



2020 Legislative Top Priorities

*Requests, Efforts and
Accomplishments*



The 2020 Legislative Session was unlike any other.

Following a long interim session focused on tax reform, there was still much to accomplish. We worked and coordinated with you throughout the summer and during our weekly legislative policy committee meetings throughout the legislative session to coordinate efforts.

We want to thank you for your hard work this year as we all worked together unlike ever before. When you joined us at the capitol to advocate for your public office, you demonstrated your commitment to uphold your public office in the highest regard. Again, we thank you for that ongoing effort.

The pages that follow are legislative priorities that together we turned into victories. These are the highlights of our combined efforts. Overall, we tracked 257 bills and began using a bill tracking software to help streamline the process.

The other bills tracked not mentioned in this recap can be found on our website. Bills relating to the topic are linked in the bottom left-hand corner.

Thank you for your commitment to good government and a wonderful legislative session.

Sincerely,

Your UAC Team

2020 Legislative Priorities and Successes



1. Tax Reform - Repeal and Legislation to Remove Education Earmark



2. Change in County Form of Government Recodification



3. Fix the Educational Exemption to Property Tax



4. Floating the Certified Tax Rate - Multicounty Assessing Levy



5. Funding – Increase the Daily Rate for Jails



6. Funding – Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal System



7. Funding - Reinstate Medicaid Funding Cuts (\$3.9M)



8. Funding - Rewrite of GOED Incentive Tools for Counties



9. Tier II Retirement Issues - Protect County Budgets



10. Funding - County TRT Flexibility Issues

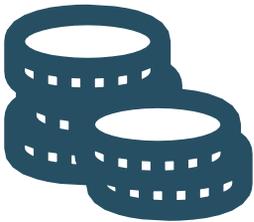


11. Personal Use of Public Property Modifications



12. Funding - EMS Services Stabilization and New Funding

Tax Reform



Following months of Tax Reform and Equalization Task Force meetings, SB 2001 passed during a special session but was repealed during the 2020 General Session. Any major changes to tax policy in the state will come as gradual changes during upcoming legislative sessions, or there will need to be another round of task force meetings to change Utah's tax structure in an all-encompassing bill.

UAC worked tirelessly to ensure local government revenue sources were maintained, which we did successfully. We anticipate the effort around tax reform will continue, but in all conversations, our revenue capabilities are maintained. The focus is primarily aimed at loosening restrictions around the use of income tax (Education Fund).

[SB 2001 Tax Restructuring Revisions \(Hillyard\)](#)

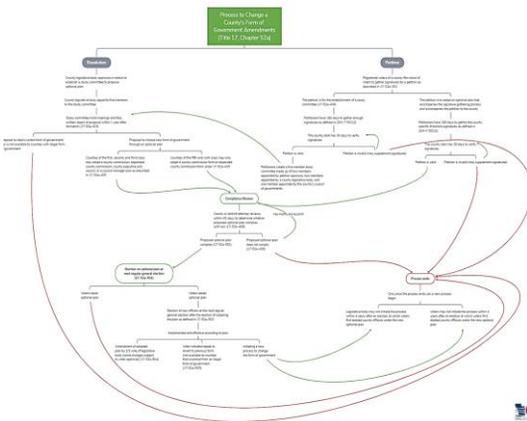
[HB 357 Public Education Funding Stabilization \(Spendlove\)](#)

County Form of Government Recodification

- Promote the Commission as the default form (Rural Counties)
- Streamline the process for a change in form
- Ensure the process is controlled by the County on any proposed change
- Clarity around roles of the “study committee” and the elected officials during deliberation



This bill was a priority during interim as we determined how language should be modified to clarify the change of form of government process. This bill also identifies the alternative forms of government counties can choose from should they choose this process.



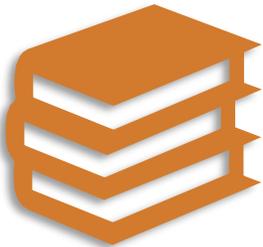
The flowchart (left) shows the new form for changing county form of government. (Click the chart to view)

OLRGC

[HB 61 Amendments to County Form of Government \(Wilde\)](#)

Educational and Charitable Exemptions for Property Tax

- This bill came as a result of a lawsuit from Cache County
- This bill ensures that the Cache County interpretation of the law is maintained
- Provides consistency of interpretation for counties and taxpayers



UAC staff worked closely with several representatives from the assessors, auditors, attorneys, and the Utah Taxpayers Association in drafting this language.

