



2024 MAY INTERIM

May 15, 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 uacnet.org. November is the last interim meeting of the year.

<p><u>Business, Economic Development, and Labor Appropriations Subcommittee</u></p>	<p>Business, Economic Development, and Labor Appropriations Subcommittee met to address their statutory accountable budget process requirements and to hear a presentation on the property tax audit. After the presentation, legislators asked the Tax Commission if addressing the audit’s recommendations would require statutory adjustments. The Tax Commission responded that statutory changes will need to be made.</p>
<p><u>Federalism Commission</u></p>	<p>The Federalism Commission met to discuss public land management issues, including concerns over the inclusion of conservation as a use under the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA), which would allow BLM to lease land to conservation groups and could impact grazing leases and other uses. Additionally, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), could further restrict land use, particularly affecting oil and gas development in regions like Rock Springs.</p>
<p><u>Economic Development and Workforce Services</u></p>	<p>Economic Development and Workforce Services heard an economic development update from the Gardner Policy Institute.</p> <p>The Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity (GOEO) discussed Utah’s entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem, including the Startup State Initiative, Utah Innovation Center and Fund, and the Manufacturing Modernization Grant.</p> <p>Committee members raised several critical concerns during the meeting including the effectiveness of economic incentives and the need for regulatory reforms to address housing supply issues. They also discussed the importance of targeted investments in critical supply chain sectors to ensure Utah’s economic resilience.</p>



<p><u>Government Operations</u></p>	<p>Government Operations recommended a bill to allow election officers in Southern Utah to mail ballots directly from their federally assigned processing center in Las Vegas rather than routing ballots through Salt Lake before arrival in Las Vegas. This bill would save approximately two days of time before voters receive their ballots. Brian McKenzie represented county clerks in the discussions.</p> <p>The committee discussed Rep. Peterson’s bill to require contact information (including a name, email, and phone number) to be published for every function of a government entity. The committee did not take action, but encouraged Rep. Peterson to seek a solution without legislation.</p>
<p><u>Judiciary</u></p>	<p>Judiciary discussed amendments to bail and pretrial release legislation, specifically HB474, Criminal Justice Changes (C. Jack). The bill criminalized violations of pretrial release orders.</p> <p>Jonathan Adams, Policy Analyst, provided an overview of the pretrial release process in Utah, explaining the conditions under which judges set bail and the different types of bail available, including cash bail, unsecured bonds, and commercial surety.</p> <p>Rep. Colin Jack, Washington County Attorney Eric Clarke, and Washington County Sheriff Nate Brooksby, shared their perspectives on the challenges and issues with the current pretrial release system. Challenges presented included inconsistency in bail amounts for serious offenses, inefficiency in releasing individuals on their own recognizance, and the need for more tools to ensure compliance with pretrial release conditions. The committee did not take any immediate action.</p>
<p><u>Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice</u></p>	<p>Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice heard a presentation from the Utah Department of Corrections regarding the department’s efforts to create opportunities for inmates to improve their lives, address drug possession and use in correctional facilities, and implement intelligence-led policing within the department. Committee members were impressed by inmates transformational changes, as well as the shift from an “us versus them” mentality to a more collaborative and supportive environment.</p> <p>The Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) presented on recidivism trends. The recidivism rate in Utah is performing better than the national average.</p>



