

Senate Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee

3/4/2025

Bill: 2nd Substitute HB 461 – Animal Crime Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Verona Mauga

Floor Sponsor: Senator Jen Plumb

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill modifies provisions related to the release and forfeiture of an animal that is being held because of abuse or involvement in a crime.

Discussion: Representative Mauga presented the Bill, which establishes a process for managing animals that have been abused or involved in a crime while legal proceedings are ongoing. It allows for the release or transfer of these animals from shelters under court supervision. The Bill grants peace officers with a warrant the authority to enter premises or vehicles to rescue animals that are being mistreated or are linked to criminal activity. It also requires that the animal's owner or caretaker receive notice of any legal actions involving their pet.

Additionally, the Bill permits shelters or government attorneys to petition the court to determine whether an animal should be forfeited or placed in alternative care. It outlines procedures for court hearings, ensuring that the animal's owner has an opportunity to present their case. If the court orders forfeiture, the Bill provides guidelines for the proper placement of the animal. It also allows courts to require owners to cover the costs of sheltering their animals if the owner's criminal activity led to the animal's seizure. Furthermore, courts may mandate that individuals who have abused animals or involved them in crimes complete an educational or animal cruelty prevention program.

The primary goal of the Bill is to reduce the time animals spend in shelters, allowing them to find new homes sooner while relieving shelters of the financial burden of long-term care. This, in turn, benefits taxpayers, as these shelters are publicly funded. The Bill also gives courts the option to require convicted animal abusers to cover the costs of care. Addressing concerns, the sponsor clarified that the Bill applies only to domestic pets in abuse-related cases. The Salt Lake County Animal Services and the Salt Lake County District Attorney's Office expressed their support for the Bill.

Yeas: 3

Nays: 2

N/V: 2

Outcome: 2nd Substitute HB 461 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 2nd Substitute HB 309 – Wildlife Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Casey Snider

Floor Sponsor: Senator Michael K. McKell

UASD Position: Tracking and Amend

This Bill addresses state activities related to wildlife.

Discussion: Representative Snider presented the Bill, which serves as a cleanup measure for the Division of Wildlife Resources. It clarifies regulations on night hunting for non-protected wildlife, specifically allowing the use of thermal imagery and spotlighting when hunting these animals. The Bill also updates various definitions, imposes requirements for holding a hunting or combination license to serve on the Wildlife Board or a regional advisory council, and clarifies the definition of and access to wildlife management areas.

Additionally, the Bill makes changes to provisions related to the Department of Agriculture and Food's responsibilities regarding livestock depredation and big game protection. It also addresses compensation for livestock damage and corrects the definition of "big game." The Utah Farm Bureau and the Utah Sportsman Caucus expressed their support for the Bill.

Yeas: 4
Nays: 0
N/V: 3

Outcome: 2nd Substitute HB 309 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 2nd Substitute HB 411 – Public Asset Ownership Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Troy Shelley

Floor Sponsor: Senator Derrin R. Owens

UASD Position: Tracking and Amend

This Bill addresses the state ownership of certain environmental assets.

Discussion: Representative Shelley explained that the Bill requires any state entity that sells or exchanges an environmental commodity to report a digital identification number to the Office of Energy Development. It exempts environmental commodities created from activities on school and institutional trust lands from these reporting requirements. Additionally, the Bill declares that any environmental commodity generated through activities funded by the state is owned by the state in proportion to the funds contributed. It also clarifies that an environmental commodity created or purchased by a state entity remains under the control of that entity. The Bill further establishes specific responsibilities for the State Treasurer in managing environmental commodities.

Senator Blouin requested further clarification, prompting the sponsor to provide an example involving carbon credits. The sponsor explained that once these credits are serialized, they become state property. Senator Owens further simplified this explanation, stating that because the credits are purchased with taxpayer money, they rightfully belong to the taxpayers. There were no public comments.

Yeas: 4

Nays: 0
N/V: 3

Outcome: 2nd Substitute HB 411 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: HB 446 – Great Salt Lake Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Jill Koford
Floor Sponsor: Senator Scott D. Sandall

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill addresses issues related to the Great Salt Lake.

Discussion: Representative Koford explained that HB 446 is primarily a cleanup Bill designed to improve water flow to the Great Salt Lake ("Lake"). The Bill enhances resource management, streamlines project planning, and updates provisions related to adaptive management berms to support environmental management efforts. It also grants operators greater flexibility and expands the powers and responsibilities of the Commissioner of the Salt Lake. This includes a requirement for the Commissioner to consult on projects funded by state appropriations for acquiring or leasing water or water rights for the Lake, ensuring these efforts align with the state's strategic plan. There were no public comments.

Yeas: 5
Nays: 0
N/V: 2

Outcome: HB 446 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: HB 507 – Legislative Water Development Commission Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Thomas W. Peterson
Floor Sponsor: Senator Don L. Ipson

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill addresses membership requirements on the Legislative Water Development Commission.

Discussion: Representative Peterson explained that the Bill increases flexibility in selecting members for the Legislative Water Development Commission ("Commission"). It reduces the minimum number of Commission members nominated by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House to two legislators from each body and modifies the partisanship requirements for Commission members.

Senator Stratton asked whether there is a maximum number of legislators allowed on the Commission. The sponsor clarified that this decision is left to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. There was no further discussion, and no public comments were made.

Yeas: 5
Nays: 0
N/V: 2

Outcome: HB 507 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

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