



October 26, 2011

2011-2013 Vol. 1

GENERAL SESSION

September 21, 2011

The first meeting of the 2011-2013 Biennium was held in the newly restored Kimball Home at *This Is The Place* State Park. General Session I consisted of a Dedication Ceremony held outside in view of the five trees planted in honor of WSLC's five most recent Past Presidents.

Darlene Hutchison 2009-2011
Kitty Kaplan 2007-2009
Suzanne Turner Merrill 2005-2007
Kathryn Rowley 2003-2005
Paula Green Johnson 2001-2003

Remarks by the Past Presidents were followed by recitation of the poem "Trees" written by Joyce Kilmer.

*I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed against the earth's sweet flowing breast.
A tree that looks at God all day, and lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear a nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain; who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me, But only God can make a tree.*

General Session II

Program Topic: Perspectives from The House

**Presented by: WSLC Pres. Sylvia Rickard
WSLC Pres. Elect Kari Malkovich**

**Speaker: Rep. Rebecca Lockhart (R) – House Speaker; Dist. 64; Utah County
(south-central)
Rep. David Litvack (D) – House Minority Leader; Dist. 26; SL County
(central SLC; part of W.V. City)**

Rep. Lockhart said the issue of the day and the one word on everyone's lips is

"Redistricting." Governor Herbert will call the legislature into session on October 3.

Ideally, it will take only two to three days for legislators to vote on the redistricting maps and get them sent to the governor for his signature. Half a dozen other items will be considered during this special session. They are all consensus issues – minor technical bills left over from last session.

There is a great deal of talk throughout the state on redistricting. Since it only happens once every 10 years, everyone is interested, opinions are heated and rumors are flying. Border disputes are inevitable. On the current House map, the areas of special concern are the northern & southern rural areas of the state.

Citizens can keep current on what is really happening by going to the official website (www.redistrictutah.com). All legislator and Committee plans presented at public meetings will be available in the online redistricting tool. Rep. Lockhart is especially proud of this website, since it also invites input. Any Utah citizen can submit a redistricting plan to be considered by the Committee, if his or her map complies with procedural guidelines. In fact, the State School Board map adopted by the Committee was a citizen-drawn map.

When Senate and House Committee maps are finished, they will be released to the website. There is no “secret” map, Rep. Lockhart asserted. Nothing is pre-determined. There are many theories regarding how the maps should be drawn. She found it amusing that the several theories all seem to be associated with food. There is a “donut hole”, a “pizza slice,” and even a “layer cake” theory circulating. The House Speaker said she personally sees value in both the donut hole and pizza slice.

Turning to education, Rep. Lockhart said she is surprised there is not nearly the public interest in school district maps. Federal funding and regulations influence so much of what the state is able to do. Because Utah

can't tax one half of its own lands (which are federally owned), the state will always have a problem with education funding.

Rep. Lockhart anticipates the budget next year will be fairly flat. It is a continuing challenge to the state that over \$50M in one-time money was allotted to ongoing programs. Most states are still relying on federal money to balance their budgets. In Utah's case, one half of our budget depends on federal money. The structural deficit is becoming so problematic, legislators are beginning to ask all our state agencies, “What would you do if...”

Responding to questions, Rep. Lockhart said the House would consider all maps. This includes the “Fair Boundaries” map, even though, unfortunately, the map was found to have been drawn by a political party rather than a bi-partisan committee. She also noted it would be unconstitutional to use taxpayer money to take an opinion poll.

Rep. Litvack recalled a humorous error made when he was first elected. There was an (R) placed after his name. So, he told the then-Speaker the mistake probably meant he was invited to attend their closed caucus meetings.

The Minority Leader agreed it was disappointing that the (D) party submitted the “Fair Boundaries” map. He feels it tainted a dialogue that should remain bi-partisan. He also believes the base House map is a good one, as it reflects redistricting principles better than the Senate map. For example, in the initial base map, District 25 was kept the same. Summit County objected and voiced its concern to the House. They listened and subsequently modified the map.

Rep. Litvack said the hard work that has been done on redistricting is remarkable. Although he isn't on the Committee, he feels comfortable with what has emerged. However, he hopes other issues won't be

allowed to slide due to continuing focus on redistricting.

Regarding the budget, he agreed it's problematic when one-time money is applied to ongoing programs. We don't want to have an out-of-control structural deficit, he maintained. But when the economy collapsed, the states had little choice but to accept it. Fortunately, Utah has reduced its imbalance. It now stands at \$50M. On the other hand, Rep. Litvack said, we shouldn't make the elimination of structural deficit the #1 priority, as it may inflict harm on needed programs.

On the subject of Medicaid, The Minority Leader said for every state dollar we expend, we get \$3 federal dollars. Remember, he advised, there is an economic impact to Medicaid: 75% of the cost of Medicaid goes to 25% of our population. These people have few, if any, alternatives. Utah's eligibility criteria for Medicaid are not nearly as generous as those designed by some other states. There are ways to reform this safety net without going straight to deep cuts.

Briefly addressing several topics in succession, Rep. Litvack, who sits on the governor's Education Council, said there would be innovative funding ideas from the Democrats in the upcoming Session. He

doesn't think immigration will be the hot topic it was last session, as people realize states can't do much meaningful reform. The authority lies at the federal level. It is possible HB116 may be revised next session, but he does not think it will be reversed.

Regarding liquor reform, Rep. Litvack said Utah would probably never be fully privatized. From the perspective of the Minority Caucus, liquor regulation isn't a moral issue. It's an economic one, further complicated by the restriction of free trade. National retailers routinely avoid Utah because they can't get liquor licenses here.

Responding to questions, Rep. Litvack said Utah's resorts are allowed to sell alcohol in partnership with the state. In rural areas, that may be more practical than an expansion of state liquor stores. He believes the House redistribution map is much better than the "Fair Boundaries" map. The public spoke "loud & clear" with regard to school vouchers, he said. Only one legislative district voted in favor of it. He hopes collective bargaining by education employees won't be used as a political issue. And he sees no statewide movement on the idea of a Constitutional Convention.

Reported by Pam Grange

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