

Wrap-up of the 2006 Legislative Session

Several weeks ago, The Clipper printed a random poll of what Davis County residents thought of Utah Lawmakers. In this poll, the majority of them compared the Legislature as a "loony bin" of self-serving lawmakers. They spend too much time on "message" bills and address priority bills with little or no time. The term "loony bin" maybe harsh and given the fact that our lawmakers annually repeat "loony" acts, the term maybe too nice.

This year, our lawmakers did not disappoint as the media supplied us with some comical and sad editorials. To be fair, there were some bright spots from this year's legislative session, including a reduction in the sales tax on food and the passing of the Hate Crimes Bill. Another bill ensured students of active-duty military families the right to pay in-state tuition.

Unfortunately, the 45 days spent by our lawmakers was more of a disappointment because of self-interest issues as they again ignored the voices of Utah's citizens.

Legislators had more than \$1 billion to work with, yet our lawmakers left many services short of desperately needed funds. For example, lawmakers cut dental and vision Medicaid services. That means 65,000 citizens on Medicaid will not have the funds to afford proper dental and vision care while our lawmakers have saved the state less than \$5 million. Which means taxpayers will have to makeup the difference in the future.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment came in education funding. Conservatives will tell us that they gave education a big increase in the Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU) at 6%. But education advocates have said that we need at least a 10% increase to meet the demands of increased enrollments in the future. In addition, every statewide poll indicated that Utahns wanted the legislature to spend more money on public education. With their attitude of abandoning the public's wishes and their desire to under fund

education, why do we continually put up with anti-education lawmakers who neglect our children's future?

Another disturbing part of our legislature is the continuing saga of overlooking ethics reform. This type of self-interest serves no one and opens the door to future ethical problems. It is interesting to note that they voted themselves a \$10 a day raise.

Also, rather than study the possible tax reforms presented by ex-Governor Walker's task force, lawmakers pushed for their own agendas as Republicans fought amongst themselves. In the end, they only spent the last day to discuss any tax reform.

From a Democratic viewpoint, this past session is indicative why we need a change. Our one-party form of government is failing the citizens and the lack of adequate representation is the consequence. There are some Republicans who do listen, but many legislative Republicans today, indulge themselves with power, arrogance and a growing attitude of superiority. This year is an election year and what better way of improving the government of Utah than to vote out the incumbents. For that reason, voters should seriously consider Democratic candidates who will work for the citizens of Davis County.

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