

Bill: 2nd Substitute HB 186 – Wage Payment Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Kay J. Christofferson

Floor Sponsor: Senator Heidi Balderree

UASD Position: Support

This Bill modifies the payment of wages provisions.

Discussion:

Yeas:

Nays:

N/V:

Outcome: 2nd Substitute HB 186 was not heard in Committee on March 3, 2025.

Bill: 3rd Substitute HB 160 – Professional License Degree Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Stephanie Gricius

Floor Sponsor: Senator Chris H. Wilson

UASD Position: Tracking with Concern

This Bill modifies licensure requirements.

Discussion: Representative Gricius, alongside Representative G. Miller, presented the Bill and discussed its 3rd substitute. The Committee adopted the substitute, which merges HB 160 with Representative G. Miller’s Bill, HB 531. The Bill updates statutes to better reflect current practices regarding specialized certificates and degrees. It also expands pathways to licensure by allowing exams, such as the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (“NCARB”) which administer the Architect Registration Examination (“ARE”), a key component for architectural licensure in the United States, to be taken in place of a degree.

Representative G. Miller explained that the Division of Professional Licensing (“DOPL”) requested these changes because, under current statute, employers are unable to accept individuals who hold only a certificate, as an associate’s degree is required. The substitute includes cleanup language to align statutes with existing DOPL practices.

The Director of the Utah Geological Survey raised concerns regarding lines 182-183 of the second substitute, requesting consistency in terminology between “higher education” and “accredited institution”. The Libertas Institute and the American Institute of Architects expressed support for the Bill.

Yeas: 6

Nays: 0
N/V: 2

Outcome: 3rd Substitute passed out of the Committee and was placed on the Senate's consent calendar.

Bill: 3rd substitute HB 300 – Amendments to Election Law

Sponsor: Representative Jefferson S. Burton

Floor Sponsor: Senator Michael K. McKell

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill amends provisions relating to elections.

Discussion: The sponsor presented the 3rd substitute of the Bill, which was adopted by the Committee. The Bill mandates the lieutenant governor to implement procedures to enhance the accuracy of voter registration records. These measures include identifying the number of individuals registered at a single-family home address, investigating returned undeliverable ballots to verify voter registration validity, and utilizing the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (“SAVE”) Program to identify non-citizens who register to vote. Additionally, the Bill requires the Lieutenant Governor to seek an agreement with federal courts to exchange state-provided data used for maintaining federal jury lists. In return, the courts would notify the state of individuals disqualified from jury service due to criminal convictions or non-citizen status.

The Bill also introduces a voter verification card for eligible voters who do not possess a Utah driver license or state identification card. Indigent individuals may obtain this card free of charge. Exceptions to the in-person application requirement are granted for individuals who are unable to apply due to disability, age, extended illness, or long-term absence from the state.

To enhance ballot security, registered voters with a Utah driver license, state identification card, or voter verification card (primary state identification) must provide the last four digits of their identification number on the return envelope. As an alternative, voters may use the last four digits of their Social Security number. Beginning in 2029, accepted identification will expand to include tribal identification cards, Bureau of Indian Affairs cards, and tribal treaty cards. Until January 1, 2029, mail-in voter identity verification will be conducted using either the last four digits of a voter's primary state identification or signature comparison. After that date, subject to certain exceptions, voter identity verification will rely solely on the last four digits of an approved identification card.

The Bill also modifies mail-in ballot procedures. Starting in 2029, voters must request to receive ballots by mail instead of being automatically enrolled. Such requests will remain valid for eight years unless the voter takes action to terminate the request. Voters may request or renew a mail ballot request when applying for or renewing primary state identification or when voting in person. Additional provisions update voter registration forms to include options for requesting ballot notifications and mail-in ballots. The electronic voter registration system must also allow voters to request a ballot by mail.

The Bill further revises election procedures, including changes to voter assistance at polling places, modifications to return envelopes to include specific voter warnings, updates to emergency ballot provisions, and adjustments to ballot processing procedures to align with the new regulations.

