

**For Good or For Bad: What Do You See In The Upcoming Legislative Session?**

2007 is now upon us and the New Year only means one thing in Utah politics: a new legislative session. As usual, the predictable and always entertaining Legislature will be flexing their political muscles for all to see. To be honest, I was tempted to reprint last year's Party Lines piece about the Legislature. That is because the only thing different is the calendar date. We will see the inevitable message bills and the extremists will provide plenty of humor for local columnists and cartoonists. Plus, we will see the usual closed-door meetings that Republican lawmakers love to hold.

Of course, the usual priority bills will be discussed, such as transportation, health care, and taxes. But, public education, as it is every year, will be the marquee topic. Let's face it; our one-party government in this state has done little for public education in the past 20 plus years. Yes, the lawmakers gave education a ten-percent increase last year. But with all the years of neglecting our children, last year's increase was like using a garden hose to put out a forest fire. Sadly, most of our elected leaders have campaigned on promises to fix education, but somehow come up with more important priorities once they are in office. I hate to think that our lawmakers do not care. But, our per-pupil spending now ranks Utah dead last in the country and our state is losing teachers faster than Republican lawmakers can "speed-date" lobbyists.

The excuses for not funding education and snubbing teachers will sound familiar. Among the excuses:

- We have a lot on the table, but we promise to fund education later when we have more revenues.
- We need the free market to work because there is no competition in public education.
- Utahns are taxed more than anyone in the country.
- People know how to spend their money better than government does.

With ridiculous excuses like these and their disregard for our children over the past two decades, it is hard to believe any promises made by legislators to fund education are genuine. And to make matters worse, in the next 10 years, our student population will increase by 145,000 and a teacher shortage is threatening the future of our children. Our lawmakers need to stop playing politics and start listening to what most Utahns want. Our lawmakers need to come out of their cave (closed-door meetings) and smell the Postum.

Like Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." I challenge every Davis County resident to call their representative and tell them we care about the future of our great state. Below are the phone numbers of our Davis County Legislators:

Rep. Ray 725-2719

Rep. Oda 725-0277

Rep. Aagard 546-3935

Rep. Garn 544-3533

Rep. Fisher 544-3833

Rep. Barrus 292-2266

Rep. Allen 295-8576

Rep. Neuenschwander 295-4400

Sen. Killpack 773-5486

Sen. Bell 971-2001

Sen. Eastman 295-5133

Hopefully, we will see some changes.

Richard Watson,

Chair, Davis County Democratic Party