The 2020 Utah State Legislative Session will last for 45 days from January 27th through March 12th. During this time, state legislators will consider over 1,300 bills, including proposals to address the issues that a majority of Utahns care about most. Here are some of the big issues and bills to watch for and follow on our Bill Tracker. Follow Action Utah on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @ActionUtah and at www.actionutah.org for simple actions you can take to impact bills like these. Please note: most bills remain unnamed and unnumbered. This list uses some unofficial titles.

#1: HEALTH CARE

Expanding access and reducing costs.
After a tumultuous year of legislative changes and public input following the Medicaid ballot initiative, Utah has finally achieved full Medicaid coverage. With efforts underway to enroll people who previously did not have any health coverage, we now expect to see a heavier legislative focus on mechanisms that reduce overall healthcare cost as well as provide better opportunities for people to access treatment in ways that meet their needs. Look for efforts to reduce costs for prescription drugs through importation from Canada and to reduce out of pocket costs for insulin. We will also see a collection of bills seeking to curb the epidemic of vaping and associated illnesses, particularly related to minors.

#2: AIR QUALITY & ENVIRO STEWARDSHIP

Promoting stewardship of our air, climate, water and land.
Last legislative session we saw an unprecedented $29M appropriated to a variety of efforts to improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions. Once again, the Governor’s budget includes $100M toward air quality measures. We expect to see bills that focus on building for the future by increasing infrastructure for electric vehicles, promoting transit oriented development and transitioning more quickly away from the highest polluting vehicles. We also can expect to see bills that focus on the reduction of carbon emissions by incorporating the recommendations from the Utah Roadmap, a state-funded report on positive solutions for air quality and a changing climate by the Kem C. Gardner Institute, as well as proposing targets for transitioning to greater use of renewable energy sources. Other environmental stewardship bills will address water issues like secondary water metering and testing water at Utah schools.

Health Care bills to look for:

- **HB 38: Substance Use and Healthcare Amendments** by Rep. Brad Daw - Puts inmates on Medicaid 30 days prior to release if they have a behavioral health issue.
- **HCR 7: Encouraging Congressional Action on Medicare Drug Prices** by Rep. Suzanne Harrison - Encourages Congress to provide policy tools to negotiate significant reductions in Medicare drug prices.
- **SB 37: Electronic Cigarette and Other Nicotine Product Amendments** by Sen. Allen Christensen - Changes permitting requirements, excise taxes and penalties for e-cigs and other nicotine products.

Air Quality bills to look for:

- **Vehicle Emissions Reduction Program** by Jeff Stenquist - Reduces emissions by retiring and replacing dirty cars that fail an emissions test in nonattainment areas.
- **Electric Vehicle Charging Network** by Robert Spendlove - Works in tandem with Utah Department of Transportation to increase fast charging stations for electric vehicles.
- **Clean and Renewable Energy Requirement Amendments** by Ray Ward - Amends the way renewable energy is counted and sets more ambitious state renewable energy goals.
- **HB 88: School and Child Care Water Testing Requirements** by Rep. Steve Handy - Requires testing of drinking water for lead at schools and child care centers.
**#3: EDUCATION**

Supporting teachers and schools to ensure a prosperous future for our state.

Education funding is consistently a top priority among Utahns, particularly after the legislature passed a massive tax reform bill that relies on changing the funding mechanism for education during the 2020 Legislative Session. Speculation abounds as to what new funding structure and minimums may be proposed for education this year. The governor’s budget includes an increase to public education spending, but it will be up to legislators to decide on the final appropriation amount and impact to weighted pupil unit. In the meantime we are looking forward to seeing changes to school accountability standards.

**Education bills to look for:**

- *Education Accountability Amendments* by Rep. Marie Poulson – Eliminates the current school grading system, as research indicates that this is not an accurate representation of the school quality and does more damage than good for enrollment and funding.
- *Proposal to Amend Utah Constitution - Education Amendments* by Rep. Ray Ward - Coupled with the tax reform bill passed in 2019, this bill would trigger a public vote to remove the constitutional earmark for public education from income tax revenue.
- *HCR 7 Encouraging Consideration of a Late Start Time for High School* by Rep. Suzanne Harrison - Non-binding resolution encouraging districts to use late start times for high schools.

**#4: SUICIDE PREVENTION**

Reducing our high suicide rate through evidence based solutions.

Utah has seen a slight decline in suicide rates in the past year, dropping from 5th to 6th in the nation. However, a recent Kem C. Gardner Institute report indicated that we are still falling behind when it comes to access to mental health care. Vulnerable populations continue to see increased rates of anxiety and depression and a 2018 Harvard report proved correlations between high gun ownership and suicide completion rates in Utah. We expect to see a revival of the Extreme Risk Protective Order bill and safe harbor legislation to reduce access to firearms for people in crisis, as well as continued funding increases to programs we know are working, such as the SAFEUT app. Also in the works are mental health bills that make it easier for people to access emergent care in a more cost effective and efficient manner and bills that help expand insurance coverage of mental health treatment.

**Suicide Prevention bills to look for:**

- *Extreme Risk Protective Orders* by Rep. Steve Handy - Allows law enforcement and family members to petition a judge to temporarily remove firearms from an individual who poses an imminent threat to themselves or others.
- *HB 35: Mental Health Treatment Access Amendments* by Rep. Steve Eliason - Requires study of long-term need for adult beds at the Utah State Hospital and standards for ACOTTs.
- *Mental Health Insurance Requirements* by Rep. Brian King - Helps insurers comply with the federal mental health parity law passed in 2008 to ensure wider access for insured people to mental health services and pharmaceutical treatments.