The sponsor acknowledged that these changes would likely result in more people voting in person, requiring additional polling locations and election volunteers. He emphasized the importance of adequate preparation and adjustments to ensure a smooth transition, stating that the Bill aims to strengthen voter identification requirements.

During the discussion, Senator McCay inquired about the ballot cure process. The sponsor clarified that ballot envelopes would still require signatures, which could be cured if necessary. Senator Weiler asked whether voters who do not request mail-in ballots by 2029 would lose eligibility for mail-in voting. The sponsor confirmed this. Senator Weiler then questioned the rationale behind the Bill. The sponsor explained that under current law, voters are only required to show ID once when registering, after which they are not required to present identification in subsequent elections. He argued that the Bill would enhance election security and voter confidence.

Senator Ipson raised concerns about individuals who may face challenges in obtaining an ID, particularly those unable to travel. The sponsor acknowledged this issue and suggested additional efforts may be needed to assist specific communities, such as tribal populations, in obtaining identification. Senator Musselman asked whether voters who fail to vote in two consecutive general election cycles would be removed from vote-by-mail eligibility. The sponsor confirmed this, citing concerns over ballots being sent to deceased individuals.

Public opinion on the Bill was divided, with both supporters and opponents voicing their perspectives. Some individuals who had previously opposed the Bill expressed support for the changes introduced by the sponsor in the 3rd substitute. The Utah County Clerk raised concerns, particularly regarding signature verification, while supporting the overall intent of the Bill. John Whittaker, the Iron County Clerk, speaking on behalf of the county clerks, opposed the Bill, arguing that most clerks were concerned about its impact on voters, logistical challenges, and increased implementation costs. Shelley Jackson, Deputy Director of Affairs at the Lieutenant Governor's Office, spoke in favor of the changes made in the 3rd substitute but gave no position on the Bill itself.

Senator Musselman expressed support, stating that the Bill struck a balance between maintaining mail-in voting and incorporating security measures. Senator Weiler opposed the Bill, citing concerns about its fiscal impact and the potential disenfranchisement of voters after a decade of widespread mail-in voting. Senator Ipson spoke in favor.

Yeas: 5

Nays: 3

N/V: 0

Outcome: 3rd substitute HB 300 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 6th substitute HB 332 – Amendments to Voting Provisions

Sponsor: Representative Karianne Lisonbee

Floor Sponsor: Senator Brady Brammer

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill addresses provisions relating to voting and voter registration data.

Discussion: Representative Lisonbee presented the 6th substitute and Amendment 1, both of which were adopted by the Committee. She explained that the Bill was developed through collaboration between county clerks and the Lieutenant Governor's Office to address findings from the December 2024 election audit. The Bill establishes a statutory process for handling election inaccuracies, enhances data transparency, and strengthens privacy protections for Utah voters. Additionally, the representative addressed concerns about non-citizens voting in Utah elections, stating that the Bill would require proof of U.S. citizenship for voter registration. She noted that the implementation date had been postponed to allow time for further policy development during the interim.

Senator Vickers asked whether the primary change in this substitute was the addition of proof of citizenship. The sponsor confirmed that this was a recent change in response to concerns about non-citizens voting but emphasized that the delayed implementation would allow time to refine the process. Senator Ipson inquired whether the Bill would withdraw Utah from the Electronic Registration Information Center ("ERIC"). The sponsor clarified that language removing Utah from ERIC had been eliminated in a previous substitute. Senator Musselman asked about the modifications introduced by Amendment 1. The sponsor explained that it removed lines 95 and 96 to reduce redundancy in the Bill.

The Utah Republican Party and the Utah County Clerk expressed support for the Bill, while the League of Women Voters opposed it. The Summit County Clerk remained neutral. Senator Weiler asked how many non-citizens had voted in Utah County elections in the previous year. The Utah County Clerk responded that he had no records confirming such cases but was aware of three instances. Public comments were divided between support and opposition. No further discussion followed.

Yeas: 3

Nays: 4

N/V: 1

Outcome: 6th substitute HB 332 failed to pass out of the Committee.