

2024 UEA
LEGISLATIVE
SUMMARY



“We remain steadfast in our commitment to work together with legislators to ensure that every child in Utah has access to a high-quality education and that our educators are respected, trusted, and treated as professionals. We are grateful for the continued support and solidarity of our educator members and allies.”

- UEA President Renée Pinkney

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2024 UEA LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

The 2024 General Session of the Utah Legislature marked a period of adversity and perseverance for the Utah Education Association (UEA). A significant number of legislative bills challenged our fundamental principles of promoting a safe and equitable learning environment for all students and the continued fight against culture wars in classrooms with book bans and anti-trans bills. In all, UEA closely monitored more than 100 bills related to education during the seven-week session.

However, UEA succeeded in our two high-priority bills: the defeat of HB 285 Labor Union Amendments and the passage of HB 221 Future Educator Stipends.

The legislative session resulted in mixed outcomes for UEA's budget priorities. Some of our budget goals saw partial fulfillment, including the \$6,000 stipend for student teachers and the increase in educator-directed Paid Professional Hours. However, the requested 12% increase in the Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU) was not fully met. The expansion of the Utah Fits All voucher program by an additional \$40 million also reflected the continuous challenge of keeping public money out of private education institutions.

The UEA legislative team extends our deepest gratitude to the members who actively engaged with their lawmakers at home and during UEA's six Educator Day on the Hill events. Also, nearly 4,000 people signed UEA's petition against HB 285: Public Sector Labor Organization Amendments.

Member interactions with legislators were pivotal in highlighting the real-world impact of proposed laws. Through personal stories, public testimonies, and relentless advocacy, members highlighted the critical needs and challenges public educators and students face, ensuring that the voices of those at the center of public education are heard in the halls of power.

Early in the session, UEA responded to baseless claims made during a committee hearing for HB 285, that the UEA wasn't member-led or focused on the needs of Utah's educators with the "I Am UEA" campaign. It highlighted dozens of member testimonials to demonstrate the truth: all UEA members are leaders, every voice is important, and together, we improve public education for Utah students.

In 2024, the Utah legislature approved a record number of bills.

591 total bills passed

940 proposed bills & resolutions

BILL SCORECARD

UEAs position on the final status of some of the 100 + bills we closely tracked.