The bill defines educational and charitable purposes in a clear manner based on case law. These clarifications remove ambiguity from the statute so those who do not meet the definition of an educational purpose pay their fair share in property taxes.

Multicounty Assessing and Collecting Tool

This was a proactive piece of legislation that was initiated by UAC to ensure adequate funding for the computer assisted mass appraisal system. This is the tool counties use to effectively value property for the purposes of establishing property tax rates. By establishing a set funding rate for the tool, we have guaranteed adequate resources for the full development of this critical county tool.

New multicounty assessing and collecting levy tax rate

.000012

Stabilizes rate for 5 years — funding MCAT

[SB 141 \(Hemmert\) – Multicounty Assessing and Collecting Levy Amendments](#)

Jail Funding

Jail funding is a continued priority for our counties and for UAC. Work on jail contracting, reimbursement and programming will continue to be a focus. While this year's allocation was not a significant increase, we have been very successful over the last several years to increase the rate substantially. We will be back at it again in 2020 and 2021.



Jail Contracting and Reimbursement

\$82.93

Actual County Daily Incarceration Rate

This year, our Joint Jails Committee wanted to study the true cost of running a jail. UAC staff worked with county auditors and sheriffs' offices to collect this information.

Jail funding is an ongoing topic as the new state prison nears completion. Counties will continue to play a vital role in housing & rehabilitating inmates.

[SB 236 Jail Contracting and Reimbursement Amendments \(Anderegg\)](#)
[HB 3 Appropriations Adjustments \(Last\)](#)

Medicaid

During the 2019 effort to expand Medicaid, the fiscal analyst, anticipating cost savings, and thus cut local Medicaid budgets by 3.9M to account for the “savings”. When full-expansion was delayed, so were the savings. With that loss of savings, we found ourselves in a \$3.9M hole. UAC successfully reinstated the \$3.9M that was originally cut.



Reinstatement of \$3.9 Million from funding cuts.

This money goes to Behavioral Health Mental Health Services.

\$398,800 was appropriated to Washington County in order to restore funding to the Washington County Court Support Services program.

[SB 2002 One-Time Appropriation for Behavioral Health \(Christensen\)](#)

Rewrite of GOED Incentive Tools for Counties



Appropriations for:
Continuation of Rural Online Initiative - \$880k
Opportunity Zones Development - \$150k ongoing
Inland Port - \$1.5 Million

\$5 Million



**Economic
Incentives for
Rural Counties**



\$5 Million

This is the second consecutive session UAC has worked on this legislation. The bill creates the Rural County Grant Program for 3rd – 6th class counties and requires each county seeking to participate in the grant program to create a County Economic Development Advisory Board. It creates two pools of ongoing funding, pool A which is \$5 million distributed evenly per rural county (up to \$200,000 annually) and pool B which is another \$5 million distributed through a competitive grant program. The County Advisory Board vets and proposes projects to their county commission/council then forwards the proposals to the Governor's Rural Partnership Board who then approves the grant.

The **\$10 million** used to fund these grants was drawn from the former USTAR program. SB 95 sunsets the BEAR, Rural Fast Track, and Enterprise Zone tax credits.

UAC supported changes to the Inland Port, which include enhancements of satellite locations and the benefits this would provide to rural Utah.

[SB 95 Economic Development Amendments](#)
[HB 347 Inland Port Modifications](#)

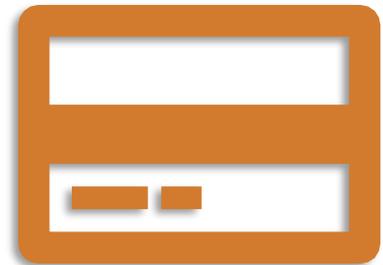
HB98

Personal Use of Public Property

With huge concerns from members, UAC proactively redrafted 2019 legislation for the 2020 session, redefining what is considered an “allowable use”, giving counties flexibility and removing many of the felony provisions for unintentional violations of this section of code.

