

## USEA LEGISLATIVE ALERT

As you probably know, the Utah legislature is considering substantial cuts to all parts of government, including public education. Legislative leadership has taken the position that it prefers to cut costs to meet expected revenues, and has asked all state agencies to cut costs by 7.5% for the remainder of this fiscal year (through June 30, 2009) and an additional 7.5% for the next fiscal year.

Public education officials believe that at this point in the current school year, the only possible place to cut further is compensation. This could result in reduced hours, furloughs, eliminated or deferred programs, and even reductions in force.

Governor Huntsman has proposed a budget that partially makes up for reduced revenues by bonding for construction (which frees up money for other programs), one-time use of Utah's rainy day funds, and other measures that would minimize cuts to ongoing programs.

USEA believes that the better-reasoned approach is to minimize cuts by temporarily using bonding and using rainy day funds to offset lower revenues and to fund ongoing programs.

Classified school employees need to contact their representatives and senators and urge them to minimize any cuts to public education. We suggest the following as talking points:

Public education is critical to the long-term economic success of the state;

It is in the best interests of the state to keep these programs intact as much as possible, retaining qualified employees and established programs;

Alternatives to reductions in funding for public education (bonding, rainy day funds) are available to reduce the present shortfall;

Reduced funding for public education will result in long-term costs to the state because of a less-educated workforce, lost industry, and other impacts;

Final decisions as to where to make any reductions should be left to local school boards, who best understand the needs of their students and communities;

Funding public education is an investment, not a cost.

Thank you for taking the time to make your support of public education known to the Legislature. If you have any questions about what is happening on Capitol Hill, contact the USEA offices.