

Bill: HB 239 – Disaster Funds Revisions

Sponsor: Representative Carl R. Albrecht

Floor Sponsor: Undeclared

UASD Position: Support

This Bill concerns disaster funds.

Discussion: Representative Albrecht stated that this Bill was introduced in response to requests from rural Utah communities affected by summer monsoon flooding. The state provided funding to northern areas impacted by heavy snowfall. Some of the money was remaining ARPA funds. Central Utah can also experience severe summer flooding. The sponsor's goal is to protect these communities and mitigate future damage. To achieve this, he consulted with the Director of Emergency Management to restructure restricted emergency funding accounts. This change would allow communities to apply for pre-disaster mitigation funding. Chris Hamlet, representing the Utah Division of Emergency Management, spoke in support of the Bill. He emphasized the increasing frequency of hazardous events and their devastating impact on local communities. He noted that existing programs do not cover pre-disaster funding. He also highlighted successful accounts that have helped communities recover from disasters. Mr. Hamlet explained that the Bill facilitates transfers from the State Disaster Account to the Local Disaster Account of up to \$10 million at a time, with a maximum of \$50 million in total. Additionally, the Bill introduces a pre-disaster mitigation component to proactively address recurring disaster risks. He clarified that the Bill does not require additional funding. It merely reallocates existing resources. There was no discussion from the Committee. One member of the public spoke in support of the Bill's mitigation efforts.

Yeas: 11

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: HB 239 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: HB 285 – Water Infrastructure Modifications

Sponsor: Representative Casey Snider

Floor Sponsor: Undeclared

UASD Position: Support

This Bill addresses funding and planning for water infrastructure.

Discussion: Representative Snider stated that last year, a Bill was introduced to improve water infrastructure funding in the state. It established a series of benchmarks, with this Bill representing the first. A study from the Division of Water Resources recommended fund consolidation and outlined requirements for entities applying for state grants. The sponsor explained that this Bill repeals the Water Resources Cities Water Loan Fund, directs loan

repayments into the Water Infrastructure Fund, and allows transfers between various water funds and accounts. It also updates definitions, requires capital asset management plans and reserve funding in certain cases, and revises the water infrastructure prioritization process, including specific exemptions.

Representative Albrecht asked whether the ranking process for water projects would function similarly to the Utah Department of Transportation. The sponsor said that having water infrastructure funding function similarly to road project funding is the end goal. He would like the state to be able to allocate funding for water projects across multiple initiatives over the course of 5, 10, 15, and 20 years. The Utah Farm Bureau spoke in support of the Bill's overall concept but would like to continue to work with the sponsor to ensure that agricultural water allocation is prioritized. The Director of the Division of Drinking Water spoke in favor of the Bill because it creates better coordination and helps public water systems to be more resilient as aging infrastructure is updated. The Committee adopted Amendment 1. This adds "or Part 5, Capitol Assets for Water" on lines 799 and 801.

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

N/V: 4

Outcome: HB 285, as amended, passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 1st substitute HB 307 – Wildfire Funding Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Casey Snider

Floor Sponsor: Undeclared

UASD Position: Tracking and amend

This Bill addresses wildfires.

Discussion: Representative Snider explained that multiple accounts exist within the wildland fire sector to support mitigation, the wildland urban interface ("WUI"), fire suppression, and post-fire recovery. He explained that issues arose last year with fires, like the Silver King Fire, where suppression funding was available but post-fire funding faced delays. This Bill consolidates those accounts into a single fire fund, with a significant portion allocated to suppression. The sponsor emphasized that this integration would streamline funding for both suppression and post-fire recovery.

Representative Bennion asked how this change would interact with the Watershed Restoration Initiative ("WRI"). The sponsor clarified that WRI typically funds fire related work and that this Bill would prevent WRI from being used as a "slush fund", ensuring these state funds support only the most necessary projects. Representative Shipp noted that the fund is not intended to prevent prescribed burns and asked whether it could be used for controlled burns. The sponsor confirmed that the Bill allows for greater flexibility within the fund and supports controlled burning efforts. The Committee adopted the 1st substitute. There was no public comment or further discussion.

As a side note, the sponsor plans to substitute the Bill on the floor of the House with UASDs proposed amendments.

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

N/V: 5

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 307 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: SB 33 – Water Rights Recording Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Evan J. Vickers

Floor Sponsor: Representative Rex P. Shipp

UASD Position: Support

This Bill addresses water rights addenda.

Discussion: Senator Vickers stated that this Bill allows the grantor to sign electronically or facsimile on a water rights addendum. The Utah Farm Bureau spoke in favor of this Bill.

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

N/V: 5

Outcome: SB 33 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.
