

USEA LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

February 3, 2009

Public Education Budget

As the Utah State Legislature began the 2009 legislative session, they were faced with a shortfall in revenue of over \$350 million.

On Monday, February 2, 2009, The Legislature approved **H.B.3 – Current Fiscal Year Supplemental Appropriations. This bill reduces funding for public education by 3% for the current 2008-2009 fiscal year.**

USEA is urging legislators to use part of the **Rainy Day Fund (\$414 million)** and the additional **\$100 million** set-aside in the 2008 legislative session for public education to offset cuts to public education. In approving H.B.3, these two funding sources have been left untouched.

In addition, we have suggested bonding for appropriate road and building construction to free up funds to fill cuts to ongoing programs.

The Utah Legislature has 37 days left to finalize a budget for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. Although revenue projections are not expected to be available for another two weeks, legislators are predicting an additional \$100 million in revenue shortfall. This shortfall may result in further budget cuts if these other funding sources are not used.

We are asking for you to help by contacting your Senators and Representatives and urging them to minimize cuts to public education. We suggest the following talking points to help you in your conversations:

- Public education is critical to the long-term economic success of our state;
- It is in the best interest of students to keep funding intact as much as possible, retaining established programs and qualified employees;
- Alternatives to reductions in funding for public education (bonding, rainy day funds) are available to reduce the present shortfall in revenue;
- Reduced funding for public education will result in a less-educated workforce, lost industry, and other consequences that will become a long-term cost to our state.
- 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;
- Adequate funding for public education is an investment in our great state.

You can contact your State Representatives and Senators by phone, email or letter. The important thing is that legislators hear from you, their constituent. Be respectful but let them know what you think.

Go to <http://www.le.state.ut.us/Documents/find.htm> to contact your legislators. You can also reach the Utah House of Representatives at 538-1029 and the Utah Senate at 538-1035. At these numbers you can ask to speak to your Representative or Senator and be connected to their phone on the floor, or you can leave a message.

Thank you for taking the time to make your support of public education known to the Utah Legislature.