

Week 1

# UTAH LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Weekly Legislative Session Newsletter of RRJ Consulting  
*Utah's Leading Lobbying Firm*



## 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Welcome to the 2024 General Legislative Session where lawmakers meet for 45 days to consider, debate, and pass policies that will impact Utahns statewide. On average, over 1,000 bills will be considered and about 500 will become law. While a busy time of year, we always look forward to the hustle and excitement of meeting with lawmakers and watching the legislative process firsthand.

## APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

The first three weeks of the legislative session include morning committees for appropriations. Seven different committees meet a few times a week to discuss different budget sectors. Every budget item, from infrastructure to social services, is debated. Committee budget discussions will wrap up at the end of the third week and the Executive Appropriations Committee will finalize the budget before bringing it back to the full legislature by the end of session.



Thank you for letting us represent you and please reach out if there is every anything we can do for you. We will have your backs this session and for fight for policies to benefit you and your businesses.

Sincerely,

*Rob, Jodi, and Chris*

# — A CLOSER LOOK —

## OPENING SPEECHES AND STATE OF THE STATE

The 2024 Legislative Session has begun, and as with any session, we begin with the opening day speeches from the presiding officers of the state. President Adams and Speaker Schultz addressed the bodies of the Senate and the House to ring in the state to the 45-day session. Thursday evening, Governor Cox addressed both bodies and the citizens of Utah in his annual State of the State address.

### **State of the State**

Governor Cox delivered his 2024 State of the State address to the residents of Utah, members of the Legislature, the Supreme Court, and constitutional officers. He underscored the reasons behind Utah's top-ranking status among states and articulated strategies for its continued success. Throughout his address, Governor Cox delineated the unique attributes of Utah, including its striking landscapes, distinctively spelled place names, and a cultural ethos of mutual care and support.

### **Opening Day Remarks - President Adams**

President Adams addressed the members of the Senate and emphasized the need for work this session in energy, education, water, and community and family policies. He told of Utah's success as a state and that in just over 150 years, "we have created the best economy, the most charitable society, the highest upward mobility, the most family-friendly, and the happiest state in the nation. We live in the greatest state in the nation because of the integrity and work ethic of the great people of Utah. We know how to innovate and do it with incredible determination and purpose."

### **Opening Day Remarks - Speaker Schultz**

Finally, recently elected Speaker Schultz highlighted the crucial significance of representing the people of Utah. He urged every member to articulate their individual motivations or "why" behind their service as lawmakers. Each member then stood up and shared their personal reasons for serving in this capacity. Speaker Schultz emphasized the significance of the principle, "Don't give up something you want most for something you want now." Additionally, he stressed that by adhering to core values and committing to a bold yet balanced approach in addressing Utah's challenges, they would contribute to securing a bright future for the state.



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## PASSING BASE BUDGETS

Perhaps the greatest responsibility of the Legislature is to craft and pass a budget. Unlike many other states, Utah must balance their budget each year. Because of this, Utah has the best economic outlook, is best prepared for an economic downturn, and has one of the strongest economies in the nation.

One of the first steps in the budgeting process is the passage of base budgets. The base budget process is done to ensure that government services will remain open if, for any reason, the Legislature and the governor disagree on the final budget or unforeseen circumstances arise.

Each appropriation subcommittee submits their base, which is essentially last year's budget, for the administration of each state department. The entire Legislature then vote on the eight base budgets and send those to the governor's desk to sign.

The Legislature approved this year's base budgets and will now begin developing and balancing the full budget.

## ENERGY

The Legislature has signaled that the upcoming week will be focused on energy. A number of bills will begin making their way through the process to ensure Utah's energy remains affordable and reliable.

Both the Senate and House Majority Caucuses touted energy as a top priority for this session. The Senate said they will prioritize policies that "Progress toward energy independence," and the House wrote they will, "Reevaluate energy policies to meet Utah's needs, protect Utah's ability to produce reliable, affordable, and dispatchable baseload power, and investigate advanced nuclear power options for Utah."

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Getting involved in the legislative process is easier than ever. Lawmakers have continued to allow for virtual participation in committee meetings. Plus, all committee meetings and floor times are open to the public. We'd love for you to join us at the Capitol or see you online at [le.utah.gov](http://le.utah.gov).

# A CLOSER LOOK

## HOUSING

Housing continues to be a top priority for the Legislature and Governor Cox. Homeownership is a key driver of upward mobility, building generational wealth, and fulfilling the American dream. As Utah grows rapidly, we must ensure that home ownership is an achievable goal for our kids and grandkids. We are working closely alongside legislative leadership to find solutions that increase the housing supply, stabilize the housing market, and ensure all stakeholders and governments do their part to create housing opportunities.

Building upon last session's monumental focus on housing affordability, this session will be even more impactful to homebuyers. Money is still available through the Utah Housing Corporation for the Utah First Time Homebuyer Assistant Program that went into effect in July 2023. Up to \$20,000 in program funds can be borrowed for the home.

Before the session began, the Cox administration announced their budget, which includes The Utah First Homes Program includes \$50 million for the First-Time Homebuyers Assistance Program, \$75 million to expand the State Infrastructure Bank specifically for housing projects, and \$25 million to bolster starter home innovation and construction projects.

Legislation is working through the process to include policy changes to local ordinances and zoning and budget decisions on how best to tackle the housing gap.

*"Policy is the way out of Utah's housing crisis"*  
- Speaker Schultz

