3/25/2014

FINAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

The session is over! Here is what happened on the important bills surrounding Trust Lands and School Community Councils.

HB221 SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL REVISIONS – Sponsor: Representative Cunningham
PASSED
This bill eliminated some required dates related to elections. Elections must be either in the spring or in the fall and be completed by October 20th. It also moved up the date where information must be entered on the website to October 20th as well. It clarified that the School Children's Trust Section at the Utah State Office of Education could provide additional training to School Community Council members, like the ones done last year in the Alpine and Weber. PTA supported this bill.

SB111S2 EDUCATION FUNDING EQUALIZATION – Sponsor: Senator Osmond
FAILED
This bill would have froze the minimum basic rate for property taxes and subsequently brought more money to education. The bill was amended in the Senate to be a fund specifically for technology, instead of having the money flow to School Community Councils as was originally intended. Ultimately the House decided against even hearing this bill, so it failed.

HCR4 CONCURRENT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SCHOOL AND INSTITUTIONAL TRUST LANDS ADMINISTRATION Sponsor: Representative Mel Brown
PASSED
This resolution recognized the 20 years of leadership, management and accomplishments of the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration. This includes the increase in revenues from $86 million to $1.7 billion now in the permanent funds. PTA supported this bill.

HB168 SCHOOL AND INSTITUTIONAL TRUST LANDS AND FUNDS MANAGEMENT PROVISIONS – Sponsor: Representative Mel Brown
PASSED
This bill changed the management of the permanent State School Fund, this fund is where the revenue from school trust lands is deposited and invested. Currently the Fund is managed solely by the State Treasurer (and to be the Treasurer the only requirements are to be at least 25 years old and a resident of Utah). This bill moves the Fund to industry best practices. Management of the fund will be overseen by a volunteer board of long-term investment professionals, which will be chaired by the State Treasurer. The board will set policy and hire the investment officer. It will provide checks and balances that are not currently in the system. This piece of legislation will have a long term positive impact on the School Trust Program. I am thrilled that it passed. PTA supported this bill.

Thank you for all you do to inform legislators about how Trust Lands impact your school! It is so great when legislators remark about the amazing things School Community Councils are doing in their areas, as told to them from parents serving on councils. Keep communicating your successes, because it builds advocates for this program and the funding - and all our schools desperately need it. You're the best!

Karen Stahle Peterson
Utah State PTA Trust Land Appointee