

GENERAL SESSION

March 16, 2016

Program Topic: Legislative Wrap-Up - 2 Viewpoints

Speakers:

Representative Carol Spackman Moss - (D) Utah House District 37

Senator Anne Millner - (R) Utah Senate District 18



Sen. Millner Addressing the WSLC meeting

*Reported by Gay Lynn Bennion and
Hilarie Orman*

Rep. Carol Spackman Moss serves on the rules, education, higher ed appropriations and transportation committees. Having previously served on the revenue and tax committee, she acquired a good grasp on how the state is funded, and that knowledge is invaluable to her as a legislator.

She discussed HB 235, the "Remote Transactions Parity Tax" or "Internet Tax". Utah loses as much as \$200 million a year in sales tax to online purchases [Ed. Few Utah taxpayers realized that they are supposed to remit the sales tax through their yearly personal tax filing]. The bill would have required retailers to

remit sale tax for these transactions, and it would also lower the sales tax rate. She thinks the lower rate would be unwise. The plight of small businesses in Utah also concerns her, as they try to compete locally against mega-retailers on the Internet who do not charge sales tax. Rep. McKell told her the Utah affiliates of online sites killed the bill. Rep. McKell plans to continue work Internet sales tax in future sessions.

SB 246, which sets aside \$53 million to invest in a coal port in California, passed, but she is not sure if this plan will proceed. All of her constituents who contacted her about the bill were opposed to it. She viewed it more favorably after hearing Rep. Brad King (D) of Carbon County give an impassioned speech

concerning his area's struggling coal economy and his claim that other Utah products could go through the California port.

SB 115, fourth substitute, moves the responsibility for setting energy policy for Rocky Mountain Power from the public utilities commission to the state legislature. Hundreds of her constituents contacted her about this bill and all were opposed to it. The bill passed both House and Senate.

Rep. Moss services on the House Education Committee. The \$440 additional funds for education that was approved this year won't put a dent in the critical shortfall of teachers. Granite School district, for example, filled open positions long term substitutes or other less qualified individuals because the salaries don't attract teachers. Long-term teachers are disheartened to find that their children reject teaching as a profession because of the meager compensation.

She thanked WSLC member Fred Ash for his emails about education. Fred told the story of his son who is teaching calculus at a Utah high school and is the chairman of the math department. After 4 years of teaching and working as a pharmacy tech on the side, he and his family are still living in Fred's basement because his teaching salary is insufficient to pay off his college debt and support his young family.

Erin Preston asked if the universities understand the need for teachers. Rep. Moss said the constant refrain is "We can't throw money at the schools." Her response is, "We've never tried!"

A member asked if charter schools will be getting more money because of bills that have passed. Rep. Moss said yes, but the most important thing is the change in the way money flows. Now money coming to charter schools will come from the state

rather than the district. Funds going to charter schools will also be more transparent and will be noted on individual property tax bills. She commented that charter schools initially were intended to be innovative and less costly, but now they want funding for buildings and infrastructure on a par with public schools.

She sponsored HB 221 to try to deal with the declining rates of immunizations. The bill did not remove the parental option to exempt their children from required immunizations but would require them to watch an online education module with information on how to protect their unvaccinated child in the event of an outbreak. Utah has 32,000 schoolchildren who are exempted. The bill passed committee but was substituted by Rep. Anderegg to make the process of applying for exemptions easier and free of charge. She felt this was a politically motivated action, one that would move a source of funding for public health offices. These offices are a vital part of responding to infectious disease outbreak. The most recent incident of infectious disease outbreak in schools cost Utah \$200,000 for substitute teachers and vaccinations. Rep. Moss was greatly disappointed in the amended bill and did not want her name attached to it.

Rep. Moss discussed bills from the 2014 session, HB11 and HB119, which concern drug overdoses and are known as the Good Samaritan laws. Utah, has a huge number of deaths from opioid overdose and ranks 4th in the nation. Utah is 1st in the nation for veteran deaths from drug overdose. One bill protects from prosecution a person who contacts emergency services about a drug overdose situation, and the other allows the prescription of "opioid antagonists" such as Naloxone under loosened rules. These bills have saved lives, including 31 in the past few months. This year there were 3 bills to provide funding to advertise the new rules to doctors,

pharmacists, and law enforcement. Her bill provides some funding for emergency kits and training in how to use them for a variety of organizations that help addicts and their families who care about them. This is an important part of the puzzle of bringing opioid abuse under control. She is very proud of these bills. Rep. Eliason (R) Dist. 45 passed a bill (HB 187) that eventually will allow needle exchanges at pharmacies. This should cut down on the spread of diseases such as hepatitis C.

Many people have expressed gratitude to Moss for helping bring caring awareness to the plight of addicts.

Senator Ann Millner is one of only 3 Republican women in the Senate, and she is a former president of Utah State University. She serves as Chair of the Senate Education Committee. When she decided to serve as a senator, she wanted to focus on education, the economy and quality of life issues. The economy depends upon a well prepared work force. She is interested in the intersection between public and higher education. She went to a national teaching and education project with State Board Superintendent Dixon, members of boards of regents, and university leaders. She is concerned with the teacher shortage, but she also wants to make sure Utah is preparing teachers for the twenty-first century classroom and tools. She sees teachers as learning leaders who empower students. She looks for the policy levers that can facilitate their task.

