



GENERAL SESSION

March 14, 2012

Program Topic: 2012 Legislative Session Wrap-Up

Presented by: Executive Committee

WSLC Pres: Sylvia Rickard

Pres. Elect: Kari Malkovich

Speakers: **Stan Rasmussen** – Director of Public Policy;
Sutherland Institute

Sen. Ross I. Romero (D) Dist. 7; Salt Lake County
(S.L. east bench); Minority Leader

Stan Rasmussen began by introducing the Sutherland Institute as a conservative, rather than a Republican organization. He said it analyzes public policy through a “conservative lens.” At the national level, the Institute could be compared to the Heritage Foundation. George Sutherland was the first Utahan to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Mr. Rasmussen then mentioned three pieces of legislation the Sutherland Institute supports:

SB208 Healthcare adopts the Health Care Compact and joins an interstate Advisory Health Care Commission. The intent of the Compact is ‘to secure the consent of

the U. S. Congress to the Compact in order to return the authority for health care regulation to the member states.”

If a state wants to enter the Compact, it must exact state legislation virtually identical to it. Utah wishes to enter. The Utah House and Senate have approved the legislation. When the number of states adopting the Compact reaches a critical mass (about 20 states), they will have standing to negotiate with the federal government.

HB148 Transfer of Public Lands Act requires the United States to relinquish title to Utah’s public lands

and transfer title to the state by December 31, 2014. Mr. Rasmussen said if Utah doubled state income tax and substantially increased corporate tax, we still couldn't bring ourselves up to the national average of per student expenditures.

HB363 Health Education Amendments would modify the requirements for human sexuality instruction, and would require human sexuality instruction to stress abstinence before marriage and fidelity after marriage as the only sure methods for preventing certain communicable diseases.

Responding to questions, Mr. Rasmussen said it is appropriate for Utah to make policy decisions regarding Medicaid. Up until about 50 years ago, the state handled it completely. On principle, we should be administering it fully today.

Regarding Common Core, he said Sutherland's concern is the overreach of national government into these social policies. The Institute also has serious concerns about the content of Common Core. Mr. Rasmussen called it "a corporate factory" model of federal government. For more information on the Sutherland Institute and its positions, go to <http://www.sutherland.institute.org>.

Sen. Romero said he would like to think he has been an effective voice for good government in Utah. He noted that the legislature kept within

the budget this session, while the WPU is up by 1.5%. The legislature also allotted 3% more for education.

He does not favor **HB148**. We do have much federal land, he said, but this is the deal we struck when we became a state. He does not think the solution is to spend state money to pass a state law that will surely be deemed unconstitutional. We could better use the litigation fund to educate the federal government as to why Utah's compensation for these lands should be augmented. At the end of the day, both political parties want the good of our state. If this is a federal issue, our representatives in the U.S. Congress should be the advocates.

The senator opposes **HB148**, as well. By in large, he said, the national health care bill is a good idea. Why should Utah pay to litigate against the federal government, when the Supreme Court will likely take care of most of the problems with it? The most expensive health care is Emergency Room care, he noted. We should make better preventative care expenditures in the established programs already available to us. Sen. Romero believes the federal government is doing quite well to uniformly bring basic services to the poor.

HB363 was considered on the last day of the session. Usually, the vote is taken after a day to consider a bill, and includes public input. It is Sen.

Romero’s belief that legislators held the bill back in order that they not be held accountable. There is no need for this bill, the senator said, and he opposes it. Parents, he noted, now have the choice to opt into the current sex education program. They are not required to do so. The opt-in levels are: (1) The child is excused from the program. (2) The child may hear part of the program. (3) The parent may review the program before giving consent. (4) The parent gives full consent.

The senator further noted that youth today need age-specific, parent-approved information. The current sex education law provides for that. Also, youth don’t always either receive

or pay attention to parental guidance regarding sex education. As a policy maker, he must consider the best good for society at large.

Responding to questions, Sen. Romero said Common Core would be of great help to our state. It is Utah-specific, but with an overlay of other states’ ideas. Every year, he said, the legislature proposes four or five new programs for education. It’s extremely difficult for educators to keep abreast of results, without allowing for the “breathing space” needed to measure progress.

Reported by Pam Grange

**THIS BULLETIN IS A PUBLICATION OF
THE WOMEN’S STATE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF UTAH, INC.**

<http://www.wslcofutah.org>

**“CELEBRATING 92 YEARS OF SERVICE”
1920 - 2012**

President: Sylvia Rickard
Advisor: Bette Voorhees
Editor: Pam Grange
Assist. Editor: Eileen Hallet Stone

*Printed by AlphaGraphics
117 West 900 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84101*