

House Political Subdivisions Committee

1/29/2026

Bill: 2nd substitute HB 38 – Country Government Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Dunnigan

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill deals with provisions related to counties.

Discussion: Representative Dunnigan presented the 2nd substitute, which was adopted by the Committee. He explained that the substitute incorporates several changes requested by county officials and the Utah Association of Counties (“UAC”). The sponsor stated that the intent of the Bill is to clarify and update various county administrative processes, including deadlines for petitions, procedures for county recorders, the appropriate seal used by surveyors, and how counties allocate costs for trials that are relocated. The sponsor emphasized that these changes are designed to improve compliance with existing law and standardize practices across counties.

Representative Ward asked whether the Bill alters processes that had previously been established, particularly regarding the County Recorders Standards Board. Representative Dunnigan responded that while the Bill includes a fee increase, the fees remain set in statute and do not change the fundamental duties currently assigned to county recorders. He explained that current recorder fees no longer cover the full operational costs in most counties and that all but one county currently operate at a deficit. Utah County and Salt Lake County would be exempt from the proposed fee increase. Representative Ward spoke in support of the Bill. Representative Fitisemanu asked about the distinction between the roles of county auditors and finance officers. Representative Hansen raised concerns about the Career Service Council and the potential expansion of government personnel costs.

A Utah County Commissioner testified, explaining why Utah County maintains a surplus in recorder fees. The Duchesne County Recorder spoke in support of the Bill. Utah Citizens for the Constitution raised concerns about changes to auditor oversight. Representative Ward also questioned the shifting of certain duties from county auditors to county recorders. UAC representatives clarified that the Bill transfers specific responsibilities between finance officers and county auditors to improve administrative efficiency and accountability.

Yeas: 8

Nays: 1

N/V: 3

Outcome: 2nd substitute HB 38 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: HB 215 – Political Subdivision Landscaping Authority

Sponsor: Representative Peterson

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Support

This Bill restricts a municipality or county from prohibiting removal of vegetation on property located in a wildland-urban interface area.

Discussion: Representative Peterson explained that the Bill addresses wildfire risk mitigation within the wildland-urban interface (“WUI”) by restricting a municipality or county from prohibiting the removal of certain vegetation on properties located within a WUI. He stated that the Bill was developed in response to concerns raised by constituents and has been expanded to include home owners’ associations (“HOAs”) within its scope.

Representative Kohler asked where the issue was primarily occurring. Representative Peterson responded that the issue has been raised across multiple communities. Representative Arthur questioned the provision requiring a ten-foot defensible space. The sponsor clarified that defensible space requirements are based on risk categories, and that for properties classified as medium hazard, the required defensible space would be thirty feet. Representative Hansen asked whether the Bill applies only to wildfire-related situations. The sponsor responded that the Bill applies specifically to the wildland-urban interface and not to other types of fire hazards.

The Utah League of Cities and Towns testified in support of the Bill. The Fire Chief of Draper City also spoke in support, citing the importance of defensible space in reducing wildfire risk.

The Committee adopted House Amendment 1 which clarifies that the restriction to prohibit vegetation removal only applies to property that is within a designated wildland-urban interface area; and where removal is required to comply with the defensible space requirements of the edition of the International Wildland Urban Interface Code.

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: HB 215, as amended, passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 1st substitute HB 13 – Municipal Services Fees and Political Subdivision Lien

Classifications

Sponsor: Representative Cutler

Floor Sponsor: Senator Harper

UASD Position: Track

This Bill authorizes municipalities to place a political subdivision lien on property for certain past due services and makes related amendments.

Discussion: Representative Cutler explained that this Bill would allow municipalities to place a political subdivision lien for past due utility fees as a mechanism to recover unpaid utility bills. The debt would be placed on the property tax statement. He stated that certain utilities, such as

sewer and storm drainage services, are difficult or impractical to discontinue, and that the lien process provides an alternative method of collection. The sponsor emphasized that the Bill is intended to improve employee safety, as field technicians have experienced verbal abuse and threats of violence when attempting to shut off utility services. Representative Cutler further explained that the Bill is designed to protect both utility workers and tenants who may be facing financial hardship by not turning off water or other essential utilities for failure to pay.

The Utah League of Cities and Towns testified in support of the Bill. A member of the public spoke in opposition, expressing concern about the potential impact on property owners and tenants. Representative Cutler also noted that there has never been a foreclosure solely based on a utility lien.

Yeas: 6
Nays: 1
N/V: 5

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 13 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.
