

Senate Government Operations and Political Subdivisions Committee

January 24th, 2025

Bill: SB 54 - Appearance of Candidate Name on a Ballot

Sponsor: Senator Stephanie Pitcher

Floor Sponsor: Undeclared

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill addresses the manner in which a candidate's name may appear on a ballot.

Discussion: As presented by the sponsor, Senator Stephanie Pitcher, this Bill addresses how a candidate's name appears on the ballot. Essentially, individuals who use a middle or other legitimate name rather than their first name as their primary name on a ballot are allowed to have that chosen name be printed on the ballot. The sponsor believes that having a candidate's name printed on the ballot as "Satan" makes a joke of the election process. There were no questions or discussion from the Committee. The Weber County Clerk and the Lieutenant Governor's Office spoke in support of the Bill.

Yeas: 6

Nays: 0

N/V: 1

Outcome: SB 54 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: SB 95 – Truth in Taxation Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Heidi Balderree

Floor Sponsor: Representative Colin W. Jack

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill addresses the public hearing requirements for increasing the property tax rate.

Discussion: The sponsor, Senator Heidi Balderree, said this Bill clarifies that a quorum of the taxing entity's legislative body must be present at any property tax public hearing. Additionally, this Bill defines "meeting" to align with the definition in the Open and Public Meetings Act. This Bill has a retrospective implementation date of January 1, 2025. Senator Thatcher expressed concern with the retroactive implementation. He suggested that the sponsor consider amending the Bill to have immediate implementation at the time the Governor signs the Bill into law. Senators Vickers, Winterton, and Blouin agreed that changing to an immediate implementation date would make them more comfortable voting to pass the Bill out of Committee. The sponsor gave her word that she would substitute the Bill on the floor of the Senate with that change. There were no public comments.

Yeas: 6

Nays: 0

N/V: 1

Outcome: SB 95 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: SB 50 – Limited Purpose Local Government Entities Board of Trustees Compensation Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Calvin R. Musselman

Floor Sponsor: Undeclared

UASD Position: Support

This Bill eliminates the compensation limit for a member of a board of trustees of a limited purpose local government entity.

Discussion: The sponsor, Senator Musselman, explained that this Bill removes the cap on compensation for board members of special districts and special service districts. The Bill adds a transparent process by requiring a public hearing before board compensation may be increased. LeGrand Bitter, the Executive Director of the Utah Association of Special Districts (“UASD”) presented with the sponsor. Mr. Bitter explained the history of compensation for service on a special district or special service district board. He noted that board members of smaller districts often do quite a bit of work. For example, a water or cemetery maintenance district board member may use their own backhoe to dig up a burst water pipe in the middle of the night or a grave for a member of their community. These board members may be compensated for their time and costs associated with using their own equipment, but that compensation cannot go beyond the \$5,000 per year cap placed on compensation in state statute. This amount has not increased since 2007. The sponsor asserted that with the ever increasing cost of living and inflation, it doesn’t make sense to have to continually change the statute. No other form of governmental entity has a cap on compensation. The sponsor said that the compensation for board members would remain transparent because the district would have to hold a public hearing that is solely for the purpose of increasing board member compensation and the increase would be discussed during the public hearing before the annual budget is adopted.

Senator Winterton asked if a public hearing would be required any time a district board member is compensated for using their backhoe to dig a ditch. Mr. Bitter stated that there would only need to be a public hearing for such expenditures if they would exceed the maximum compensation limit previously approved by the board and included in the budget. A citizen asked what would happen if total board member compensation was less than the amount that was included in the budget. She specifically wanted to know if there would be a refund to the citizens. There is already a process in state statute that addresses unused funds, which will go back into the general funds of the district to be reappropriated during the following fiscal year.

Yeas: 4

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: SB 50 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.