 Favorable  Neutral  Unfavorable

<p>HB 29 Sub 2 Sensitive Material Review Amendments Rep. K. Ivory</p>	<p>Creates a review process for "objective" and "subjective" sensitive materials and requires a statewide ban on any material at least three school districts remove.</p>	<p> Passed the House and the Senate</p>
<p>HB 161 Sub 1 School Board Amendments Rep. R.P. Shipp</p>	<p>Allows certain local school board actions not related to tax increases to be subject to a referendum.</p>	<p> Failed in the Senate committee</p>
<p>HB 173 Sub 1 Local School Board Amendments Rep. C. Pierucci</p>	<p>This bill addresses actions of a school district that may be subject to a referendum.</p>	<p> Not heard in the Senate committee</p>
<p>HB 192 Sub 3 Local Education Agency Employee Paid Leave Rep. M.G. Ballard</p>	<p>Requires school districts to provide parental leave and postpartum leave for employees.</p>	<p> Passed the House and the Senate</p>
<p>HB 221 Sub 1 Stipends for Future Educators Rep. K. Peterson</p>	<p>Creates a grant program to pay education students during the student teaching semester.</p>	<p> Passed the House and the Senate</p>
<p>HB 257 Sub 5 Sex-based Designations for Privacy, Anti-bullying, and Women's Opportunities Rep. K. Birkeland</p>	<p>Creates restrictions on the use of sex-designated bathrooms, locker rooms and showers in public schools.</p>	<p> Passed the House and the Senate</p>
<p>HB 261 Sub 4 Equal Opportunity Initiatives Rep. K. Hall</p>	<p>Prohibits higher education, K-12 public schools and government employers from certain diversity, equity and inclusion practices.</p>	<p> Passed the House and the Senate</p>
<p>HB 285 Sub 2 Public Sector Labor Organizations Amendments Rep. J. Teuscher</p>	<p>Restricts public employer labor groups from payroll deduction of dues, limits access to public property and requires recertification every five years.</p>	<p> Not heard in the House</p>
<p>HB 287 Advanced Degree Scholarship Program Rep. C. S. Moss</p>	<p>Creates a grant program to pay educators for the costs of pursuing an advanced degree.</p>	<p> Held in the House committee</p>
<p>HB 290 Ranked Choice Voting Amendments Rep. K. Hall</p>	<p>Changes the repeal date of the Municipal Alternate Voting Methods Pilot Project.</p>	<p> Failed in the Senate</p>
<p>HB 303 School Curriculum Requirements Rep. J. Stenquist</p>	<p>Prohibits school employees from endorsing, promoting, or disparaging certain beliefs or viewpoints.</p>	<p> Failed in the House</p>
<p>HB 331 Sub 1 School and Classroom Amendments Rep. D. Welton</p>	<p>Requires a kindergarten student be toilet trained prior to enrolling in school and creates exemptions for students with a condition related to an IEP.</p>	<p> Passed the House and the Senate</p>
<p>HJR 14 Proposal to Amend Utah Constitution - Statewide Initiatives Rep. J. Kyle</p>	<p>This amends the Utah Constitution to require at least 60% voter approval on a statewide initiative related to taxes.</p>	<p> Not heard in the Senate</p>
<p>SB 69 Income Tax Amendments Sen. C. Wilson</p>	<p>Reduces the state income tax rate from 4.65% to 4.55%</p>	<p> Passed the Senate and the House</p>
<p>SB 137 Sub 1 Teacher Empowerment Sen. L. Fillmore</p>	<p>Amends provisions related to educator evaluations.</p>	<p> Passed the Senate and the House</p>
<p>SB 138 High-need School Amendments Sen. K. Riebe</p>	<p>Provides grants to school districts to employ additional educators in high-need schools.</p>	<p> Not heard in the House</p>
<p>SB 140 Utah Retirement System Amendments Sen. W. Harper</p>	<p>Prevents passing costs on to educators by allowing school districts to pay additional costs above the 10% cap for employees in the Tier II retirement system.</p>	<p> Not heard in the Senate committee</p>
<p>SB 173 Sub 3 Market Informed Compensation for Teachers Sen. L. Fillmore</p>	<p>Turns over the state-defined Teacher Salary Supplement Program to districts to define high-needs areas; creates a bonus program for educators in the top 25% of educators in the state.</p>	<p> Passed the House and the Senate</p>

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



UEA President Renée Pinkney

The 2024 legislative session was challenging for the Utah Education Association, our members and our students. It was marked by concerted efforts to undermine diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, ban books, attack our association and create conditions in schools that will negatively impact the well-being and safety of transgender individuals.

In the face of adversity, UEA members remained steadfast in our resolve to defend and promote the sanctity of public education. Our collective efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Let us remember that our power lies in our collective unity and our unwavering commitment to championing the rights and well-being of every student and educator. Our challenges are stepping stones, setting us up for a comeback that will redefine Utah's education landscape for the better. Together, we will continue to advocate, support, and celebrate public schools.

Despite the challenges, UEA members are driven by our collective resolve to defend and strengthen public education, ensuring a brighter, more inclusive future for our students and the educators who guide them.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Legislators anticipated a “lean” budget year resulting in mixed outcomes for UEA’s budget priorities.

UEA BUDGET PRIORITIES INCLUDED:

- An 8% increase in the Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU) above inflation, totaling a 12% increase.
- No expansion of the Utah Fits All voucher program.
- \$100 million for paid professional hours to increase to 40 hours per educator.
- \$8 million to create a grant program to pay student teachers.
- \$3 million to create a grant program to pay educators pursuing advanced degrees.
- \$3 million to allow more families to qualify for no-cost school meals.

FINAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

Ongoing Items:

5%
INCREASE

A 5% total WPU increase, including a 3.8% required inflation adjustment.

\$40
MILLION

\$40 million addition to the “Utah Fits All” private school voucher program, bringing the total appropriation to \$82 million annually.

One-time Items:

\$8.4
MILLION

STUDENT TEACHER PAY
\$8.4 million for a grant program to pay student teachers a stipend during their student teaching semester.

\$8.4
MILLION

CLASSROOM SUPPLIES
\$8.4 million for a one-time increase to reimburse classroom supplies.

\$74
MILLION

PAID PROFESSIONAL HOURS
\$74 million for educator-directed Paid Professional Hours, an increase of \$10 million from last year to keep the program at 32 hours.

\$100
MILLION

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES
\$100 million for school safety infrastructure upgrades.

\$150
MILLION

TEACHER BONUS PROGRAM
\$150 million for a three-year teacher bonus program to pay stipends up to \$20,000 to teachers in the top 5% of the profession.

EDUCATION FUNDING

The UEA closely monitors bills affecting the Utah Retirement System (URS). On the positive side, HB 251 Postretirement Reemployment Restrictions Amendments (Rep. Matthew Gwynn R-Dist. 6) passed and allows a retiree to return to work after 90 days for a public employer in the retirement system with a few pay restrictions. In contrast, SB 140 Utah Retirement System Amendments (Sen. Wayne Harper R-Dist. 16) proposed allowing school districts to cover Tier II employee contribution rates above the 10% statutory cap instead of transferring the cost to employees. The Senate refused to consider the bill.

Despite being described by legislators as a “lean” budget year, the legislature still passed a significant tax cut. SB 69 Income Tax Amendments (Sen. Chris Wilson R-Dist. 2) reduced the state income tax rate from 4.65% to 4.55%, resulting in a decrease of about \$170 million to the income tax fund, which funds public education.

\$170 MILLION DECREASE TO STATE INCOME TAX

The UEA opposed any tax cuts while public schools had so many unmet needs.

Finally, \$35 million in one-time money was appropriated to offset the local impact associated with implementing HB 415 School Fees Amendments (Rep. Mark Strong R-Dist. 47), which prohibits schools from charging certain student fees beginning in the 2025-26 school year.

\$35 MILLION ONE-TIME MONEY



EDUCATOR RETENTION

HB 221 Future Educator Stipends was a priority issue brought by UEA to Rep. Karen Peterson (R- Dist. 13). The bill creates a grant program to pay students in an educator preparation program during their student teaching semester. Student teachers are estimated to receive \$6,000 for their full-time teaching work.

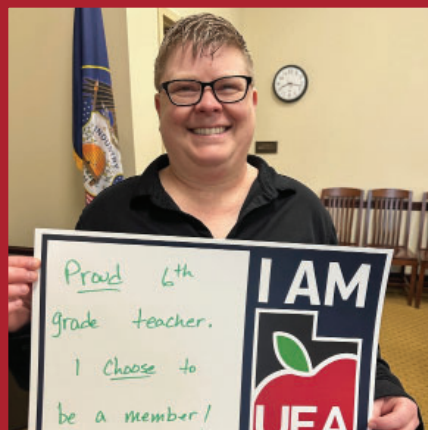
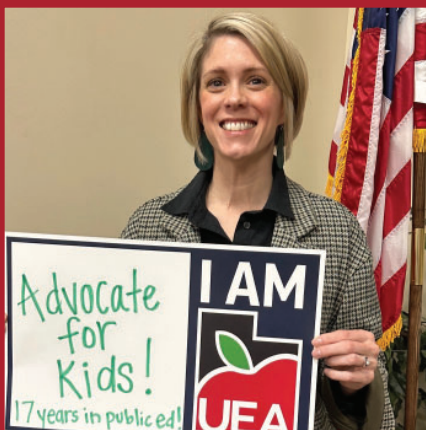
SB 137 Teacher Empowerment (Sen. Lincoln Fillmore R-Dist. 17) modifies the existing educator Paid Professional Hours program to expand and clarify the uses of the educator-directed flexible funds. The bill also modifies educator evaluation through a multi-year pilot program focused on formative feedback and professional growth.