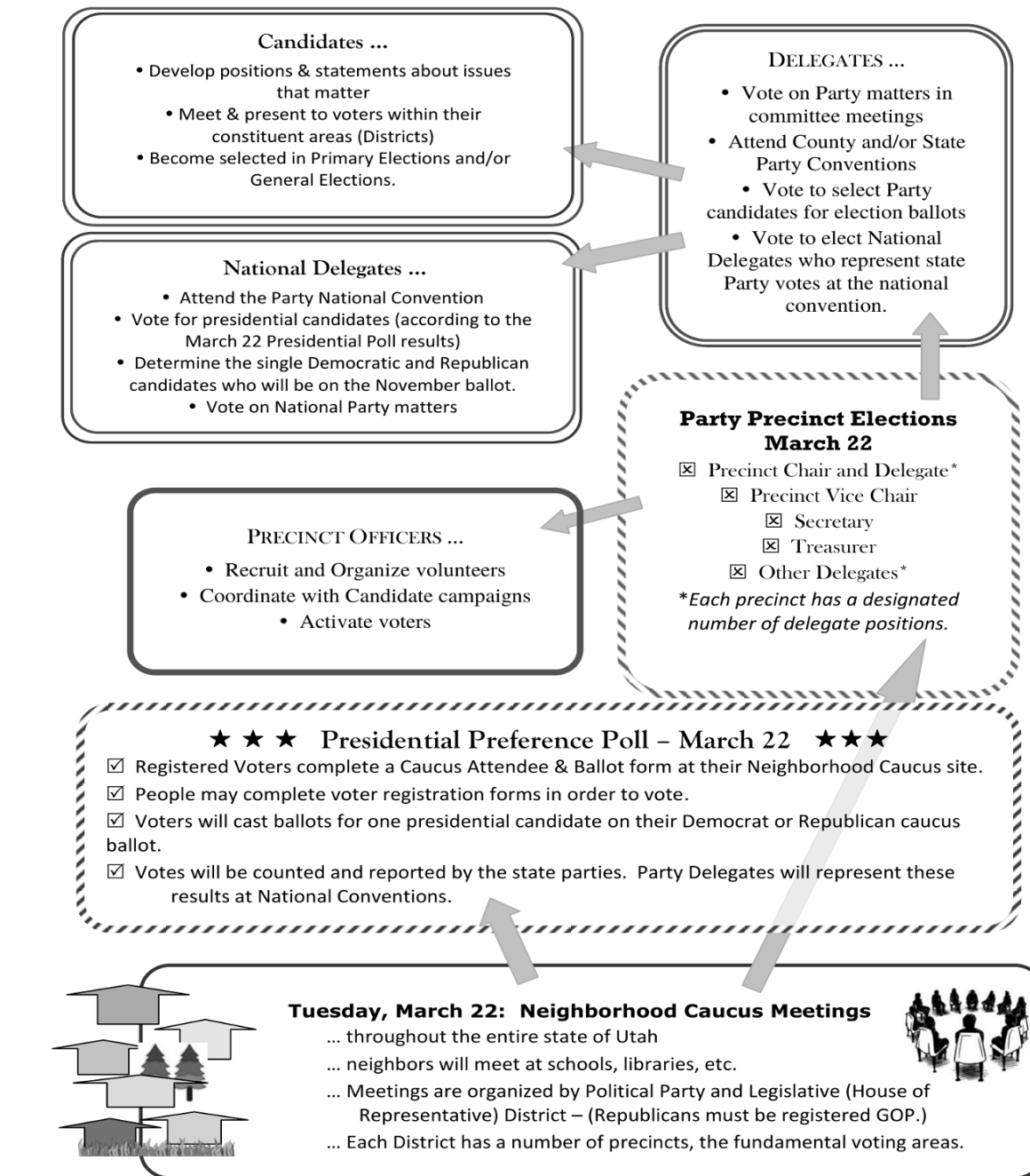
She is focused on what will help teachers enter their profession well-prepared. They need to be out in the schools earlier and more often. There should be a teacher induction process, and she commends Rep. Moss for the program she has helped initiate.

She is concerned with the teacher retention rate. Too many teachers aren't getting enough support and leave teaching. They need ongoing professional

development. A bill supporting this didn't survive funding cuts.

She is co-chair of the Interim Education Committee, which will be focusing on the teacher shortage. She ran a bill providing early education expansion for needy families bill (SB101), which is largely funded by grants from the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

The November ballot will have an initiative to amend the state constitution to allow yearly disbursements from the Schools and Institutional Lands Administration (SITLA) funds. There is currently \$2 billion in this fund, and under the state's constitution, the only regular disbursements are for interest and dividends. Sen. Millner feels that the fund could be used for intergenerational equity by benefiting students now and in the future. It would allow for a distributions of up to 4% per year from the principal. All provisions for decision making responsibility would remain the same. She noted that most foundations cap distributions at 5%, so the proposed 4% cap is a conservative strategy. Monte Carlo simulations of the strategy over a three year period validate this claim. The ballot initiative has the full support of the state treasurer, SITLA and the State Board of Education. She asked WSLC members to help educate voters concerning this initiative. These funds are given to local schools to be used as their School Community Councils determine.



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