



January 23, 2008

2007-2009 Vol. 3

GENERAL SESSION

January 16, 2008

Program Topic: 2008 Legislative Overview

Presented by: WSLC Legislative Study Committees
Conducting: Kitty Kaplan, WSLC President

Speakers: **Tibby Milne, Director** – *Judiciary/Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice/Political Subdivisions, Revenue Taxation/Transportation/Government Operations*
Shauna Scott-Bellacomo, Co-Chair – *Health & Human Services/Retirement & Independent Entities*
Nancy Donnelly and Dr. June Taylor, Co-Chairs – *Natural Resources/Agriculture & Environment*
Judy Keller, Co-Chair – *Education*
Martine Smith, Director – *Business/Labor/Public Utilities & Technology/Workforce Services/Community & Economic Development*

Judiciary/Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice/Political Subdivisions, Revenue & Taxation/Transportation/Government Operations

Tibby Milne reported on a bill which would increase the penalty for assaulting a police officer more than once. Also, since research indicates those committing animal torture often go on to commit violence against people, two bills will address animal torture.

Increasing violence against children last year generated three bills to deal with the sex offender registry. They would require 1) closer compliance with the Adam Walsh bill, 2) sex offenders to report their email addresses and 3) sex offenders on probation to have a period assessment, possibly every 12-16 weeks. Pending legislation may also adjust the amount of time to be served by sex offenders violating Jessica's Law a second time.

A bill addressing the crimes of strangulation and smothering (on a surviving victim) will be considered, and another bill to extend the maximum period of prescribing certain types of medication from 30 days to 90 days.

Bills being re-visited from last session include the primary seat belt bill, another prohibiting smoking in a vehicle with children under 5 years old, the domestic & dating violence/stalking bill, as well as a bill to prohibit the hallucinogenic drug, Salva.

Identity theft amendments will be considered this session, and also a bill to establish a commission to evaluate judges before their retention elections.

Health & Human Services/Retirement & Independent Entities

Shauna Scott-Bellacomo reported on **HB15**, dealing with public information on sexually transmitted diseases; **HB16**, which would allow the use of telemedicine for certain services under the state Medicaid plan and **HB17**, which would expand the breast cancer mortality reduction program to include other cancers. **HB24** affects how medical information would be transmitted electronically between providers according to the HIPAA law. **HB3** modifies definitions of the Child Welfare law.

HB36 amends background check and child placement provisions in the Utah Human Services Code and the Juvenile Court Act of

1996. **HB38** would establish a public education & outreach program regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances harmful during pregnancy. **HB45** makes the pilot program for provision of supported employment services into an ongoing program.

HB46 addresses concerns raised during recent controversies over the state removing children from their parents' control. **SB15** assigns penalties to drivers who smoke in a vehicle with restrained children. **SCR001** by is a Resolution to promote awareness of the effects of obesity.

Natural Resources/Agriculture & Environment

Nancy Donnelly provided five "Utah Quick Facts" as background for today's consideration of bills. **1)** Utah contains three of the nation's 100 largest oil fields and two of the 100 largest natural gas fields. **2)** More than four-fifths of Utah's homes use natural gas for heating (the largest percentage in the nation). **3)** Coal bed methane accounts for more than one-fourth of Utah's natural gas production. **4)** Utah is one of the few states with electricity production from geothermal power sources. **5)** Utah has enormous deposits of oil shale rock (marlstone) which can be converted into crude oil.

Dr. June Taylor stated that because of Utah's large energy reserves and the pollution problems in the Salt Lake Valley in particular, energy will be a hot topic in the legislature's upcoming general session. Although there are no numbered bills in this area, two are in progress. Sen. Scott McCoy (D) is working on a bill titled Renewable Energy Standards for Utilities. Sen. Curtis Bramble (R) has a bill titled Energy Resource and Carbon Admission Reduction Initiative. These important bills reflect the

national effort to promote renewable energy resources to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, as well as addressing the quality of air in our own area. The emphasis on standards is to require electrical generating utilities to provide some amount of their electrical energy from renewable sources. The controversy will be over the form of the standards.

