



2021 House Majority Caucus Priorities



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Fellow Utahns,

With the 2021 General Legislative Session upon us, members of the Utah House of Representatives are working diligently to understand the challenges facing our state and their respective constituencies in order to craft policies that benefit the people of the State of Utah now and for decades to come.

With the rest of the world, Utah was greatly impacted by COVID-19 in 2020. Lawmakers held several special sessions to provide pandemic related relief and support, make necessary adjustments to the state budget, keep the economy running, and address the separation of powers in emergency response procedures. Utahns also faced a significant earthquake, raging wildfires, and damaging windstorms. Additionally, civil unrest in our streets directed our attention to inequities that merit our serious consideration.

These challenges did not simply disappear as the calendar turned to 2021. Nor did the many ongoing needs of our growing state unrelated to these extraordinary events. As we face these challenges, we are committed to bettering the lives of all Utahns. With so much important work for the legislature to do in a short amount of time, it is imperative that we prioritize our efforts. By focusing on the following four goals, we can ensure our state continues to be the best place to live, work, learn, and play not only now, but for generations to come.

Broaden Economic Success

2020 brought a host of economic challenges, but Utah was well prepared to meet them. Allocating taxpayer funds in a way that maximizes each dollar, prepares us for the next crisis, and broadens economic success to each corner of the state will be critical to Utah's continuing economic rebound and future prosperity.

Build a Connected Future

Continued investment in transportation, recreation, and technology infrastructure projects will provide the foundation for Utah's long-term prosperity and quality of life.

Extend Opportunity to All

Efforts to improve access to healthcare, housing, and education will open the door of opportunity to everyone in the state. Utah can only reach its full potential when all Utahns can make the most of their individual talents.

Balance Emergency Power

Finally, after facing a global pandemic for almost a year, it is apparent that we must reassess how we respond to emergencies to allow for swift action, but never at the expense of the will of the people.

As we work together in the spirit of collaboration and forward-thinking, we are confident Utah will further enhance its reputation as home to an unsurpassed quality of life with endless opportunity.

The following pages will give you a glimpse into a few of the House Majority Caucus priorities. Over the course of the next 45 days, there will be many more great ideas that come forth. We look forward to debating and enacting policies that will better the lives of all Utahns

Sincerely,

The House Majority Caucus

Broaden Economic Success

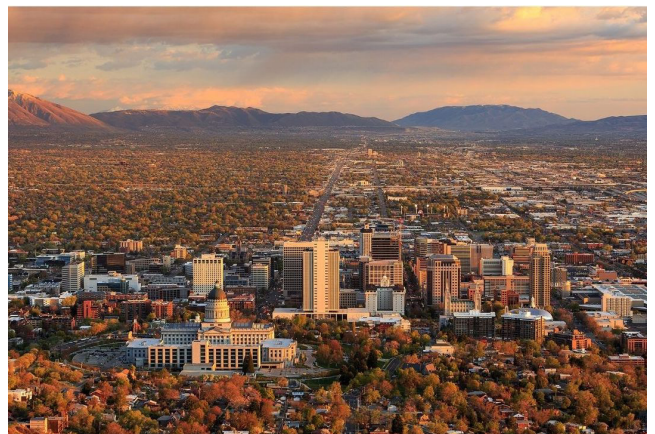
Utah enjoys a strong and diverse economy. From our breathtaking landscapes, skilled and industrious workforce, and business-friendly policies, it is no wonder why businesses love calling Utah home. We have secured several top-rankings as the best state to do business. However, this success is not guaranteed. At the root of this success are free-market principles and to maintain our economic vitality, our policies must cultivate an environment where the free market can flourish.

Tax Relief

The hard work and innovation of the people of Utah are the fuel that drives our economy. Two sessions ago, the Legislature set aside 80 million dollars for tax relief. The House Majority Caucus intends to finish what we started and work to find the most appropriate way to provide that relief. Now is the time to put this money back in the hands of the people of our state.

