



MINUTES

HIGHER EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Monday, February 9, 2026 | 8:00 a.m. | 110 Senate Building

Members Present:

Sen. Ann Millner, Senate Chair
Rep. Karen M. Peterson, House Chair
Rep. Jill Koford, Vice Chair
Sen. Keith Grover
Sen. John D. Johnson
Sen. Karen Kwan
Sen. Kathleen A. Riebe
Sen. Evan J. Vickers
Sen. Chris H. Wilson
Rep. Katy Hall
Rep. Sahara Hayes

Rep. Trevor Lee
Rep. Michael J. Petersen
Rep. Mark A. Strong
Rep. R. Neil Walter

Members Absent:

Sen. Michael K. McKell
Rep. Ryan D. Wilcox

Staff Present:

Joseph Fitzgerald, Finance Officer
Ben Leishman, Finance Manager
Lorna Wells, Committee Secretary

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

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes - February 5, 2026

Chair Koford called the meeting to order at 08:03 AM.

2. Requests for Appropriation:

j. Veterans PTSD Clinical Research Amendments

Rep. Jennifer Dailey-Provost explained this funding request with the assistance of Benjamin Lewis, Associate Professor, Huntsman Mental Health Institute.

Matthew Butler, Retired Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army special services, discussed his experiences with PTSD.

[6j. Veterans PTSD Clinical Research Amendments \(HB390\) RFA](#)

Sen. Kwan spoke of her excitement about the research. She asked some clarifying questions about the associated bill (H.B. 390). Rep. Dailey-Provost and Dr. Lewis responded.

Rep. Strong asked if the funding request was scalable. Rep. Dailey-Provost responded.

MOTION: Sen. Millner moved to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2026 meeting. The motion passed with a vote of 10 - 0 - 7.

Yeas - 10

Rep. S. Hayes
Sen. J. Johnson
Rep. J. Koford
Sen. K. Kwan
Sen. A. Millner
Rep. M. Petersen
Rep. K. Peterson
Rep. M. Strong
Sen. E. Vickers
Sen. C. Wilson

Nays - 0Absent - 7

Sen. K. Grover
Rep. K. Hall
Rep. T. Lee
Sen. M. McKell
Sen. K. Riebe
Rep. R. Walter
Rep. R. Wilcox

3. A Performance Audit of Utah State University's Governance, Leadership, and Culture

Jesse Martinson, Audit Manager, and Nick Varney, Audit Supervisor, Office of Legislative Auditor General, discussed the performance audit.

[2a. A Performance Audit of Utah State University's Governance, Leadership, and Culture](#)

Sen. Kwan asked for more information about the succession planning. Jesse Martinson responded.

Sen. Riebe asked questions about the requirements of Board of Trustees members and offering more incentives for university presidents to stay. Jesse Martinson responded.

Sen. Millner asked if other institutions practices have been evaluated. She also asked if the recommendations would mean increases in staff and administration positions. Jesse Martinson responded.

Brad Mortensen, President, Utah State University (USU) recognized members of the Board of Trustees and the USU student body president.

Pres. Mortensen responded to the audit findings and discussed changes that are being implemented as a result of the audit.

Geoff Landward, Commissioner, Utah System of Higher Education, responded to the audit findings. He also discussed future succession plans.

Sen. Wilson thanked the commissioner's office and the audit staff. He mentioned the bill in his name, S.B. 240, that is associated with this issue.

Sen. Riebe expressed concern about the legislation being applicable for every institution. She also expressed concern for requiring more of the Board of Trustees. Geoff Landward responded.

Sen. Kwan agreed that more training should be involved. She discussed the findings to increase funding with respect to enrollment and teaching loads. Pres. Mortensen responded.

Rep. Walter stated that clarifying the role of the Board of Trustees is a helpful recommendation.

Chair Koford thanked Pres. Mortensen for accepting the position of president during such a challenging time.

4. Higher Education Compensation Process

Nate Talley, Deputy Commissioner, and Geoff Landward discussed the USHE compensation process.

[3a. Higher Education Compensation Process](#)

5. Campus Safety Taskforce Updates

Geoff Landward discussed work that is being done regarding Campus Security with the assistance of Keith Squires, Chief Safety Officer, University of Utah.