HB 431 Teacher Retention (Rep. Candice Pierucci R-Dist. 49) mandates that

school districts offer paid postpartum leave to employees by 2027. It also establishes a two-year 'master teacher' pilot program, allowing teachers to serve as leaders while remaining in the classroom.

Finally, SB 173 Market Informed Compensation for Teachers (Sen. Lincoln Fillmore R-Dist. 17) creates a new program to change the existing Teacher Salary Supplement Program so school districts determine "high needs" areas to receive a stipend rather than the state-designated areas of math, science, computer science, and special education. The bill also creates a new program to designate the top-performing 25% of teachers and provide a significant bonus of up to \$20,000 each.

**Approximately
1,400 student
teachers per
year will receive
\$6,000.**



CURRICULUM

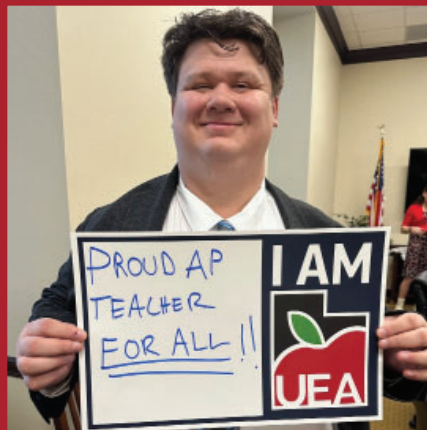
HB 29 Sensitive Materials Review Amendments (Rep. Ken Ivory R-Dist. 39) creates definitions for “objective” and “subjective” sensitive materials and clarifies review processes for materials challenged as sensitive. The bill also implements a statewide ban on materials if as few as three school districts remove an “objective” material. It would also allow the State Board of Education to choose to review the banned material and decide whether to overturn the statewide ban. On March 6, UEA asked Governor Spencer Cox to veto the bill.

HB 269 Public School History Curricula Amendments (Rep. Michael Peterson R-

Lawmakers remained committed to regulating school curricula and books.

Dist. 2) adds the Ten Commandments to a list of “historical documents” that can be studied in history and government classes.

HB 303 School Curriculum Requirements (Rep. Jeffrey Stenquist, R-Dist. 46) would prohibit school employees from promoting political or social beliefs, sexual orientations, or gender identities through instruction, materials, or displaying symbols, images, or language. UEA opposed the bill because of its vague language and concern over chilling classroom discussion and critical thinking. Ultimately, the bill failed on the House floor.



ANTI-EQUITY

Lawmakers quickly passed two controversial anti-equity bills during the first week of the session.

HB 257 Sex-based Designations for Privacy, Anti-bullying, and Women's Opportunities (Rep. Kera Berkland R-Dist. 4) introduces provisions for sex-designated restrooms, showers, and locker rooms

HB 257 risks isolating transgender students and educators

for students and employees in the public education system. This bill mandates that students and employees use the restroom corresponding to the sex listed on their

birth certificate. The UEA opposed the bill, arguing that local school districts have already implemented policies reflecting community values on bathroom use. The bill could be used to single out transgender students and educators for isolating and discriminatory treatment.

HB 261 Equal Opportunity Initiatives (Rep. Katy Hall R-Dist. 11) prohibits education institutions from having an office named "diversity, equity, and inclusion" (DEI) and restricts certain discriminatory practices and training related to DEI. Initially, the policy proposals primarily targeted higher education institutions. HB 261 quickly included K-12 public education. The UEA believes culturally responsive teaching leads to great instruction. The UEA opposed the bill due to its lack of clarity for educators and the restrictions it imposed on certain training.