Economic Development Incentives

Over the past decade, the Governor's Office of Economic Development has surpassed all expectations in attracting businesses and creating jobs in our state. Utah went from having the 15th best statewide unemployment rate in the country, to the best rate in the country. Although much of the state enjoyed incredible growth, the benefits of this growth have not been felt equally by all areas of the state. Utah's economy has changed and Utah's economic development approach must evolve to address current concerns. The Legislature should optimize our economic strategy by reimagining Utah's economic development incentives to support local businesses, help Utah entrepreneurs, bring regional and national headquarters to Utah, and encourage job creation in rural parts of our state.



Reduce Regulatory Burdens

A decade ago, state government rightly reviewed regulation and eliminated some rules that had outlived their purpose and were hampering our economic growth. That effort



served as a springboard for Utah's enviable economic growth. The time is ripe for the Legislature to lead a thorough review of state regulations including licensing requirements. By soliciting input from the business community we can craft policies that allow the private market to flourish while ensuring necessary protections for consumers, communities, and the environment.

A regulatory sandbox can also provide a feedback loop for businesses and regulators to maintain a framework that cultivates innovation. In a hyper-competitive marketplace, we simply cannot afford to crush new industries before they can even get off the ground by forcing them to fit into a regulatory framework that has never envisioned the innovations of tomorrow's economy.

Generational Opportunities

Now is the time to think big when it comes to Utah's economic future and potential to become the "Crossroads of the World." The Point of the Mountain area connects our two most populated counties and the opportunities it presents are astounding. The Inland Port's connecting hub and spokes across the state will bring unrivaled distribution capability and allow Utah to emerge as a significant international trade partner. We must make the necessary investments to take full advantage of these and other economic development opportunities that arise.



Build a Connected Future

Utah is growing at an unprecedented rate. Without wise investment, the critical infrastructure that is the foundation for our economy and quality of life— roads, rail, recreation, water, and technology – will become overused and overcrowded. We must take steps now to protect our future.



Roads

As the Crossroads of the West and as one of the fastest growing states in the nation, Utah's economy depends on a robust transportation system. Utah policymakers have a proven track record of wise investment in our transportation infrastructure with an emphasis on cutting edge construction techniques and proper maintenance. During this session, the Legislature must continue to prioritize funding to plan,

develop, and construct road projects vital to the flow of commerce and to quality of life in Utah.

Rail

Railroads have been a key component of Utah's transportation system for the past 150 years. Rail transportation is essential to Utah's air quality and economic development efforts. Our considerable investment in rail transit has proven to be visionary as the population along the Wasatch Front grows and roads become more congested. Supporting new investment in rail will enhance mass transit options in our state increasing mobility for millions of Utahns.





Recreation

Outdoor recreation is key to our quality of life. Visitors from around the globe flock to Utah to experience the natural beauty found in our state, significantly benefitting our economy. Crowds have grown so large that our parks and the nearby towns are struggling to keep up. We love our state and national parks, but unfortunately, we currently love them to death. Now is the time to invest in our parks and do so in a way that gives access to all who wish to experience Utah's natural beauty benefits our state economy for decades to come.

Water

Water is always an overriding concern in the West and is rightly considered to be the primary restraint on Utah's long term success. After decades of talk but little action, it is time we get serious about working with neighboring states to ensure Utah benefits from our water rights. This session, we must work to ensure Utah is reaping its full benefit from the Colorado River Compact.



Technology

As technology continues to advance, we must ensure that our entire state has the infrastructure to keep up. We must also ensure that as we generate more and more data, we are able to keep private information secure and protected.

This session, the Legislature should work to improve our critical infrastructure to connect our growing state, enhance our outdoor recreational assets, and protect our natural resources.



Extend Opportunity to All

Over the past year, inequities in communities across our country, including in Utah, have been brought to the forefront. We have seen peaceful protests and violent riots, all in the name of change. This session is an opportunity for Utah to once again lead the nation in creating responsible and compassionate policies to ensure our laws and criminal justice system continue to treat all our citizens justly and protect our public safety.

