

**MINUTES OF THE
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS INTERIM COMMITTEE**
Wednesday, June 17, 2015 – 9:00 a.m. – Room 20 House Building

Members Present:

Sen. Margaret Dayton, Senate Chair
Rep. Jack R. Draxler, House Chair
Sen. Lyle W. Hillyard
Sen. Jani Iwamoto
Sen. Alvin B. Jackson
Sen. Scott K. Jenkins
Rep. Patrice M. Arent
Rep. Fred C. Cox
Rep. Brad M. Daw
Rep. Sophia M. DiCaro
Rep. Brian M. Greene
Rep. Brian S. King

Rep. Merrill F. Nelson
Rep. Curtis Oda
Rep. Lee B. Perry
Rep. Jeremy A. Peterson
Rep. Dean Sanpei

Staff Present:

Mr. Brian J. Bean, Policy Analyst
Mr. Thomas R. Vaughn, Associate General
Counsel
Ms. Katie LeFevre, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Draxler called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Motion: Sen. Dayton moved to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2015, meeting, with corrections. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Jackson, Rep. Greene, Rep. Nelson, Rep. Oda, Rep. Peterson, and Rep. Sanpei absent for the vote.

2. Report from the Department of Veterans' and Military Affairs

The handouts "Utah Department of Veterans & Military Affairs" and "The Utah Veterans Voice" were distributed to the committee.

Mr. Gary Harter, Executive Director, Department of Veterans' and Military Affairs, reported to the committee on the Department of Veterans' and Military Affairs. He spoke about benefits, education, and jobs for veterans. He explained the pilot programs and networks the department has created and implemented to support veterans.

Mr. Harter also informed the committee about the department's outreach methods, veteran's nursing homes, and the Veteran's Memorial Cemetery. He also elaborated on the benefits from using a database to track veterans. Mr. Harter then informed the committee of the department's plan for the next year as well as statistics relating to veterans. He indicated that he receives positive reviews from veterans in Utah who often refer veterans in other states to his organization.

Mr. Harter responded to questions from the committee.

3. Report from the Commission on Federalism

President Wayne L. Niederhauser reported to the committee regarding the Commission on Federalism. President Niederhauser announced that the commission chairs will change. He explained that the commission created a working group to identify future discussion items. He further explained that an evaluation committee was also created to review responses to a request for proposals that were issued by the commission relating to the Curriculum on Federalism. He informed the committee that the commission studied the statutes and regulations relating to federal lands, received a report from the fiscal analyst, and heard a presentation on the federal register.

President Niederhauser responded to questions from the committee regarding the federal register, President Niederhauser's communication with other states' Senate presidents, and a constitutional convention.

4. Draft Legislation "School District Participation in Risk Management Fund" (2016FL-0246/002)

Mr. Vaughn presented draft legislation "School District Participation in Risk Management Fund" to the committee. He explained that the committee requested the bill, which repeals the sunset provision in relation to a statute that allows the risk management fund to provide coverage to a school district.

Motion: Sen. Jenkins moved to recommend draft legislation "School District Participation in Risk Management Fund" as a committee bill. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Plurality in the 50 States

Mr. Bean gave a presentation to the committee. He explained the meaning of plurality and how 2014 General Session S.B. 54, "Elections Amendments," prompted a broader discussion in Utah about election by a plurality. He also explained other states' candidate nomination systems as well as whether and how each state has addressed the plurality issue.

Mr. Bean responded to questions from the committee regarding Utah's past election systems, voter participation, and the cost of elections.

6. Legislative Solutions for Plurality

Rep. Marc K. Roberts addressed the committee. He discussed ranked choice voting and party choice voting. He spoke about the background of 2014 General Session S.B. 54, "Elections Amendments," and how it was created. Rep. Roberts showed a video explaining preferential voting and gave his opinion that preferential voting may be too costly for the state to consider. He then explained the bill he sponsored to address plurality: 2015 General Session H.B. 313 2nd Substitute, "Primary Elections Modifications."

Rep. Roberts responded to questions from the committee. Rep. Nelson expressed concern that preferential voting could allow vote manipulation. Rep. Cox discussed the positive and negative aspects of sending the vote to a convention. Rep. DiCaro asked whether there is information on the costs of each voting option, and Chair Draxler suggested that the committee staff work with county clerks, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and others to obtain cost comparisons.

7. Plurality's Implications for State Election Administration

A handout, "Office of the Lt. Governor Government Operations Interim Committee June 17, 2015," was distributed to the committee.

Mr. Mark Thomas, Director of Elections, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, addressed the committee. He discussed the effects different policy solutions to plurality would have on election administration. He indicated that significant administrative and financial hurdles would need to be overcome to successfully implement ranked choice voting or runoff elections. Mr. Thomas indicated that the party choice option would have little or no impact on election administration.

Mr. Thomas responded to questions from the committee regarding each method of addressing the plurality issue.

The committee received public comment on the various proposals to address plurality.

Mr. Arie VanDeGraaff, lobbyist, Utah Association of Counties, addressed the committee. He explained counties' roles in elections. Mr. VanDeGraaff expressed the counties' willingness to support the Legislature's decisions, but cautioned the Legislature against unfunded mandates.

Ms. Jenn Gonnely, Copresident, League of Women Voters of Utah, addressed the committee. She cautioned against the party choice option, arguing that it would disenfranchise voters. She stated that the League of Women Voters of Utah would not support the option.

Mr. Ricky Hatch, Clerk/Auditor, Weber County, and Chair, County Clerks/Auditors Legislative Committee, addressed the committee. He informed the committee that the county clerks support the Office of the Lieutenant Governor in election administration and the clerks are willing provide any information the Legislature would like.

8. Other Items/Adjourn

Motion: Sen. Dayton moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously with Rep. Sanpei absent for the vote.

Chair Draxler adjourned the meeting at 11:28 a.m.