

UTAH LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Monthly Newsletter of RRJ Consulting
Utah's Leading Lobbying Firm



WEEK 2

Utah Legislative Session Week 2 Recap

As the 2025 Utah Legislative Session wraps up its second week, 1,366 bills have been proposed, with over 620 pieces of legislation progressing through the legislative process. Sub-appropriation committees are actively reviewing budget allocations, ensuring funding priorities align with state needs, while standing committees continue debating key policy bills before they reach the full House and Senate for votes.

CELL PHONES IN CLASSROOMS

SB 178, *Devices in Public Schools*, by Senator Fillmore proposes to seek to establish a default policy prohibiting the use of cellphones and smartwatches during classroom hours. While schools would retain control over their specific cellphone policies, the bill aims to create a standard approach across the state.

HIGHER EDUCATION

A new bill in the Utah Legislature, HB265, aims to significantly reshape how state funding is allocated to Utah's public colleges and universities. Sponsored by Rep. Karen Peterson, the bill would eliminate the longstanding "hold harmless" policy, which guarantees institutions maintain prior funding levels despite enrollment shifts. Instead, the bill proposes a performance-based funding model that reallocates resources according to student enrollment and institutional outcomes.

This reform will create a more efficient and equitable distribution of higher education funding, ensuring that rapidly growing institutions receive adequate support while preventing under-enrolled schools from receiving disproportionate funds. As the bill moves forward, lawmakers, educators, and students alike are closely watching its potential impact on the future of Utah's colleges and universities.

— A CLOSER LOOK —

BASE BUDGETS

In Utah, base budgets serve as the starting point for the state's annual budgeting process. They represent the ongoing funding levels for state agencies and programs, based on the previous year's appropriations, before any new spending decisions or cuts are made.

Key Aspects of Utah's Base Budget Process:

1. Established Early:

- The Utah Legislature passes base budget bills early in the legislative session, ensuring that core government functions are funded in case budget negotiations extend late into the session.

2. Continuity and Stability:

- The base budget ensures that essential services, such as education, public safety, and health programs, continue operating without disruption.

3. Legislative Review:

- Lawmakers review and adjust base budgets during the session, adding or cutting funds based on revenue forecasts, policy priorities, and economic conditions.

4. Incremental Adjustments:

- After approving the base budget, the Legislature considers additional appropriations or reductions through supplemental budget bills.

5. Balanced Budget Requirement:

- Utah is constitutionally required to pass a balanced budget, so base budgets are crafted with revenue constraints in mind.

Over the next few weeks, appropriation subcommittees will meet to debate what cuts and reallocations will be made in each of the eight committees. A final budget will be presented and debated on the final days of the session.

