

## 2010 Legislative Priorities

Check out our recap of the 2010 legislative session. Hats off to everyone who helped us come out on top!

Working closely with the business community and our state's leading non-profit and public sector experts to advance the common good, United Way provides a unique perspective to public policy. The following are the priorities we supported during the 2010 legislative session. This information can also be accessed in the PDF document below.

### 2010 Legislative Priorities Booklet

#### Budget and Revenue

Due to the downturn in the economy, UWSL's overarching policy priorities are to:

- Maintain current investments in education, income, health and safety net services
- Increasing state revenue through the use of rainy day funds, user fees and targeted tax increases

UWSL believes that further cuts in the areas of education, income, health and safety net services are not only harmful to individuals and families, but also harm our overall economic health and long-term quality of life. In addition to rainy-day funds and other one-time sources of revenue, the Legislature has a number of reasonable options to consider for increasing state revenue. UWSL strongly supports an increase in the tobacco tax, as well as the gas tax.

#### Education

Educational achievement is essential to creating stronger, more prosperous families and communities. Whether it is a high-school diploma, a secondary degree, or job training, education translates into higher-paying jobs and a more complete set of life skills. And it's fundamental to a community's economic prosperity: a well-educated workforce attracts world-class jobs.

- Early Learning: Maintain investments in home-visitation, quality child care and pre-school, and extended-day kindergarten.

- K-12 Public Education: Fully fund public education.

- Adult and Post-Secondary Education: Maintain overall funding for adult and post-secondary education and reduce financial barriers to higher education for low-income students, such as the Regent's and New Century Scholarships Programs.

## Income

Our community assessments have consistently found financial instability to be the number one cause of many of our community's problems. indeed, too many Utah families are one paycheck away from financial disaster. People and families who have built a firm financial foundation are better able to weather financial disasters like a job loss or serious medical problem.

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Financial Literacy and Saving: Maintain initial investments in the K-12 financial literacy "passport" program this is embedding financial education in existing curriculum.

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Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Outreach and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Funding: Maintain VITA funding to help promote the federal EITC and target those in greatest need.

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State EITC: Create a state EITC to offset the additional tax burden on low-income families, especially if the sales tax on food is reinstated.

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Affordable Housing: Maintain investments in the Olene Walker Housing Loan Fund.

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Renter Protections: Provide protections to renters in foreclosed properties by giving them a minimum of 90 days to find new living arrangements and clearly notifying them of their rights.

## Health

Families and communities are stronger when people have access to the primary and preventive services they need to stay healthy. Every day, many Utahns are forced to live with the fear of getting sick or injured. Poor health impacts every aspect of a person's daily life. When individuals are healthy, they are more likely to succeed at work or school.

- Program Funding: Maintain investments for essential programs such as Medicaid, mental health services, substance abuse prevention and treatment and domestic violence and child abuse prevention.
- Health System Reform: Support efforts to establish a conservative, market driven framework for reform that will enhance individual responsibility and consumer choice while improving overall quality and access
- Express Lane Eligibility: Create Express Lane Eligibility to facilitate the use of income information from the state tax form to verify income for both Medicaid and CHIP. This type of income verification streamlines enrollment and retention in the programs, and improves administrative efficiency.
- CHIP Funding: Ensure Utah can keep the commitment it made to children and families by ensuring children can always be enrolled in CHIP if they are eligible for the program by allowing access to Tobacco Settlement dollars. The Tobacco Settlement fund has an on-going surplus, and last year the state began receiving an additional \$15 million annually for the next 10 years.
- Legal Immigrant Children: Allow the 800 legal immigrant children who are uninsured access to cost-effective primary and preventive care through the Medicaid and CHIP programs.
- Healthy Foods: Promote and teach healthy choices to children through the products schools offer in their vending machines.

## Safety Net

Many individuals and families in crisis rely on safety net services for temporary support. Access to basic needs and crisis services provides the foundation for families to pursue long-term goals in education, income and health.

- Program Funding: Maintain funding for critical safety net programs such as General Assistance (for disabled, homeless individuals), Pamela Atkinson Homeless Trust Fund, Emergency Food Network, Services for People with Disabilities and Services for Seniors
- Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act: Update Utah Laws to meet the provisions of the federal Unemployment Modernization Act so Utah can access the \$61 million in stimulus dollars for unemployment compensation benefits, which would generate an additional \$38.5 million in economic activity.

## Immigrant and Refugee Integration

Over the past ten years, Utah has become home to a growing number of immigrants and refugees. Immigrant and refugee integration is a dynamic, two-way process where newcomers and receiving societies work together to build secure, diverse and cohesive communities creating shared benefits and a stable, vibrant community.

- Transitional Support Services: Maintain investments in services for refugees to provide transitional support for

individuals and families resettled in Utah

- Legal Immigran Children: Allow the 800 legal immigrant children who are uninsured access to cost-effective primary and preventive care through the Medicaid and CHIP programs.
- Immigration Reform: Support appropriate and compassionate immigration reform at the national level and oppose legislation that may be harmful to employers and our economy, creates barriers to education or other needed services or that worsen public safety.