

Senate Transportation, Public Utilities, Energy and Technology Committee
01/27/2026

Bill: 1st substitute SB 151 - Public Safety Funding Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Harper

Floor Sponsor: Representative Pierucci

UASD Position: Track

This Bill modifies provisions related to funding for public safety employees.

Discussion: The sponsor presented the 1st substitute, which the Committee adopted. The substitute changes the effective date from May 6 to July 1, 2026. The sponsor explained that the Bill establishes a funding mechanism to add between 19 and 20 highway patrol troopers. The Utah Highway Patrol currently needs to hire 35 troopers to be fully staffed. The Bill would require the Division of Finance to annually transfer \$3 million of insurance premiums tax revenue from the Utah Retirement System (“URS”) into the Motor Vehicle Safety Impact Restricted Account to be used to hire new Highway Patrol troopers. The Bill guarantees the full amount needed to ensure coverage up to 110% for the Tier I firefighter retirement account before any of the premium tax may be transferred to another fund. Currently, the URS only needs \$4 to \$5 million to maintain the 110% coverage and receives over \$12 million annually. The sponsor further explained that an additional \$2 million will be transferred from the Transportation Fund to support hiring troopers. The total appropriation to the Motor Vehicle Restricted Account is \$5 million.

The Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety spoke in support of the Bill. The Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) Legislative Affairs Director took a neutral position on the Bill and expressed appreciation for Utah’s Highway Patrol troopers.

Yea: 6

Nay: 0

N/V: 2

Outcome: 1st substitute SB 151 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: SB 172 - Airport and Air Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Harper

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill amends laws relating to airports and drones.

Discussion: The sponsor stated that the Bill addresses several issues related to licensing requirements for operating an airport that is open or available for public use, as well as the timeframes in which an aircraft operating within the state must be registered in Utah. The Bill

updates the statutory definition of an airport and establishes a process for handling property left at airports.

Under the Bill, a peace officer or law enforcement agency that receives lost or mislaid property must give, hold, and dispose of the property through the local law enforcement agency whose authority extends to the area where the item was found. A peace officer or law enforcement agency at an airport that is required to maintain a law enforcement presence may give lost or mislaid property, other than a firearm or other dangerous weapon, to the airport's operations personnel. The sponsor stated that airports are required to make judicious and diligent efforts to locate owners of left property and, if owners do not respond within the specified period, the Bill provides a process for disposing of the property. SB 272 also amends restrictions on how law enforcement may use drones by deleting the provision that allows a law enforcement agency to utilize an unmanned aircraft "for purposes unrelated to a criminal investigation" and replacing it with "in a manner that does not violate a reasonable expectation of privacy".

Senate Amendment 2, which adds on line 366 "a non-federally funded" airport—language that was inadvertently removed from the definition during drafting—was adopted by the Committee.

Yea: 6

Nay: 0

N/V: 2

Outcome: SB 272, as amended, passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.