

February 18, 2025

We hope everyone had a wonderful President's Day holiday (or Washington's Birthday). Last week, we passed the halfway mark of the 2025 General Session. It is nice to be past the halfway point, but legislative hearings now start to pick up as the appropriations process nears conclusion. Legislative hearings will take place in the morning and the afternoon for the final few weeks.

On **Monday**, February 10, Utah Farm Bureau Federation (UFBF) Vice President Tyson Roberts testified in support of [H.B. 194 Beekeeping and Veterinary Amendments](#) sponsored by [Rep. Ariel Defay](#) and [Sen. Scott Sandall](#). This bill addresses the growing challenge of American and European Foulbrood, which has affected nearly 50 bee colonies in Utah over the past two years. By modifying the veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) requirements, H.B. 194 allows a Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) veterinarian to establish a VCPR with a registered beekeeper when issuing a veterinary feed directive, provided the apiary is inspected by a county bee inspector or a UDAF inspector working with the veterinarian. This will facilitate beekeepers' access to necessary antibiotics for treating Foulbrood. Foulbrood can decimate hives if left untreated, forcing beekeepers to burn or bury the infected colonies. This change is crucial because, since 2015, FDA regulations require a veterinary feed directive for all animal antibiotics added to feed, and establishing a traditional VCPR with a veterinarian coming to the property can be difficult for beekeepers. You can re-watch the hearing [here](#).



Vice President Tyson Roberts Testifying on H.B. 194

UFBF also testified in support of two bills before the Senate Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee. The first was [H.B. 46, Water Rights Application Amendments](#), sponsored by [Rep. Doug Owens](#) and [Sen. Evan Vickers](#). H.B. 46 addresses and streamlines the process for handling requests to reinstate lapsed water rights applications. The bill provides a 60-day window after notice of lapse during which applicants can request reinstatement and a time extension. It specifies that the state engineer will change the priority date of a reinstated application to the date the reinstatement request was

filed unless there is a showing of a mistake by the state engineer or fraud. These changes benefit both water users and the state engineer's office.

Additionally, UFBF testified in support of [H.B. 47, Public Lands Watering Rights Amendments](#), sponsored by [Rep. Carl Albrecht](#). This bill enhances safeguards for ranchers by establishing strict criteria for federal agencies' claims to Public Water Reserve No. 107 and requiring agencies to obtain written consent from beneficial users before filing change applications. By removing processes from the 2014 statute that were misused by federal agencies, this bill provides grazers greater control over changes to their livestock watering rights. You can re-watch the hearing [here](#).

On **Wednesday**, Feb. 12, the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations voted on its appropriations priorities. Sen. Owens' request for new ongoing funding for the Utah FFA Association ranked **2nd** out of 16, and Rep. Owens' request for new ongoing funding for a USU faculty ag teacher mentor ranked **13th** of 16. The Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee will present its report to the Executive Appropriations Committee this Wednesday, February 19. The UFBF policy team will be working closely with the Executive Appropriations Committee to secure funding for both of our priorities. You can view the full voting results by clicking [here](#).

On Thursday, the policy team testified before the Senate Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee on two bills we supported during the House Committee process. The first was [H.B. 89, Water Transfer Amendments](#), sponsored by [Rep. Gay Lynn Bennion](#) and [Sen. Scott Sandall](#). This bill amends Utah's probate code to address issues surrounding the transfer of water company shares through the small estate affidavit procedure. The bill explicitly prohibits the transfer of water shares via this simplified process, which was previously available for transfer of shares in estates valued under \$100,000. This change comes in response to complications arising from valuation discrepancies, appraisal challenges, legal threats to companies, and potential abuse of the system. By mandating that all estates involving water shares be administered through the formal probate process, regardless of their value, the legislation aims to ensure proper legal oversight for these valuable assets, protect companies from legal challenges, and provide a more comprehensive framework for resolving ownership disputes.

Second, we again supported [H.B.94, Exemptions from Dangerous Weapons Provisions](#) sponsored by [Rep. Calvin Roberts](#) (HD-46 Salt Lake). This bill clarifies laws on firearm use for harvesting livestock by UDAF-licensed and inspected custom slaughter businesses, thereby addressing challenges arising from urban encroachment into agricultural areas where these processing facilities have been operating. Custom slaughterhouses support local agriculture, reduce transportation costs for livestock, and provide consumers with access to locally raised meat. You can re-watch the hearing by clicking [here](#).

On Friday, UFBF testified before the House Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee on [H.B. 346, Department of Agriculture and Food Amendments](#), sponsored by [Rep. Doug Welton](#). The bill mandates that an accountant annually review any department account containing proceeds from marketing orders, replacing the previous requirement for a full audit. This bill eases the financial oversight burden on Utah fruit and sheep marketing boards by requiring an annual "review" of their accounts instead of an unnecessary and costly "audit". You can re-watch the hearing by clicking [here](#).

We look forward to seeing many of you this upcoming Friday, February 21, for our annual UFBF Day on the Hill. We have a great day of programming prepared for you and we hope you will join us as we celebrate the contributions of Utah Agriculture. More information on our Day on the Hill can be found [here](#).

As always, we encourage you to actively send our policy team questions or comments on topics of concern. Our 2025 Utah Farm Bureau Federation Policy Book is now online and can be found [here](#). Printed copies of the policy book will be distributed to County Farm Bureau leaders in the coming weeks. We also encourage you to visit our website where you can view our [bill tracker](#).

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