



2024 NOVEMBER INTERIM

Nov. 20-21, 2024

UAC is the advocate for all 29 Utah counties. If you have questions about legislative action, please reach out to the legislative team or visit utahcounties.org.

[Economic Development and Workforce Services](#)

Sen. Harper presented two pieces of draft legislation on housing. [First Home Investment Zone Amendments](#) changes aim to enhance housing affordability, encourage home ownership, and ensure long-term compliance in first home investment zones.

[Housing and Transit Reinvestment Zone Amendments](#) includes changes to simplify the criteria for affordable housing and clarify income thresholds, focusing on county-specific standards. By limiting the triggering of tax increment collections, the bill provides a more predictable framework for municipalities and transit authorities. Finally, the bill allows reduced density requirements in certain transit zones to accommodate regional planning needs while maintaining overall goals for housing availability.



Government Operations

Rep. Thurston presented draft legislation to [change ballot information retention and restrictions](#). Videos of ballot processing would be made available via GRAMA to the public, and other information such as scanned ballots, the election database, and the cast vote record may be made available to government entities.

Ricky Hatch testified that this bill originated from a county clerk who wanted access to envelope copies in perpetuities and that Rep. Thurston had thoughtfully expanded the scope of the bill. He also testified that there would be a large direct cost to all but five counties in the form of scanners, and increased costs for all counties to store large amounts of data permanently. Ricky noted that some accommodations would need to be made to ensure secret ballots in small precincts. Most clerks do not feel that they need access to the cast vote record after the election concludes.

Ryan Cowley noted that a simplified version of this bill could narrowly define available material and make that information public. He notes that individuals listed in this bill have access to this information already.

Rep. Thurston concluded that the clerks refuse to acknowledge that other people have questions and that he was unable to conduct his own research with available information. The committee failed to recommend the bill favorably.

Rep. Thurston also presented a drop box amendment bill that would prohibit the state from counting ballots received after the polls closed, and eliminate postmark requirements. The bill would also require 95% of a county's population to be within a one-hour drive of a drop box. Brian McKenzie noted that the postmark timing is a policy decision, and provided information about Davis County's final ballots to help legislators decide. The committee failed to recommend the bill favorably.



Health and Human Services

Rep. Daily-Provost presented draft legislation for [Criminal Justice and Mental Health Coordination Amendments](#). This bill requires local mental health authorities to designate an individual responsible for providing consultation, education, and information services concerning guardianship and conservatorship options for individuals experiencing mental health crises so that their families can be more proactive in helping them. It also creates a Crisis Response Task Force to improve outcomes for individuals experiencing mental health crises who interact with the criminal justice system. The task force will have a representative from the Utah Association of Counties and the Utah Sheriffs' Association. This committee bill passed out with a favorable recommendation.

Rep. Eliason presented draft legislation [Correctional Health Amendments](#). Now that the health responsibilities for the prison have been transferred from the Department of Corrections (Corrections) to the Department of Health and Human Services, this bill focuses on providing more comprehensive healthcare for inmates. The bill defines an inmate under this section as "an individual who is committed to the custody of Corrections and housed at a correctional facility or at a county jail at the request of Corrections," so county jails will have to make allowances for the services provided. These services include substance use disorder treatment, an electronic health record system, etc. This bill also allows the Board of Pardons and Parole to appoint a designated examiner and to consider their reports when considering when and under what conditions an offender may be paroled and allows the Board to require assisted outpatient treatment as a condition of parole. This passed out as a committee bill with a favorable recommendation.

OLRGC have been working on a series of audits concerning the public behavioral health system. [The first has to do with governance of the system](#), and says that there should be a stronger central authority for the behavioral health system. However, the Utah Behavioral Health Commission created last Session has just started to meet and may be the solution to that problem. The system also needs an action plan for reform, although again, the Utah Behavioral Health System is beginning to make its recommendations. Lastly, the audit suggests that the Office of Substance Use and Mental Health (OSUMH) should provide more oversight over the Local Mental Health Authorities. The Utah Behavioral Healthcare Committee and OSUMH both submitted responses to this audit which are included at the end of the document and outline concrete plans for improvement.

Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

Rep. Ryan Wilcox presented his School Safety Amendments which significantly enhances Utah's school safety framework by tightening training, assessment, and compliance requirements while promoting partnerships with nonprofit foundations to support safety improvements.



<p><u>Legislative Water Development Commission</u></p>	<p>Candice Hasanyager, Division of Water Resources, presented a report on use of property tax to fund water infrastructure, treatment, and delivery. The report found that while the cost of water is low in Utah, other states use the same financing structure.</p>
<p><u>Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment</u></p>	<p>Dick Garlish, President, Rocky Mountain Power, presented Rocky Mountain Power’s preliminary plan to separate from PacifiCorp to the committee. Rocky Mountain would like to discuss how to separate Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah from the Pacific states, but it would require high-level discussions with his boss, political leaders in those states, and shareholders of their parent company. Legislators expressed their frustration with Rocky Mountain for not having a better resolution for a potential split. More pressure from the legislature on Rocky Mountain is likely to follow.</p> <p>Candice Hasanyager, Division of Water Resources, presented draft legislation State Water Policy Amendments which expands the focus on groundwater quality and watershed protection and encourages tailored water reuse strategies to adapt to regional needs. It also prioritizes statewide planning without explicitly balancing competing social and economic values.</p>
<p><u>Political Subdivisions</u></p>	<p>Rep. Musselman presented draft legislation regarding boundary line amendments intended to clarify definitions between “boundary establishments” and “boundary adjustments.” It also aims to simplify the process wherein a property owner can clarify parcel or lot boundaries within a subdivision. Rep. Musselman shared that additional amendments to the bill would not be substantive.</p> <p>Johnnie Miller, UCIP, presented draft legislation to address public official bonds that would eliminate the requirement for public officials to have a bond, and retain the requirement for public officials to have crime insurance. No known entities are willing to issue bonds, so officials in Utah only have crime insurance. Currently, significant staff time is spent addressing GRAMA requests for these bonds.</p>



<p><u>Revenue and Taxation</u></p>	<p>Sen. Fillmore presented draft legislation to impose the restaurant tax on prepared food sold in grocery stores. LFA loosely estimates that closing this gap would generate an additional \$1 million in county revenue. The bill does not include prepared food sold at convenience stores. Sen. Bramble suggested that it would be appropriate to include restaurants located inside gas stations. Rep. Thurston suggested that the restaurant tax may have outlived its usefulness and should be eliminated.</p> <p>Melva Sine, Utah Restaurant Association, commented that while they support the elimination of the restaurant tax, she recognizes that that is likely not feasible due to impact to counties. She argued that this bill addresses a fair market competition issue and that it's time to address fairness.</p> <p>Dave Davis, Utah Retailers Association, notes that the complexity issue is a real one, and that this would add a third tax rate for a grocery store to manage.</p> <p>Billy Hesterman, Utah Taxpayers Association, spoke in favor of the bill, noting that entities are already managing different tax rates, and doing it well.</p> <p>Rep. Dailey-Provost motioned for the bill to be a committee bill, noting the competitive advantage that current statute creates. Rep. Eliason substituted a motion to move to the next agenda item. Sen. Fillmore agreed, and noted that it would be released early and looks forward to the conversation.</p>
<p><u>Transportation</u></p>	<p>Rep. Ken Ivory presented draft legislation Unsecured Load Amendments. The bill establishes the Rural Transportation Infrastructure Fund and Litter Abatement Fund. It also increases and redistributes vehicle registration fees while adding a landfill fee for unsecured loads. The bill enhances fines and criminal classifications for unsecured loads and littering. It also introduces reporting obligations for landfills and courts while mandates UDOT execute a campaign to educate the public on waste and load security.</p>