While criminal justice is one avenue for change, many in our state do not have access to resources that others take for granted and that provide the foundation for individual opportunity. As a government and as a state we can do better. Broadening access to key resources in health, education, and housing can expand opportunity for all Utahns and open the door for them to reach their potential.

Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light many health challenges, both physically and mentally, for the people of our state. The state must ensure that we address these health challenges and prepare to face other health crises in the future.

Beyond the pandemic, the physical and mental health of Utah's citizens is a fundamental concern of the Legislature and is also key to our state's prosperity. Today, we have more uninsured children per capita than any other state in the nation. In this session, the Legislature should support efforts to connect the families of uninsured children with existing coverage options that best suit their respective situations.

Mental illness has long been stigmatized, but we now have a clearer understanding of the importance of mental health and obtaining treatment for mental illness. Mental health in schools is an important aspect of this. We should fund and support a comprehensive, state-wide, school-based mental health framework and commit resources to ensure that all communities have the necessary tools to support the mental health needs of students. Dedicating resources to address mental health challenges will save government funds in the long run by reducing strain on police forces and other government services in our local communities. Most importantly, such efforts will have a positive, and in some cases life-saving, impact on individuals and families in our state.



Education



The Legislature must prioritize investing in education that truly prepares our students to compete in a global marketplace, fulfill a meaningful role in our society, and achieve their potential. Students need to develop critical thinking skills and gain an appreciation of their civic responsibility. Ensuring such an education is a possibility to any child in the state, regardless of the economic status of their neighborhood or

family, is a necessity if we are to provide equitable opportunities to all Utahns. This session, we should follow through with our commitment to increase education funding by over \$400 million and support legislation to more fairly allocate state education funding to all districts throughout the state.

Last year, the Legislature created the new Utah Board of Higher Education, which merged the state's higher education institutions and technical colleges under one leadership umbrella. This new system increases access to and opportunities for postsecondary education, but it was just the first step in creating a better system for Utah's students. This session, we should take steps to expand access to College Access Advisors throughout the state. College Access Advisors help high school students navigate their post-graduation options, whether they be at a higher education institution or technical college. Providing opportunities and resources for postsecondary education is one of the most important things we can do for Utah students, our workforce, and our state's future.



Housing

Adequate, safe, and stable housing is a key element in an individual's path toward a better life. The impacts of housing on economic mobility have long been studied and evidence of the positive relationship between the two is significant. Over the past ten years, average home prices in our state have risen more than twice as fast as our median income. Rising home values are good for homeowners. However, the lack of homes priced for those looking to buy for the first time and for those who need more affordable options creates real challenges for thousands of Utahns, including our children and grandchildren.



This is an issue that demands our immediate attention. Already, House members have opened bill files to address our housing affordability challenge by reducing regulations that prevent the free market from relieving stress on home prices through existing housing options - like accessory dwelling units. No doubt, other innovative ideas will also come to the forefront as we employ our best thinking to create workable solutions.

Balance Emergency Powers

2020 was a year unlike any before. On top of a global pandemic, Utahns faced a significant earthquake, raging wildfires, damaging windstorms, and social unrest and uncertainty. The Legislature made important adjustments to allow each branch of government to address the needs of the state during these crises. As we address new and unforeseen challenges, we must ensure that our actions are rooted in the constitutional principle that divides the powers of government among three departments, each with distinct functions and responsibilities.



When the statute for emergency powers was written, it never contemplated a long-term emergency, such as the global pandemic we have been fighting. The events of 2020 made it clear that there is an urgent need to review and update emergency plans and procedures to help each branch of government fulfill its proper role during emergencies.

We must evaluate, revise, and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the executive branch, local and state health departments, and the legislature during times of crisis. Doing so will allow each branch of government to act under appropriate authority and ensure an equal balance of power.





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