

House Government Operations Committee

February 20th, 2025

Bill: HB 298 – Volunteer Emergency Medical Service Personnel Insurance Program

Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Douglas R. Welton

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Support

This Bill amends provisions regarding the Volunteer Emergency Medical Service Personnel Insurance Program.

Discussion: House Amendment 1 was adopted by the Committee. The amendment expands the definition of a “Local government entity” to be a political subdivision that is a licensed as a ground ambulance provider under Part 5, Ambulance and Paramedic Providers or a quick response provider as designated under 53-2d-403; and does not offer health insurance benefits to volunteer emergency medical service personnel. The sponsor explained that the Bill expands eligibility for the Volunteer Emergency Medical Service Personnel Insurance Program, allowing more municipalities to participate. It extends state benefits and access to qualifying communities in second-class counties, as these benefits are already available to third through sixth class counties. Representative Loubet asked whether the amendment excluded sixth-class counties, and the sponsor assured that it did not. Representative Burton spoke in favor of the Bill. No further discussion followed.

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: HB 298, as amended, passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 1st substitute HB 445 – Revisions to Election Law

Sponsor: Representative Doug Fiefia

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill amends provisions relating to elections.

Discussion: The sponsor spoke to the 1st substitute of the Bill, which was adopted by the Committee. He explained that the Bill standardizes the reporting of election results by establishing a clear statewide reporting schedule. It also implements statewide election technology equipment standards and requires that mail-in ballots be received by poll closure.

Additionally, the Bill sets deadlines for voter registration and ballot requests; registration closes 21 days before the election, and mail-in ballot requests must be submitted 14 days before the election. The sponsor emphasized that same-day registration and early voting would remain unchanged. He believed that streamlining these processes would lead to cleaner and more accurate results and reiterated that same-day voter registration was not being removed.

Representative MacPherson asked about the fiscal note, specifically regarding one-time costs and the impact on local governments. He wondered if the substitute would significantly change these costs. The sponsor responded that the one-time funding was intended to be used to raise public awareness of the changes and that the substitute, if anything, would reduce the fiscal impact. When asked whether he had concerns about securing funding in the budget, the sponsor expressed confidence but acknowledged challenges due to limited funding this year. Representative Hayes inquired about conversations with county clerks regarding the Bill's timeline. The sponsor confirmed ongoing discussions to address any concerns. Representative Hayes then asked about language in lines 1026-1028 concerning a 15-minute disruption. The sponsor was unsure how to respond and said he was open to discussing potential changes with the drafting attorney. Representative Cutler raised similar concerns about the 15-minute disruption language. The sponsor clarified that it referred to continuity in clerks' work breaks and related standards. Representative Cutler also asked about line 1132, questioning what would happen if an election worker was unable to complete tabulation and whether there was a penalty. The sponsor clarified that this provision served as a guideline rather than a strict requirement. Representative Loubet asked for clarification on the first substitute, mentioning concerns from constituents about ballot deadlines. He wanted to ensure that ballots submitted on time would still be counted. The sponsor confirmed that all timely ballots would be counted and that the deadlines served as guidelines. Representative Burton spoke in favor of the Bill and commended the sponsor's work.

The Salt Lake County Clerk and the Utah Association of Counties spoke in favor of the substitute but expressed a desire to continue working with the sponsor on areas of concern. Representative Loubet then asked the Salt Lake County Clerk about barriers to early election result reporting. The Clerk explained that, as Utah primarily operates under a vote-by-mail system, processing ballots takes time. The Utah County Clerk supported the Bill's intent but noted concerns that he hoped to address with the sponsor. A representative from the API Democratic Caucus, the Utah Navajos, the Chair of the Democratic Pacific Islander Caucus, and the League of Women Voters spoke in opposition to the Bill. The Lions Club of Utah and the ACLU from the University of Utah expressed concerns. No further discussion followed.

Yeas: 8

Nays: 5

N/V: 0

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 445 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

UAFSD