

House Law Enforcement Committee
March 3rd, 2025

Bill: 2nd substitute SB 255 – Line-of-Duty Death Benefit Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Dennis Owens

Floor Sponsor: Representative Douglas Welton

UASD Position: Support

This Bill modifies provisions relating to benefits resulting from a line-of-duty death.

Discussion: The sponsor presented the 2nd substitute, which the Committee adopted. He explained that the substitute expands the Bill to cover more public employees. Specifically, it enhances benefits for the spouses and surviving children of public safety and fire service employees who die in the line of duty by adding dental and vision coverage. Additionally, it removes the 12-month waiting period for accessing funds from the Local Public Safety and Firefighter Surviving Spouse Trust Fund, allowing immediate financial support for surviving families.

Brian Williams from the Lone Peak Police Department spoke in support of the Bill, emphasizing the need to provide greater assistance to the families of fallen public safety employees. The Utah Highway Patrol also expressed support.

Representative Gwynn asked whether municipalities were currently refusing to provide these benefits and whether that was the reason for the Bill. The sponsor confirmed this and added that the Bill also establishes a consistent process for municipalities to follow. No further discussion followed.

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

N/V: 1

Outcome: 1st substitute SB 255 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 2nd substitute SB 144 – Sexual Crimes Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Karen Kwan

Floor Sponsor: Representative Anthony Loubet

UASD Position: Support

This Bill addresses sexual crimes.

Discussion: This Bill clarifies and expands definitions related to sexual exploitation offenses. It defines a female breast for certain offenses to include undeveloped or partially developed breasts and broadens the definition of "child sexual abuse material" to include instances where a minor is observing or being used in sexually explicit conduct. Additionally, it expands the definition of "sexually explicit conduct" to include certain bodily functions.

The Bill also modifies the mental state required to commit sexual exploitation of a minor and includes cases where an individual accesses such material with the intent to view it. It adjusts the mental state requirement for aggravated sexual exploitation of a minor and removes lesser penalties for material depicting children 14 or older or pubescent individuals. Reoffending with such material will now be classified as a first-degree felony. Furthermore, the Bill establishes a safe harbor provision for employees and independent contractors who must access such material as part of their job.

The purpose of this Bill is to strengthen protections for children, prevent the distribution of exploitative material, and ensure that law enforcement and Children's Justice Centers can access necessary investigative information.

The Victim Services Commission, Utah PTA, and Nate Mutter, Assistant Chief of Investigations at the Attorney General's Office, testified in support of the Bill, citing rising statistics on sexual abuse and the distribution of this material. Representative Wilcox asked Mr. Mutter whether the exponential increase in cases was due to improved investigations or technological advancements. Mr. Mutter responded that technological advancements were likely the primary factor. Several Committee members expressed their support, emphasizing the importance of addressing the concerning statistics. No further discussion followed.

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

N/V: 2

Outcome: 2nd substitute SB 144 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.