<p><u>Legislative Water Development Commission</u></p>	<p>Legislative Water Development Commission heard a presentation from Amy Haas, Colorado River Authority on the Authority’s progress over the past three years, including implementation of a five-year management plan.</p> <p>The meeting included discussions on the challenges of balancing water use, managing reservoirs like Lake Powell and Lake Mead, and addressing the lower basin’s increasing water demands. Committee members asked questions about the impact of tribal water rights on existing users, the effectiveness of conservation measures, and the implications of federal funding for long-term water management projects.</p>
<p><u>Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment</u></p>	<p>Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment heard a special session from Rep. Brooks to consolidate funds from various sources into one account, renamed from the Public Lands Litigation Restricted Account to the Federal Overreach Account. The bill also includes provisions for an education campaign to inform the public about land management and federal overreach issues. The bill was passed and signed by the governor.</p> <p>Terry Camp, Utah Farm Bureau Federation and Jeremy Christensen, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, highlighted the need for ongoing funding to leverage federal programs that support agricultural land conservation.</p>
<p><u>Organized Crime Task Force</u></p>	<p>Organized Crime Task Force is a new format being trialled to gather information and learn from experts, rather than make immediate legislative decisions. The meeting included detailed discussions on the tactics used by cartels and the impact of organized crime on Utah communities.</p> <p>Congresswoman Maloy discussed her experiences dealing with organized crime, explaining that organized crime groups, often not based in Utah, commit crimes in the state as they transit through, making it difficult to root out these issues locally. Sheriff Arbon, Weber County Sheriff called for better enforcement of existing laws and creation of new state-level laws to combat these issues.</p> <p>The subcommittee discussed the role of federal policies and the need for better coordination between state and federal governments to address border-related organized crime.</p>



<p><u>Political Subdivisions</u></p>	<p>Political Subdivisions had a discussion on incorporations led by Rep. Dunnigan. The committee decided to open a bill file to address the incorporation process and form an informal working group to develop recommendations. Representative Kyle emphasized the emotional nature of the issue for his constituents in Ogden Valley and the importance of creating a process that works statewide.</p> <p>The committee discussed recodification of Title 17, with Mike Curtis from the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel proposing a phased approach to overhaul the structure and organization of the Utah Code related to county provisions. The committee agreed to open a bill file and form a working group to begin this long-term project.</p> <p>The committee reviewed recommendations from a recent audit on housing policy, and formed a working group to collaborate with the Commission on Housing Affordability and other stakeholders to address these recommendations.</p>
<p><u>Public Utilities, Energy, and Technology</u></p>	<p>Public Utilities, Energy, and Technology heard a presentation on recent federal reforms, including the Fiscal Responsibility Act, and the Coordinated Interagency Transmission Authorization and Permitting (CITAP) program by the Department of Energy. Committee members expressed concerns about the effectiveness of new reforms and the potential for increased litigation.</p> <p>Thom Carter from Rocky Mountain Power provided an overview of wild-fire operational procedures, including the success of Utah’s legislation which has been praised as a national model. Logan Shumway, Energy Fuels, provided an update on efforts to produce rare earth elements at White Mesa Mill, including challenges posed by reliance on China.</p> <p>Committee members, including Rep. Jack and Sen. Owens, raised concerns about the impact of transmission line shutoffs on communities, particularly in southern Utah, and the need for improved communication and planning.</p>
<p><u>Revenue and Taxation</u></p>	<p>Revenue and Taxation heard presentations previously scheduled for last month, including the property tax audit, centrally assessed property, and the transient room tax.</p> <p>Staff highlighted the workgroup that has been meeting with Sen. McCay to generate solutions related to our biggest centrally assessed property challenges.</p>



<p><u>School Security Task Force</u></p>	<p>School Security Task Force heard an overview of recent legislation including HB84, School Safety Amendments (R. Wilcox), an update on the Utah School Security Conference held at Riverton High School, and progress on the state’s school security efforts.</p> <p>Chief Matt Pennington, State Security Chief at the Department of Public Safety, reported that the State Security Division has been working to hire regional representatives. The state emphasized need for a cultural shift to prioritize safety in Utah’s schools.</p> <p>The task force agreed on the importance of timely needs assessments to qualify for grant funding and emphasized ongoing collaboration between stakeholders to implement effective security measures.</p>
<p><u>Transportation</u></p>	<p>Taylor Jensen, Do Better Utah, presented to the Transportation Interim Committee on the significant litter problem on Utah’s highways. UDOT responded, discussing their current strategies for litter removal and the challenges they face. They noted that budget cuts reduced resources, and proposed restoration of \$1.8 million to UDOT’s budget.</p>

