



## GENERAL SESSION

January 27, 2010

### ***Program Topic: Public School Class Size***

**Presented by: Education Committee**

**Speaker: Holly Langdon – Exec. Dir.; Utahns for Public Schools**

**Holly Langdon** presented a power point presentation showing how money is raised for education in Utah, where it is spent, and how funding is declining in the state.

The State Constitution was amended in 1993 to include Higher Education as an additional recipient of the income tax dollars which had previously funded only K-12. As a result, since 1995 over a billion dollars has been siphoned away from K-12 funding. This money could have reduced class size by up to 12 students. Utah currently has some of the largest class sizes in the United States.

Ms. Langdon stressed the need to improve technology in schools with ongoing money instead of “one-time bumps” during surplus years. Also, although tax incentives and a simplified bureaucracy are a factor, polls taken of businesses indicate quality of education actually ranks higher on the list of reasons businesses choose to re-locate.

Noting that for most of our rural areas the largest employer for the city is the school district, Ms. Langdon compared the financial returns on stocks vs. the financial return we gain by investing in education. Using the Utah Foundation report, which compared Utah to five “peer states” with

equal demographics during 2005-06, she said Utah is struggling in overall education.

New York spends the most per student at \$15,981 compared to Utah’s \$5,683 per student. She urged WSLC members to stress to legislators the continuing importance of education during the 2010 session,

Responding to questions, Ms. Langdon said we should set a dedicated percentage of income tax funding between K-12 and Higher Education. A constitutional change would not be needed.

Fiscal accountability by the school districts is monitored by several organizations. Utah’s school administrative costs are among the lowest in the nation, partly due to our extra large school districts. On the other hand, poor student achievement seems to directly reflect Utah’s low per student spending. Diversity is increasing, which brings additional financial needs to schools.

The state still uses the “small school district formula” for funding, which is a good model for equalizing. Utah doesn’t have a high percentage of home schoolers, but they often use certain parts of the system, such as extra-curricular activities, art classes, etc.

Visit the Utahns for Public School website at <http://www.utahnsforpublicschools.org> for more information.

Reported by Ronda Rose

## General Session II

### ***Program Topic: Rx Drug Abuse: Issues & Answers***

**Presented by:** Judiciary/Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice/  
Political Subdivisions/Revenue and Taxation/Transportation

**Speakers:** Nick Daskalas – Intern to Sen. Patricia Jones (D) Dist. 4  
Salt Lake County; Minority Leader – Sponsor:  
*SCR2 Reducing Prescription Drug Misuse  
Resolution*

**Richard Nance – Director, Utah County Division of  
Substance Abuse**

**Rep. Trisha Beck (D) Dist. 48, Salt Lake County  
(Sandy, Draper) – Sponsor:**  
*HB13 Drug Law Definitions – Amendments  
HB23 Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing  
HB30 Drug Law Amendments*

**Nick Daskalas** brought information about **SCR2**, which is sponsored by Sen. Jones. He stated that Utah has the highest amount of prescription drug misuse in the nation. Between 1990 and 2007, deaths resulting from the misuse of Rx medication rose from 50 to over 300.

**SCR2** encourages the proper use and disposal of Rx drugs. Different sections of the resolution are devoted to information for consumers, doctors, pharmacies, employers, and employees.

Responding to questions, Mr. Daskalas said there is nothing in the resolution dealing specifically with the over-prescribing of

post-surgery medication. The resolution is intended to raise public awareness rather than impose regulation. If the response is favorable, a bill may follow.

**Richard Nance** brought information concerning a study by the Office of National Drug Control Policy regarding the economic costs of drug and alcohol abuse in Utah and the nation. All of Utah is affected by substance abuse problems.

Noting that between 1992-2002 the costs of drug and alcohol abuse increased at an average rate of 2.8%, Mr. Nance made a power point presentation that indicated the costs of this abuse cut across all categories.

For example, 71% of the costs to the public were productivity losses (days of work lost). However, these losses include premature births resulting from drug and alcohol abuse. They cause not only productivity losses, but huge health-related costs for ICU treatment of the babies, as well as rehabilitate treatment for the mothers.

Other issues found under the category of productivity loss include:

- Abuser incarceration
- Institutionalization (for ensuing mental or social problems)
- Hospitalization
- Productivity loss of crime victims

Additional costs to the public, comprising 20.1% include:

Criminal Justice System and other public costs –

- State and local police
- State and local legal adjudication
- State and federal corrections
- Local corrections
- Federal spending

Private Costs –

- Private legal defense
- Property damage for victims of crime

Social Welfare –

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF program)
- Food Stamps

The annual cost per capita from drug and alcohol abuse is approximately \$1,587 per person (in taxes), with drug abuse factoring in at \$739.00 and alcohol abuse at \$848. The annual cost to a family of four is approximately \$6,348.00 per year.

Mr. Nance said that for Utah County, alcohol ranks first and prescription drugs second as the most misused substances. His studies

indicate many people abuse three or more prescription drugs at the same time.

Every city has a drop-off place for unused drugs. Two bills are pending this session that will allow pharmacies to receive old drugs for disposal.

For more information, visit the “Clean Out the Cabinet” ([www.cleanoutthecabinet.org](http://www.cleanoutthecabinet.org)) and the “Use Only As Directed” ([www.useonlyasdirected.org](http://www.useonlyasdirected.org)) community outreach program websites.

**Rep. Beck** spoke of several bills she is sponsoring, as well as others having to do with alcohol and controlled substance abuse issues. She began with **HB13**, which is intended to modify health care chapters in The Utah Controlled Substances Act, among others, to provide consistency in the definitions used. The bill is circled at this time.

**HB30** modifies the Utah Controlled Substances Act with regard to Schedule IV substances. It adds “carisoprodol” (brand name “Soma”) as a Schedule IV drug. Soma will be included on the “controlled substance” list and, therefore, subject to drug testing.

Soma, a highly addictive muscle relaxant, is considered a gateway drug, leading to other drug use. **HB30** will alert both patients and family members that Soma is addictive. The bill has already passed out of the Health & Human Services Committee, and just moved out of Law Enforcement today.

Currently, 17 other states have put Soma on their controlled substance lists. Saying more deaths occur from prescription drug misuse than from car accidents, Rep Beck advised that while responsible use of Rx drugs can save lives, irresponsible use can just as easily take them.

Another bill to watch is **HB38**, sponsored by Rep. Paul Ray (R). This bill modifies provisions regarding controlled substances and creates the Controlled Substances Advisory Committee to advise the Legislature on the scheduling of substances. In addition, it provides guidelines for determining if a substance should be scheduled (at level I, II, III or IV) as a controlled substance.

Rep. Beck is also sponsoring **HB23**, which updates an existing law that was passed in 1987. She was happy to report this bill unanimously passed the House just this morning.

**HB23** updates methods for drug and alcohol testing in the workplace. It modifies provisions related to an employer. The bill also requires confirmation testing to be done by a certified laboratory, defines the particulars of a medical review, addresses grounds for employer action, and outlines

how an employer will be protected from liability.

**HB23** does not make employee drug testing mandatory, but does protect the employer if testing is needed. Employers must have a written policy in place before testing. Senator Karen Mayne (D) will carry this bill in the Senate.

Responding to questions, Rep. Beck acknowledged last year's concern over this bill, but feels confident the revised bill will pass. Its most vocal opponent last year stood on the floor today and voiced his support of the revised bill.

In educating parents concerning Rx drug abuse, we also educate the youth. The information in the "Parents Empowered" program (<http://parentsempowered.org>) can help.

**Reported by Ronda Rose**

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