

# For Utah

## 2024 Opening Day Speech

Speaker Mike Schultz

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You know, when I was a kid, my dad had a quote hanging on a big poster above his mirror. In big, handwritten letters it read, “Don’t give up something you want most for something you want now.” Now, I can’t tell you how many times I’ve looked back at that quote throughout my life.

It’s easy to play the short game. It’s easy to lose sight of the end goal. It’s easy to want instant gratification. Representatives, we are not here to take the easy way out - that’s the way they do it in Washington, D.C. and in many other states across the country.

The next 45 days will be filled with debate and decision, and with that comes contention, discouragement, and some frustration. Let’s not give up something we want most for something we want now. Let’s think big, act boldly, and secure a bright future for Utah. Our constituents, our kids, and our grandkids expect and deserve nothing less.

The 75 of us represent every citizen of this state. We all have distinct and equally important motivations for being here. The reality of politics is that some issues will win the day more than others, but every person giving service is valued in this body. But *why* are you serving? Why is it worth being away from work, family, and the most important things in your life for the next 45 days?

A couple of days ago, I asked each of you to write your “why.” Will you please stand up for a moment and hold up the cards that represent the reasons why you are here. Whatever your reason may be, I want to thank you for representing all the varied parts and people in this great state. And I commit to each of you that I will do my best as Speaker to make sure your issues are heard.

So, this is my first session as Speaker of the House. I keep hearing people saying they’re nervous for me to be the Speaker – and they should be. This isn’t going to be business as usual. Some of you may like that. Some of you may hate it. And I’m okay with that.

So to my colleagues, special interest groups, and the entire political ecosystem, here’s what you can expect: The people of Utah will come first. I will always be straightforward; I’m not going to say one thing to your face; and something different when you leave. I promise you that I will fight for the little guy and gal, for the everyday Utahn. I promise you that you will never need to question where I stand or what I believe. I won’t shy away from making hard decisions. I will not make decisions based on fear. And I promise that I will not give up something I want most

for something I want now.

My philosophy is that right now Utah needs bold leaders. Utah needs leaders who aren't afraid to go against the status quo. Utah needs leaders who are willing to play the long game. We need leaders who will be accountable for their decisions no matter what anyone in the press or on social media is saying. I promise you that I will work harder than anybody else to make sure we are successful.

My sign says Ronald Schultz. Let me explain what that means to me. I'm a fourth-generation Weber County guy and the grandson of Ronald Schultz. And many stories can be told of what a hard-ass my grandpa was. But from as young as I can remember, he talked about being of service, but more importantly, he did the work of public and community service. Just one example: He was on the West Haven City council for 18 years before he died. In fact, he helped West Haven incorporate and become a city. He never put up one sign – not because he didn't care but because everyone already knew him – he did the work of serving his community. Now what's impressive to understand is he and my grandma didn't have a lot to give – but that didn't stop him from giving back more than anyone I've ever met. He is the answer to the question of why I ran for the state house in 2014 – to follow in his footsteps – to be of service to others.

Now, let's get back to why we're all here. Utahns – we are here for you. And I want to take a moment to address the people of Utah. I love this state and I love our people. I love our potential and opportunities every bit as much as I love our heritage. It's home for me, my kids, and hopefully more of my grandkids. Our landscapes, our values, and our vision are unique – and preserving them is worth the sacrifice. We have an elite economy, we have abundant natural resources, and we have unmatched opportunities, in part because of leaders who came before us who put the people of Utah first.

Back in 1986 Governor Norm Bangerter said, "Utah's future depends on making not just *easy* decisions, but the *right* decisions." Growing up in Hooper on the shores of the Great Salt Lake, I vividly remember watching the rising lake levels seep into my neighbor's backyards. Governor Bangerter put in pumps to lower the water level on the lake. But the overflowing Great Salt Lake wasn't his only problem. Very different from today, he grappled with a drastic decline in state revenue, historic enrollment growth in public education, tax increases, a serious recession, layoffs at two of Utah's largest employers at the time – Geneva Steel and Kennecott Copper – and relentless public and political opposition.

While I don't necessarily agree with every action Governor Bangerter took while in office, I've always admired that he had the guts to do what he thought was right. Reflecting on his time in office, I love what Governor Bangerter said, "We have not concentrated on image or on

protecting our popularity in the polls. We have taken the problems as they came, head on and we have proposed the best solutions we knew – regardless of political consequences.”

Representatives, this session will undoubtedly bring many big decisions – some of them will be easy, and some of them hard. So, I ask each of us: Will we step up to the plate to make the right decisions? Will we take a step back and make sure we’re not giving up what we want most – what Utah needs most – for something we want now?

Let’s commit to making the right decisions – Utahns are counting on us because our future depends on it. If we make decisions based on fear, we’ll make the wrong decisions. This session will have a generational impact. Let’s act boldly to secure a bright future.

Trust in government is at an all-time low, and it’s easy to see why that’s the case. Our federal government cannot get its act together, and Americans are paying the price. Utah can and should lead the nation in restoring trust in the government – in our systems, our processes, and our institutions. To the people of Utah: For the next 45 days this body is committed to doing your work.

As the Speaker of the Utah House of Representatives, I want every Utahn to know this body cares about earning your trust; we care about listening to and reflecting your priorities. And most importantly, we ask you to participate. Now, more than any time in history, you can watch and see how you are being represented. You are welcome to join us at the Capitol but you can also follow every committee and every vote by going to [le.utah.gov](http://le.utah.gov).

These words by Ronald Reagan are what we should strive for – “My view of government places trust not in one person or one party, but in those values that transcend persons and parties. The trust is where it belongs — in the people.”

Above me read the words “Vox Populi” – Voice of the People. As the chamber established to be closest to the people, we should hear the people. From Blanding to Logan; from Vernal to Tooele; from Richfield to Salt Lake, every Utahn’s voice is represented in this room.

Choice, not chance, determines our destiny: so let’s talk about a few priorities for this session. This year, the House Majority Caucus has charted a path that will put Utah ahead. We aren’t just hoping for the best, we’re planning for it. We’re going to pass policies that elevate opportunities for Utahns, maximize and protect our resources, improve our systems, processes, and institutions, and ensure a bold and bright future for all Utahns.

We will lead the way in creating the Environmental Stewardship Caucus because, as a conservative legislature, we are committed to protecting our state’s natural resources for future

generations while also supporting responsible energy and resource development. A strong economy and a healthy environment are not mutually exclusive. We are committed to finding solutions that achieve both.

We will tackle comprehensive higher education reform. Higher education plays a key role in preparing students to join our dynamic workforce and build strong communities. This Legislature will work alongside the Board of Higher Education to ensure our colleges and universities are focusing on their core missions of embracing academic excellence, fostering innovation, and preparing students for prosperous lives. Let's get back to just educating our students.

We will act boldly to continue generational investments and progress in housing, transportation, and infrastructure. We will champion policies for our families, expand opportunities for all, bolster our economy, support students and teachers in the classroom, and prioritize the health and wellness of Utahns. This session will be a success only if the lives of all Utahns are enhanced by every vote we take and every bill we pass.

Utah's focus on families, common-sense solutions, fiscal prudence, and long-term thinking remain foundational to our success and prosperity. If we stick to our core values, and we commit ourselves to a bold, yet balanced, approach to solving Utah's challenges – we will do our part to secure a bright future for Utah.

Let's not give up something we want most for something we want now. We cannot afford to miss a step, so let's get to work.

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