



STATE OF UTAH

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DEIDRE M. HENDERSON
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

March 21, 2024

The Honorable J. Stuart Adams
President of the Senate

and

The Honorable Mike Schultz
Speaker of the House

Dear President Adams and Speaker Schultz,

Thank you again for your sincere and dedicated efforts during the 2024 General Legislative Session. I hope you have all enjoyed some time off after a very taxing and difficult 45-day session. I'm sure many in your legislative bodies may have forgotten that my session lasts 65 days. So, while you have all been relaxing and reintroducing yourselves to your families, the Lt. Governor and I, along with our great team, have continued toiling at the Capitol to complete our thorough review of every bill and resolution (please forgive the very transparent attempt to gain some sympathy from a fellow branch of government).

Having completed my review, I truly want to commend your collaborative spirit and many productive outcomes. The people of Utah will benefit from your sound fiscal decisions and strategic investments made in our teachers, water resources, homelessness and behavior health, housing, infrastructure and many other priorities. This session was a resounding success. And you and your members deserve credit for making Utah a better place.

If you recall, last year I sent a first-of-its-kind "non-veto" letter. In that letter, I specifically requested that you focus on two issues moving forward: 1) the rapid expansion of boards and commissions and 2) better processes to improve public trust. I want you to know how grateful I am for the meaningful steps that were taken on both issues.

At the beginning of this session, we had more than 400 boards and commissions. Now, thanks to your actions this year, we were able to consolidate 35 into 14, and repeal another 34! I believe this is a huge step in the right direction. While I support citizen involvement through board and

commission service, I'm also a big believer in smaller and more efficient government. Thank you for paring down these unnecessary boards.

Likewise, I was very pleased to see your commitment to process this past session. I heard from members of the public and several legislators (including those from the minority party), that some of the more controversial bills were given much longer committee hearings than normal, some lasting for hours. This allowed citizens an opportunity to be more involved in the process and, I believe, led to better outcomes. I also appreciated the lack of big issues being substituted into bills at the last minute with less public input.

I am also profoundly grateful for the opportunity I have to serve with you. Last year I wrote that, "I doubt that there has ever been better communication and collaboration between the legislative and executive branches." I believe that to be even more true today. Thank you for your willingness to work closely with me to try and resolve concerns before a bill is passed. As in past years, I have signed legislation that I don't love and probably would not have voted for. But that is not the standard.

Now, I know the last thing you want is a lecture from the Executive Branch. But I'm hoping you will permit me just a little bit of constructive feedback. My overarching concern this session was with the sheer number of bills passed. To put things in context, the year I was elected to the Legislature (2012), there were 477 bills passed. This year, you delivered a record 591 bills to my desk – a significant increase over the record of 575 set last year. For comparison purposes, here are the numbers over the past 20 years:

General Session Year	Bills Passed	General Session Year	Bills Passed
2005	370	2015	528
2006	395	2016	474
2007	423	2017	535
2008	436	2018	533
2009	451	2019	574
2010	481	2020	510
2011	504	2021	502
2012	477	2022	512
2013	524	2023	575
2014	486	2024	591

As you can see, we have moved from bill totals in the 300s to almost hitting the 600 mark. While I suppose there is nothing inherently wrong with more bills, I truly believe it makes it more difficult to focus on the quality of legislation. I know how much attention each bill takes to shepherd through the process as you run from committee hearing to stakeholder meetings. The problem is that with each bill a legislator runs, there is significantly less time to pay attention to everyone else's bills. Ultimately, we end up with lots of new laws, but not necessarily the best versions of those laws.

Now, I'm not asking you to be like our dysfunctional Congress, which somehow only passed 27(!) bills last year. While I would love to get back into the 300s, maybe shooting for the high 400s is a more realistic goal. And while I'm not sure the best way to get there, I do have a few vetoes this year that might be instructive.