What qualifies as a renewable resource? The two issues for Utah will be: **1)** Should nuclear reactors be included as a renewable resource? **2)** Should hydroelectric power be a significant source? Many of the state's rural electric power cooperatives get their power from hydroelectric power, which requires a dam. Should we build more dams or should we encourage these cooperatives to seek other renewable resources?

The committee recommends an information session on renewable energy standards as preparation for a discussion of the bills when they are filed. The January 23 WSLC General Session I will include experts across the political spectrum. We hope Senators

Bramble and McCoy will be here to discuss their bills. General Session II that day will

spotlight the Governor's Energy Initiative, for which he has appointed a special panel.

Education

Judy Keller distributed a current list of numbered bills addressing education. Focusing on a few, she noted one concern is a lack of math, science, and Special Education teachers. Some upcoming bills will consist of initiatives which will encourage potential teachers to specialize in these areas through the use of scholarships, and require them to teach in Utah for a specific amount of time. Other bills will focus on upgrading the technology used in the schools. With the expected increase in public school enrollment of 160,000 over

the next 10 years, more teachers are needed in all areas. The legislature will explore incentives (pay increases?) for teachers who achieve excellent results, and for allowing home school & charter school students to participate in extracurricular activities at regular schools in their area. A K-8 online school will be proposed, as well as accelerated learning programs for rural schools. A bill which may spark controversy would require school districts and charter schools to give detailed monthly reports on how they spend their money.

Business/Labor/Public Utilities & Technology/Workforce Services/Community & Economic Development

Martine Smith mentioned an overlap in bills of interest between her committee and a few other committees, such as the bills on technology and mathematics education. The governor's proposal on health care will be our main issue during this session. A bill sponsored by Rep. Stephen Clark (R), and backed by United Way and the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce is intended to address the large number of uninsured persons in Utah. It would change the way we obtain health insurance. The bill would increase funding to enroll more people in Medicaid and in CHIP. A new management office, the Government Office of Economic Development (separate from the Health Department) would be created to administer programs to increase the number of insured persons. The program is somewhat similar to the one passed in Massachusetts,

mandating all citizens to have insurance and the insurance companies to provide affordable policies. There will also be other bills addressing various aspects of the governor's initiative. Rep. James Dunnigan (R) is sponsoring bill to look at the state & federal mandates of this bill.

Speakers from the audience noted, in addition, the ethics bills scheduled to be introduced by Rep. Roz McGee (D) and on behalf of Paul Mero of the Sutherland Institute. There is a bill to make the State School Board a partisan board. Also, a bill that failed last year will be re-introduced to bring the Utah Transit Authority into the State Department of Transportation.

Reported by Stuart Gygi

General Session II

Program Topic: The Essentials of Lobbying

Presented by: Ruby Hammell and Connie Gates
Conducting: Kitty Kaplan, WSLC President

Speakers: Ruby Hammell, Chair – Lobbying/Public Awareness
Connie Gates, Co-Chair – Policy

Ruby Hammell and **Connie Gates** presented an engaging, entertaining and thought-provoking role-play sketch which demonstrated various ways (both effective and ineffective) of meeting with a legislator.

Ruby Hammell then urged any who didn't know their legislators to call the County Clerk to obtain name & contact information.

She offered suggestions on how to be a more effective lobbyist.

- Become acquainted with your state legislators before the 2008 Session begins.
- Too late to follow suggestion number one? Then call or e-mail both your state Senator and Representative now.
- Keep your message short and simple (KISS). Phone calls are acceptable. A personal note is appreciated.
- Unless you know your legislator personally, it is probably a good idea to use his/her title (Senator Jones or Representative Smith).

- Let your legislator know you are a constituent.
- Always thank a legislator if he/she votes your way.
- Be sure you know the title of your bill, its sponsor(s) and its number.
- Know enough about your bill to be able to discuss it with your legislator. Be ready to counter any talking points he/she may have heard against your bill.
- Remind your legislator that you represent a non-partisan organization. Lobby as a citizen.
- Be patient during the legislative session. You may have to wait awhile to visit with your legislator. They are studying and debating many bills.
- Remember you have something to offer them – not money or gifts – but your vote in the next election.

Reported by Shirley Johnsen

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