Both bills passed with super-majorities in both chambers and were immediately signed by Governor Cox.



ANTI-LABOR

Direct attacks on workers' rights prompted strong solidarity among Utah's labor organizations, which significantly hindered HB 285 Public Sector Labor Organizations

This unity sparked an unparalleled level of teamwork in advocacy efforts.

Amendments (Rep. Jordan Teuscher R-Dist. 44) and HB 429 State Employment Revisions (Rep. Kay Christofferson, R-Dist. 53). This unity fostered unprecedented collaboration in lobbying efforts, culminating in the defeat of both bills.

HB 285 underwent several revisions during the session. It aimed to restrict the collection of dues through payroll deduction

and significantly limit associations' access to public buildings. HB 285 passed a House committee early in the session despite hundreds of union members from across the state showing solidarity against the bill. Following the committee hearing, the bill stalled and was 'circled' on the House of Representatives voting board, indicating a pause in proceedings. All indications suggest the sponsor didn't have the votes to pass the bill. With no more votes, the bill died when the session ended.

The UEA thanks the countless members who contacted their lawmakers to vote against HB 285, which would have had a significant effect on the association. Within a week, a UEA petition against the legislation gathered nearly 4,000 signatures.

HB 429 aimed to remove career service protections for certain executive branch employees. The bill passed the House of Representatives but died in a Senate Committee by a vote of 2-3.



UEA Legislative Team

REPRESENTING UEA MEMBERS AND ADVOCATING FOR UEA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES WITH UTAH LEGISLATORS AND POLICYMAKERS.



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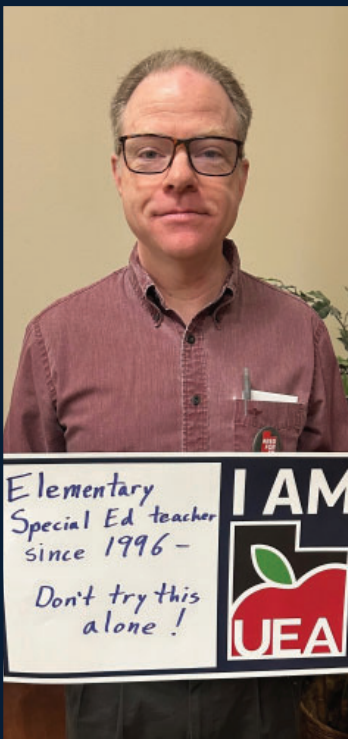
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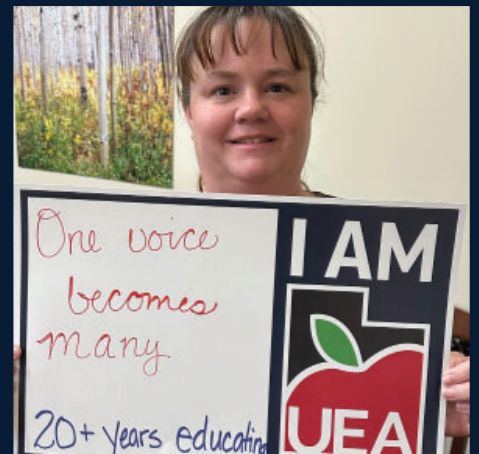
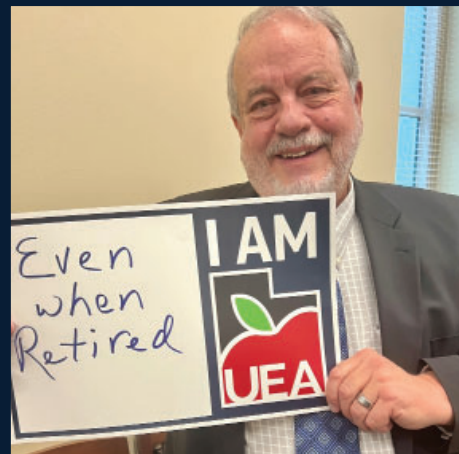


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