Just like there are meetings that could be emails, sometimes there are bills that could be phone calls. We try hard to be responsive to legislative requests and I have instructed my cabinet members to do everything they can to help with issues and ideas you might have. And while we probably could have found more bills in this category, I have selected these bills for veto:

1. HB 152 Residential Construction Amendments
This bill requires the Division of Professional Licensing to create a sample contract for residential construction and remodels. The Division can (and will) do this without a bill directing it.
2. HB 239 State Employee Cybersecurity Training Requirements
This bill requires the Division of Technology Services to create a cybersecurity training program for executive branch employees, and requires employees to complete the training program each year. However, this training program already exists, and employees are already required to participate. If there are concerns with the existing program, DTS stands ready to make whatever changes are needed.
3. HB 412 Legislative Auditor General Amendments
This bill seeks to add additional items for an agency to report on as part of the accountable budget process – including an agency's compliance with the Office of the Legislative Auditor General's toolkit. I am very supportive of the toolkit, and expect agencies to use the toolkit as a tool to improve organizational excellence. But we don't need a bill in order for agencies to apply the toolkit to improve operations.
4. SB 244 Professional Licensing Modifications
The Division of Professional Licensing created criminal history guidelines and placed the guidelines on its website to increase transparency and help potential licensees. DOPL did this *without* being directed to do so by statute. Nevertheless, this bill would put *in* statute specific requirements for DOPL on what it created without a statute. We can address the sponsor's concerns without a bill, and I have directed DOPL to ensure that this happens.

5. SB 274 Administrative Law Judge Amendments

This bill started as an effort to move all ALJs in the state into the Attorney General's Office and was quickly substituted to require state agencies to report information to the Legislature regarding ALJs. Our agencies can provide this information without a bill. I have tasked the Department of Government Operations with gathering the information sought.

As you can see, many concerns can be addressed through conversations with or commitments by agencies *without* the need for more bills that expand our ever-growing state code. And if you ever feel like you aren't accomplishing what you hope to after you talk to an agency, you can always bring your concerns to my office.

Another concern is when a bill starts with a more substantive objective, but is subsequently amended or substituted to a point that it does not effectively accomplish its goal. Sometimes, instead of trying to pass *something*, the best result is to regroup and consider another run at the issue down the road. For this reason, I am vetoing the following bills:

6. HB 144 Vehicle Accident Liability Amendments

This bill started as an effort to clarify liability involving left turns by vehicles in certain circumstances. In response to concerns, some of the language was removed. The language that remains has raised concerns and may not bring the clarity that the original goal intended.

7. SB 190 Higher Education Development Areas Study

While we agree with the initial policy direction of the bill, sometimes a bill changes direction in a substitute and doesn't need formal legislation to accomplish our policy objectives. We'll still work with higher education and Sen. Wilson to explore this idea.

In addition, I am allowing two bills to go into effect without my signature because of the overwhelming legislative support:

1. HB 78 Motion Picture Incentives Amendments

I have expressed my concerns in the past with the amounts of money being spent on film incentives. I believe there are better returns for taxpayer dollars.

2. SB 266 Medical Amendments

I am generally supportive of scientific efforts to discover the benefits of new substances that can relieve suffering. However, we have a task force that was set up specifically to advise the Legislature on the best ways to study Psilocybin and I'm disappointed that their input was ignored.

Finally, there are a few bills that address important topics that need additional work over the interim. These include SB 161 - Energy Security Amendments and SB 273 - Amendments Relating to District Attorney in County of the First Class. We signed these bills with the express understanding that we will work together to address those concerns.

In addition, I will be sending separate letters to you concerning some budget line-item vetoes.

Thanks again for your hard work, sacrifice and dedication on behalf of the people of Utah. I am proud of what you have accomplished and can't wait to start working together to solve new problems (OK, that's not entirely true ... I can wait a few days). Thank you for making Utah the best state in the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Spencer J. Cox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Spencer" and last name "Cox" clearly distinguishable.

Spencer J. Cox
Governor