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GENERAL SESSION

September 24, 2014

Program Topic: Special Invitation to the Governor's Gold Room

**Presented by: State Issues
Acting Director: Kari Malkovich**

Speakers: Rep. Greg Hughes (R) Dist. 51 (Salt Lake County)

Rep. Brian King (D) Dist. 28 (Salt Lake, Summit Counties)

Gov. Gary Herbert

Rep. Hughes commenced by expressing appreciation for WSLC's many years of service to the state. He is also grateful for the good collaborative relationship he enjoys with Rep. King. As he looks back, he finds himself to be increasingly grateful for having been raised by a strong woman and for choosing a strong woman to marry.

His grandmother was a single working mom, as his sister is now. So the problems and realities faced by this particular demographic group are very personal issues for him. For example, his sister just got a \$.50/hour raise at work, which could nullify her access to subsidized childcare in her state. What is she, and others in her situation, to do?

One of Rep. Hughes' concerns is Medicare expansion in Utah. What should the expansion look like and will it be

sustainable? An ongoing issue is the relationship between Utah's economic development and education, since our state income tax funds the schools.

Responding to questions, he addressed the governor's "Healthy Utah" plan. Unwilling at this time to declare himself on all points of the plan, he said one of the hardest jobs for the legislature is trying to balance the available state money between good programs more pressing programs.

Rep. King mentioned he has always been proud that his mother was a past president of WSLC. He also agreed with Reps. Hughes that theirs is an enjoyable "friendly adversarial" relationship.

He believes there are also other examples within our state legislature of those with differing views being able to put their most

contradictory viewpoints aside in an effort to work together to craft good legislation for the state.

Regarding Utah's economic development, He said we are fortunate to have a stable one. Utah has many natural resources and start-up businesses. The state is also attracting more national businesses. However, Utah must be wise, cautious and judicious in its use of corporate welfare to attract out-of-state businesses. For example, the bid for Tesla Motors, manufacturer of the Tesla Roadster, a high-performance electric sports car, was won by Nevada rather than Utah. But it came at a huge cost to Nevada taxpayers.

Responding to questions, Rep. King agreed that education funding for Utah would probably always be an ongoing debate. Unfortunately, Utah is still "at the bottom of the pack" regarding per pupil spending. Education is the most important investment any state can make. He believes a genuine increase in revenue by the legislature should be injected into public education. Only then should we begin to address the particulars of wants vs. needs within that system.

Gov. Gary Herbert said he felt honored to meet with WSLC again, and also gave praise for the organization's many decades of service to Utah. Warming to the subject of exemplary women's service, he mentioned Martha Hughes Cannon. She was elected in 1896 as the first female senator in the state. The governor then noted with a chuckle that Ms. Cannon defeated her husband to gain that seat in the senate.

Continuing on a lighthearted theme, Gov. Herbert referred to the "very improbable path" that led him to be the 17th governor of Utah. No one, he said, was more surprised than his former classmates who knew him when he was growing up. He recalled an incident when, as governor, he accompanied his wife Jeanette to her high school reunion

and met the "boy" who had taken her to the Senior Prom. In an aside later to Jeanette, Gov. Herbert quipped that her former date was impressive but "I'll bet you're glad you married the one who is governor of Utah." Without missing a beat, she said, "Well, if I'd married him, *he* would be governor now."

Turning to political matters, he offered his belief that former Pres. Clinton had it right when he adopted the campaign slogan of "It's the Economy, Stupid." If a state's economy is properly in place, all other pet projects of any state administration will largely fall into place. The governor maintained that adherence to that belief has produced consistently superior economic indicators for our state. Utah is one of only 9 states maintaining a Triple A bond rating. Utah has the 2nd fastest growing economy in the U.S. (The first is North Dakota.) We also have the 4th most diverse economy in the country.

It is also his belief that government regulation should be frequently examined. Legislation tends to spawn more regulation. Out of 1,969 Utah governmental regulations, his administration has identified and scraped 368 of them that no longer have any public purpose.

Gov. Herbert also reported on his recent attendance the Global Economic Summit. He said he came away convinced Utah will be able to successfully compete in the ongoing global economy.

Responding to questions, the governor said public education is a key factor of our growing state economy. \$850M of new money was put into public education last year. He is also in the process of developing a comprehensive 10-year plan for education, and will be phasing it in incrementally. State Attny. Gen. Sean Reyes is reviewing Common Core. A special sub-committee is reviewing math and English standards, as well as the appropriateness of student

questionnaires contained in Common Core. It will make recommendations to the State School Board. The governor feels his "Healthy Utah" plan is the best compromise for Medicaid expansion in our state. States were never asked to weigh in on the Affordable Health Care Act (AHCA). However, the Supreme Court gave the states some leeway by ruling the mandate is actually a tax. States receive \$258M the first year to administer the AHCA. The control and administration of public lands is also an

ongoing issue for the western states. Gov. Herbert said he supports U.S. Congressmen Rob Bishop and Jason Chaffetz's "Grand Compromise" plan for public lands.

WSLC President Kari Malkovich presented the governor with a copy of the WSLC Resolution in support of the Healthy Utah plan.

Reported by Pam Grange

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