural completions
- 36 active sites producing revenue
- Over \$1 million in new revenue generated (\$1,086,826)
- 88 participants are currently queued for training

These outcomes highlight the program's real-world benefits for Utah's rural economy, helping producers and entrepreneurs alike connect directly with consumers and grow their operations sustainably. You can learn more about the program [here](#). You can watch Tyson and Terry's testimony by clicking [here](#).



L to R: Rep. Carl Albrecht, Dr. Paul Hill, Jacob Webb, and Tyson Roberts.

Supporting Water Law Improvements

On Friday afternoon, Utah Farm Bureau testified before the House Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee in support of [H.B. 60, Water Rights Amendments](#), sponsored by [Rep. David Shallenberger](#). The bill modernizes Utah's water code to improve consistency, clarity, and efficiency in water rights administration. It removes outdated language conflicting with Utah's prior appropriation doctrine - "first in time, first in right" - and refines the protest process so the State Engineer focuses on technical water-rights issues rather than broader policy questions.

H.B. 60 also cleans up redundant provisions, clarifies publication requirements for temporary change applications, and allows applicants denied a temporary change to seek permanent or fixed-time approvals. Its most significant reform clarifies the "public welfare" standard by tying it to beneficial use and impacts on other waters of the state, while acknowledging that other agencies often have responsibilities to address broader public welfare concerns. The bill also narrows judicial review to parties who suffer a particularized injury, focusing appeals on truly affected individuals.

Altogether, H.B. 60 strengthens Utah's water management framework by keeping the State Engineer's role to the technical capabilities of its office, streamlining processes, and providing greater certainty for water users statewide.

Utah Farm Bureau also supported [H.B. 63, Livestock Watering Amendments](#), sponsored by [Rep. Scott Chew](#). The bill creates a process for formally recognizing sub-basin livestock watering claims to document historic livestock watering uses within defined sub-drainage areas and simplifies water rights management for grazers who opt into a program of sub-basin water rights management. It defines key terms such as "livestock," "small pond" (up to two acre-feet), and "large pond" (over two acre-feet).

Water right holders may file sub-basin livestock watering claims with the State Engineer as diligence claims, water user claims in a general adjudication, or change applications. Claims must identify the sub-drainage area, are subject to forfeiture for nonuse, and must be based on historic use on private land or public land with a valid grazing permit. The bill restricts expanding beneficial use, limits water depletion to the historic levels, and prohibits moving water between sub-basins if it impairs existing rights. It also gives guidance on pond construction. Small ponds may be built without a change application, while large ponds require approval and must meet dam safety standards.



Photo Credit: Sen. Mike McKell

North Capitol Building Update

The new North Capitol Building opened recently, marking a major milestone for Utah's Capitol Hill. The North Building adds expanded office space, a new conference center, secure storage for Utah's art and historical artifacts, and more than 315 additional public parking stalls to better welcome visitors from across the state. A new Museum of Utah will be opening this summer. As we noted in our Friday video update, one of the most striking features of the building is the beautiful stained-glass laylight overhead, titled "Rooted in Utah," a 25-by-25-foot installation created by Lehi's Holdman Studios that includes 89 glass panels and 14,000 individual pieces of glass depicting Utah's diverse landscapes, plants, animals, and symbols. The laylight took over 10,000 hours of labor to complete. We hope you can see it for yourself soon.



Photo Credit: Holdman Studios

U.S. Congress Update

In national news, Utah Congresswoman Celeste Maloy (UT-02) was recently elected to chair the Congressional Western Caucus, an important leadership position that gives Utah and the Intermountain West a stronger voice on critical issues such as water, land management, and rural economic development. Her appointment ensures that Western priorities, including those affecting agriculture and natural resources issues in Utah, remain prominent in national policy discussions. You can read more about her election [here](#).

Looking Ahead - Policy Resources and Day on the Hill

As the session continues, remember that you can follow priority legislation through the Utah Farm Bureau Legislative Tracker, available under the [“Policy & Action”](#) tab on our website. The 2026 Policy Book is also now online, and you can read it by clicking [here](#).

Finally, we hope you will join us this **Friday, January 30**, for our annual Day on the Hill. This is your opportunity to meet directly with legislators, attend committee meetings, and be part of the grassroots advocacy that defines Farm Bureau. You can find more information on Day on the Hill, including contact information to schedule a meeting with your legislator, [here](#).



DAY ON THE HILL EVENT SCHEDULE

FRIDAY JANUARY 30, 2026

7:00 AM – 8:00 AM Rural Caucus Meeting & Breakfast *Optional

8:30 AM – 10:00 AM We Are Utah Ag in the Rotunda – UFBF and other ag groups and industry partners will have tables set up in the rotunda showcasing Utah agriculture.

8:30 AM Small continental breakfast will be served in the rotunda. It will be a first come first serve breakfast until it is gone. Legislators will be invited to participate.

10:05 AM – 11:05 AM Capitol Board Room: UFBF legislative happenings and visits and discussions from legislators.

11:15 AM Group photo outside of Capitol on south steps with tractor.

11:20 AM – 12:00 PM Time for tours, visiting the gallery, or setting up time on your own to meet with your legislators.

As always, we encourage you to actively send our policy team questions or comments on topics of concern.

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