[4a. Campus Safety Taskforce Updates](#)

Sen. Riebe mentioned her associated bill file regarding campus security.

6. System Integration and System Partnerships

Geoff Landward discussed system integration and system partnerships with the assistance of Molly Hart, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Utah State Board of Education.

[5a. System Integration and System Partnerships](#)

Sen. Kwan expressed support for this program.

Sen. Millner thanked the commissioner's office for the collaboration with K-12, USHE, and the Governor's office.

Geoff Landward continued the presentation.

Sen. Vickers mentioned the collaboration that is taking place in the southern part of the state and asked if this is being expanded to other parts of the state. Geoff Landward responded.

Sen. Kwan discussed the importance that this work is intentional and asked for clarification about aligning this work as a system. Geoff Landward responded.

7. Requests for Appropriation:

a. UVU Law School Exploration

Sen. Brady Brammer explained this funding request with the assistance of Steve Anderson, AVP University Relations, UVU.

[6a. UVU Law School Exploration RFA](#)

b. Utah Lake Research and Nature Center

Sen. Brammer presented this funding request with the assistance of Luke Peterson, Executive Director, Utah Lake Authority.

Sen. Kwan asked if there would be matching funds from the federal government. Luke Peterson responded. She also asked about why it is coming through this committee. Joseph Fitzgerald responded.

Rep. Strong asked for clarification about the two parts of the request. Sen. Brammer responded.

d. Bear River Agricultural Education Research Center

Rep. Jill Koford explained this funding request.

[6d. Bear River Agricultural Education and Resource Center RFA](#)

[6da. Bear River Agricultural Education & Resource Center Presentation](#)

e. Land Management Funding Amendments (HB376)

Rep. Carl Albrecht explained this funding request with the assistance of Brad Mortensen, President, Utah State University.

[6e. Land Management Funding Amendments \(HB376\) RFA](#)

g. National Federalism Initiative 26-27 Funding Request

Rep. Ken Ivory presented this funding request with the assistance of Troy Smith, Utah Valley University, Center for Constitutional Studies.

[RFA - Rebalancing the State-Federal Relationship](#)

Sen. Kwan urged committee members to support this funding request.

h. Proxima Career Access Support

Rep. Karen Peterson explained this funding request with the assistance of Rich Saunders and Cameron Wright.

[6h. Proxima Career Access Support RFA](#)

[6ha. Proxima Career Access Support RFA Presentation](#)

I. Utah Wildfire Camera Network

Sen. Grover presented this funding request with the assistance of Heidi Drum, Executive Director, Lake Tahoe Prosperity Center; and Troy Morgan, Battalion Chief, Wasatch Fire District.

k. Center for Civic Engagement

Sen. Johnson explained this funding request with the assistance of Harrison Kleiner, Associate Vice Provost for General Education, Utah State University.

Sen. Riebe commented that she does not support this funding request in light of the current budget shortfalls.

Sen Kwan expressed concern about the dissension that this funding request has caused. She asked about faculty input and transparency. Brad Mortensen and Harrison Kleiner responded.

Rep. Michael Petersen expressed his support for the work that has been done and especially that it is at USU.

Rep. Karen Peterson mentioned that this is a difficult task and a huge opportunity to improve general education.

Sen. Johnson gave some concluding remarks about the pilot program.

Chair Koford mentioned that House Committee members have been asked to give their ranking sheets to the chairs.

Sen. Millner mentioned that the Senate Committee members will be meeting at 12:15 to discuss the rankings.

Sen. Kwan asked about other funding requests that were not heard. Chair Koford responded.



MOTION: Rep. Hayes moved to adjourn. The motion passed with a vote of 12 - 0 - 5.

Yeas - 12

Sen. K. Grover
Rep. K. Hall
Rep. S. Hayes
Sen. J. Johnson
Rep. J. Koford
Sen. K. Kwan
Sen. A. Millner
Rep. M. Petersen
Rep. K. Peterson
Sen. K. Riebe
Rep. M. Strong
Rep. R. Walter

Nays - 0

Absent - 5

Rep. T. Lee
Sen. M. McKell
Sen. E. Vickers
Rep. R. Wilcox
Sen. C. Wilson

Chair Koford adjourned the meeting at 10:34 AM.