



Utah Education Association

CAPITOL BULLETIN

January 25, 2008

www.utea.org

"News from the Utah Legislature"

Published by the Utah Education Association, 875 East 5180 South, Murray, Utah 84107-5299 (801) 266-4461

For Your Information

*Invest in public schools,
NEA economist tells
governor's staff*

It is vital to the Utah economy that we invest in public schools and not concentrate so much on tax cuts, a National Education Association economist told representatives of Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. on Wednesday.

NEA Chief Economist Richard Sims told the governor's Office of Planning and Budget that businesses seeking to relocate in a particular city look at education and simplifying the bureaucracy. Tax incentives are of lesser importance in site selection decisions.

While Utah has continued to focus on low corporate tax rates, state corporate income taxes account for a small percentage of the business costs. Labor costs make up a larger percentage of business costs, which is why public education is so critically important.

Emphasizing the need for a continuing investment in public schools, Sims quoted a *Wall Street Journal* article that said local schools in rural areas are "the best business in town."

Need Legislative Information?

www.utea.org
www.le.state.ut.us
<http://le.utah.gov>



The Week in Review

The 2008 legislative session began with some good news for Utah educators. Both the governor and legislative leaders promised to make teacher salary increases a top priority. Bills dealing with differentiated teacher pay and calling for the establishment of a task force to study performance pay incentives passed out of committee. An NEA economist told the governor's staff that investing in public schools is vital to the Utah economy.

House Phone: 538-1029 or 1-800-908-4261 Senate Phone: 538-1035 or 1-800-613-0677

UEA thanks governor, Utah Legislature for making teacher salaries a top priority

Members of the Utah Education Association are applauding Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. and the Utah Legislature for making teacher salary increases a top priority this year. But there will likely be debate about how the compensation money is appropriated — through the Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU) or as a budget line item.

"It is time we put educators back on a pedestal," Gov. Huntsman said during his annual State of the State address on Tuesday evening. "To do this, we must improve two things: compensation and capacity.

"Since historically our state has lagged in economic strength, we've always used that excuse to explain our inadequate salaries for teachers," Huntsman continued. "Those days are gone. And there is light at the end of the tunnel." He said if the state continues "our current rate of increasing compensation over the next four years," salaries will surpass the national average.

Huntsman said the state was 400 teachers short of meeting the school districts' needs this year and stressed the importance of increasing the number of educators being trained in the state's colleges and universities. He also advocated for more year-round contracts for teachers and summer school activities for students.

"Investing in meaningful teacher compensation will allow us to attract and retain the best educators — the kind parents want and students deserve," said UEA President Kim Campbell. "We must stop the exodus of great teachers from our state."

A Call to Action: Please call or write the governor and your legislator and thank them for recognizing the efforts of educators and making teacher salary increases a top priority. Address: Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr., Utah State Capitol Complex, 350 North State Street, Suite 200, PO Box 142220, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2220. Phone: (801) 538-1000 or (800) 705-2464. House/Senate phone numbers are listed above. Legislators' e-mail addresses at: <http://le.utah.gov>

Differentiated Pay, Task Force bills okayed by legislative committees

The Senate Education Committee this week approved Senator Howard Stephenson's (*R-Draper*) bill to establish differentiated pay to attract certain mathematics and science teachers to fill positions in school districts with a critical shortage of qualified personnel. Senate Bill 35, if approved, would require a school district or charter school to provide an ongoing salary supplement of \$5,000 to these educators. An ongoing appropriation of \$7 million per year would be required to fund the program.

"The Utah Education Association is opposing this bill because we believe increasing base salaries for all educators should be the Utah Legislature's first priority," said UEA Executive Director Susan Kuziak. "Providing increased pay for math and science educators only is not the best way to ensure long-term teacher recruitment and retention." SB 35 is on its way to the full Senate for a vote.

The Association does support House Bill 81, which establishes a task force to study performance pay incentives for Utah educators. "A comprehensive study of educator compensation models is the best way to arrive at a pay system that honors the skills of the profession and helps ensure a quality teacher for every child," Kuziak said. The task force will include the governor (or his designee), senators, representatives, teachers, and local and state board of education members.