**Did you know?**

During the State Legislative Session, Action Utah tracks dozens of bills in our Bill Tracker and publishes daily and urgent calls to action for community members to help pass, amend and oppose the bills they care about. Stay informed at www.actionutah.org!
Strengthening Families bills to look for:

- **HB 69: Sick Leave Amendments** by Rep. Patrice Arent - Allows employees already receiving sick leave to use it to care for a sick family member.
- **HB 89: Workforce Development Incentive Amendments** by Suzanne Harrison - Provides that the Governor's Office of Economic Development may consider whether an employer will provide working parent benefits when awarding certain economic development tax incentives.
- **HB 153: Parental Leave Amendments** by Rep. Elizabeth Weight - Requires certain executive branch employers to offer parental leave.
- **SB 39: Affordable Housing Amendments** by Sen. Jake Anderegg - This bill infuses one time funding to the Olene Walker Housing Loan Fund and ongoing funds to the Department of Workforce Services for the development of workforce housing and community development and rent assistance for families at risk for homelessness.
- **Payday Lending Amendments** by Rep. Brad Daw - Moves oversight of payday lenders to the Consumer Protection Bureau and reclassifies the definition of personal loans to reduce the total amount of payday loans a person can take out.

Good Government bills to look for:

- **HB 70: Repeal of Single-Mark Straight Ticket Voting** by Rep. Patrice Arent and **HB 71: Prohibition of Straight Ticket Voting** by Rep. Craig Hall - These bills would remove the provision that allows for a voter to vote for all the candidates of one party without having to vote for each candidate individually.
- **Repeal or revision of Prop 4 for Better Boundaries** - Rumored bill to change the independent redistricting commission approved by voters during the 2018 election.

#5: STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Building family economic prosperity.

Our state has been enjoying long term economic growth and prosperity, with job opportunities so abundant that Utah boasts one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, particularly along the Wasatch Front. Along with growth come economic challenges for families, including lack of access to affordable childcare, increased housing costs and decreased housing availability, as well as other issues. Watch for legislative proposals that address some of the pressing issues around childcare, family and medical leave and workforce housing development. In addition, we expect to see bills addressing intergenerational poverty, such as reform of predatory payday lending practices.

#6: GOOD GOVERNMENT

Protecting the voters voice and strengthening our democracy.

Although the legislature passed a sweeping tax reform bill during a special session in 2019, tax reform will continue to be a major point of discussion throughout the 2020 Legislative Session, particularly as legislators await the outcome of a voter referendum to undo the tax reform bill. Legislators have already made significant changes to two ballot measures passed by the people in 2018, and several have vowed this year to repeal or significantly alter 2018’s Prop 4, the Better Boundaries initiative to create an independent redistricting commission. We also expect to see voting/election reform policies, such as two bills seeking to eliminate straight ticket voting, and others that look at candidate filing, campaign finance and ethics issues.
Your Voice Matters During the State Legislative Session

We are fortunate to live in a state where our state legislators are accessible and willing to talk with and listen to constituents. In fact, legislators often appreciate learning how their constituents feel about issues and getting personal stories and factual information that can aid in their decision making. YOU can make an impact this Legislative Session by reaching out to your state senator and representative or members of legislative committees. Action Utah can help you to make a meaningful difference on the issues you care about most. Here’s how!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. **Subscribe to our email list** – We’ll send you an assortment of simple actions delivered in a single weekly email straight to your inbox. Pick and choose actions you want to take to impact your favorite bills.

2. **Download our State Legislative Session Advocacy Guide** to give you step by step instructions and tips on how to be civically engaged to impact the issues that you care about during the Legislative Session.

3. **Use our BILL TRACKER** to follow the bills you care about most. Watch for actions you can take to impact them on our "Take Action!" blog or on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

4. **Attend an informational event.** Action Utah is here to bring you the latest on the issues, upcoming bills and the skills and tools you’ll need to make a meaningful difference. Mark your calendars and register now for these great events!

- **January 23rd: Women’s Advocacy Seminar** – Back by popular demand! Find out about proposed bills that impact women and families and get insider tips on how to help these good bills pass. Co-hosted with Women & Leadership Project and YWCA. 12:00p, UVU Thanksgiving Point.
- **January 23rd: SLC Legislative Preview** – Hear about Action Utah’s top priority bills directly from legislators at Action Utah’s popular annual event, featuring community advocacy tips to help you make an impact. 6:00p, Marmalade Library, SLC.
- **January 29th: State Capitol Tour** – What more exciting time to visit than during the start of the 2020 State Legislative Session! Join Action Utah on Utah’s Capitol Hill to find out what’s happening at the “People’s House” and how community members can witness the legislative process during the session and throughout the year. 8:00a, Utah State Capitol.
- **January 30th: How to Attend a Committee Hearing** – Join Action Utah for a workshop on how committee hearings work on Capitol Hill and how community members can participate as witnesses or community advocates. 10:00a, Utah State Capitol.
- **Tuesdays, February 6th - March 12th: Weekly Lobby Days** – Action Utah hosts members of the community to join us weekly at State Capitol during the State Legislative Session to learn how to lobby legislators on current bills and participate in activities on Capitol Hill. This is a great opportunity to witness the state legislative branch in action and to make a meaningful impact on policy decisions. Plus, it’s fun! 1:00p, Utah State Capitol.

Action Utah is a nonpartisan community advocacy organization empowering Utahns from both sides of the aisle to get civically engaged to impact the issues you care about most. Find us at www.actionutah.org or on social media @ActionUtah. Contact us at mobilize@actionutah.org.