Removing draconian language and allowing for de minimus or incidental use of public property by a public servant. Previous de minimus use was all felonious.

Intentional misuse, damage, or theft of public property remains a crime and can be a Class B Misdemeanor for damages or theft of less than \$500, all the way to a Second-Degree Felony if the damage or theft of property is over \$5,000.



[HB 98 Offenses Against the Administration of Government Amendments \(Hall\)](#)

Tier II Retirement for Public Safety

Always a balancing act, this bill give counties the flexibility to grant increased benefits, but it is at the county's discretion. We successfully found a middle ground to grant additional benefits while also leaving it up to the counties to decide.



The Tier II Retirement bills adjust retirement benefit accumulation. Retirees are now eligible to earn additional service credits in cases of reemployment.

The line-of-duty death benefit is expanded to allow for potentially larger death benefit allowances based on years of service and salary, rather than just a percentage of final monthly salary.

[SB 56 Public Safety and Firefighter Tier II Retirement Enhancements \(Harper\)](#)
[HB 22 Utah Retirement Systems Amendments \(Hall\)](#)

Transient Room Tax

As counties grapple with funding infrastructure to support our tourism economies, we sought to rebalance the split between marketing/promotion and infrastructure development. This bill changed the split between those two activities to help ensure we have resources to accommodate our visitors.



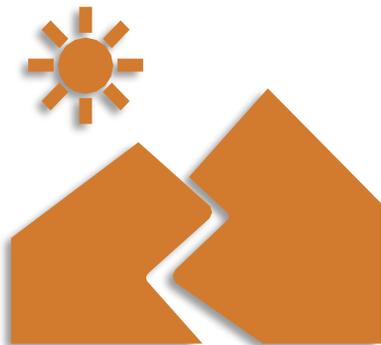
Transient Room Tax change

Lowers the TRT tourism marketing funding percentage from 45 to 37 percent and allows for revenue in addition to the base to be used for a number of expenses, which now includes Emergency Medical Services in 4th–6th class counties.

This was proactive legislation of UAC that was successfully passed for our tourism-based communities.

[HB 280 Transient Room Tax Revisions](#)

Transportation Funding



Rural Road funding will be a priority for the 2021 Session.

Funding for rural roads was initially in SB 2001 or the Tax Reform bill.

We anticipate \$5 Million or more for rural roads.

EMS Funding

EMS Funding in our rural areas has become a critical issue for many, as our ability to rely on volunteers dwindles, and the lack of resources grows, it has become imperative to have a robust EMS funding pool for these communities.

As a top priority, UAC was successful in restructuring and funding a new EMS Grant program.



\$3,000,000

HB 389 Creates a grant program for 3rd–6th class counties to fund their EMS programs.

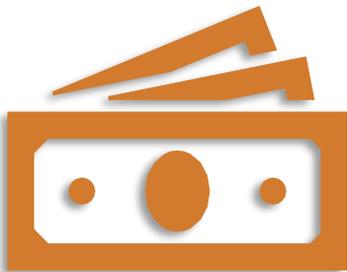
Up to \$100,000 for vehicle purchasing.

As part of our efforts, we want to make EMS an essential service. This designation is crucial when receiving future funding.

[HB 389 Emergency Medical Services Amendments \(Owens\)](#)

Revenue Recovery

Brought to us by several UAC members, UAC pursued state authorization to participate in the NACO Revenue Recovery Program. With the leadership of our counties and Sen. Okerlund (former county commissioner) we successfully passed legislation allowing UAC to operate its own revenue recovery program for Utah communities.



This bill enables counties to contract with UAC as a clearinghouse to collect on debts from fees and other debts owed to the county by offsetting a debtor's income tax refund/overpayment.

UAC staff is working with NACo to implement a system through which counties can search for debtors and collect lost revenue — all while not going to collections or affecting a debtor's credit.

This new system will be known as UTRECS —the Utah Tax Refund Exchange and Compliance System.

[SB 234 – Government Debt Collection Amendments \(Okerlund\)](#)



UTAH ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

The Unifying Voice for County Government

