



## STATE OF UTAH

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*2018 State of the State Address*

*Utah Governor Gary R. Herbert*

President Niederhauser, Speaker Hughes, members of the Legislature, justices of the Supreme Court, Utah's First Lady, Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. Cox, other constitutional officers, and my fellow Utahns: It is an honor to address you this evening in our historic State Capitol.

It was here, last year, that we managed to balance our budget and pass over 500 bills in 45 days. And on our watch I don't recall a single government shutdown.

For each of the past eight years I have come before you in this special setting to talk about policy and priorities. I usually tout our economic growth and urge increased funding for education; I talk about taxation and transportation; I encourage ways to improve our social services and our environmental stewardship.

Along the way I might even brag about some particular successes. And, if you're really lucky, you might even hear me share how Utah ranks at the top of a national survey or two.

Each year, I am required by the Constitution to present to the legislature the State of the State. And each year, I have been pleased to report to you that our state is healthy, it's growing, and it's very successful.

This year, my overall report is more optimistic than ever. I am pleased to report to you today that by every meaningful metric, the state of the State of Utah is truly exceptional.

As I have given some thought about this special occasion, where the leadership of the state of Utah is gathered and focused for a few rare moments, I have felt inclined to use this time just a little bit differently.

So, tonight, in order to get your fill of Utah bragging rights, you'll have to get out your smartphone and go to [utah.gov/stateofthestate](http://utah.gov/stateofthestate) where you will find an abundance of

commendations. And if you were hoping for a detailed review of my budgetary and legislative priorities, simply visit: [utah.gov/stateofthestate](http://utah.gov/stateofthestate).

I believe you already know what we need to be doing in the remaining 42 days of this session.

You already know that we need to prioritize funding and standards for the kind of learning that educates the hearts and minds of our children so that they can flourish in our highly competitive global marketplace.

You already know that we need to update our tax code so that it conforms to the realities of today's dynamic marketplace while anticipating what tomorrow might bring.

You already know that we need to strive to keep tax rates low and revenue reliable by broadening the base.

You already know that we need to think proactively about infrastructure so that we maintain what we build, so that users pay their fair share, and so that we are investing in the future of our great state.

You already know that we need to think creatively about transportation funding so that our finite funds provide the most cost effective solutions, regardless of the mode of travel, for getting people to where they want and need to go.

You already know that although we have continued to reduce overall emissions, we need to do much more to encourage responsible choices and pursue evidence-based improvements for our air quality.

You already know that we need to patch up holes that are in our social safety net.

And you also know that we need to do all of this without growing the size, the scope or the burden of government carried by the taxpayer.

That's a big ask. But I know we can do these hard things.

So, tonight I want to talk about the good that comes from doing the hard things. I would like to talk about building our future together, about how we perpetuate our unique culture of self-reliance and personal responsibility, and how, together, we can build a better, a kinder and a more civil world.

Let's begin with a little history. This book contains the Laws of Utah passed in 1917.

Back in the day, general sessions of the legislature only met in odd-numbered years. One hundred and one years ago, in 1917, the House and the Senate passed, and Governor Simon Bamberger then signed into law, 131 bills that span a total of 458 pages.

And they did some pretty big things back then: For starters, they passed statewide prohibition of alcohol -- a full three years before it became a nationwide policy.

But let's consider some of their other accomplishments. They modernized Utah's contract law. They created workmen's compensation. They expanded public vocational education. They passed securities regulation to prevent against fraud. They expanded our system of roads.

And because of many of their efforts we really are better off as a state today.

I can't help but wonder: Were they thinking about how their work would be remembered 100 years later?

So now I ask this question of us all: How will the decisions we make today shape Utah 100 years into the future?

I understand that 1277 bill files have been opened for this session. As one of your colleagues said to me earlier this week, "It may be a bit much." I recognize that the pressure on you from constituents to address problems through legislation is tremendous. We're also one of the fastest growing states in the nation, and we do have lots of things that need to be dealt with today. It can be a little bit overwhelming.

But I would like to believe that as we prioritize our work this session that a tax reform bill sponsored by President Wayne Niederhauser, for example, or an education bill sponsored by Representative Carol Spackman Moss, or a bill benefitting rural Utah sponsored by Representative Scott Sandall will have meaningful impacts on the state not only today -- but will lay a foundation for the success and well-being of our children and our grandchildren into the future.

One month ago my six children, along with their spouses and fifteen of our sixteen grandchildren all gathered at our home for our traditional Christmas Eve celebration. Everyone but a granddaughter who is currently serving an LDS mission was able to enjoy our tradition of hot chocolate, karaoke and singing "Silent Night" around the Christmas Tree.

It is remarkable to consider in this age of economic dislocation that three generations of Herberts can enjoy fulfilling lives right here together, living just twenty minutes apart from one another.

I think we all want to give our families the best world we possibly can, and I have become increasingly concerned about the kind of world that we are creating for our children and for our grandchildren.

I think of my granddaughter, McKelle, who is serving as a Mandarin Chinese speaking missionary in Melbourne Australia. Everyday she sees globalization first hand, witnessing the dynamic economic growth and the blend of cultures in Asia and the South Pacific.

Just like all young people who are concerned about their future, she will ask a lot of questions about her own future when she returns home this year.

Will her experience and training match the economic opportunities here?

Will she find a workplace that protects her from harassment and gives her equal opportunity for her equal potential?

As she pursues the American Dream, will our culture reflect the ideal of human dignity found in our Declaration of Independence?

Will our society honor the fundamental rights guaranteed to all of us in our Constitution?

This is why we are here: To ensure that the answer to these questions is a resounding and emphatic “yes.”

As the elected representatives in the state, it is sometimes tempting to think that it is what we do with policies, with procedures and with appropriations that makes all the difference in the well-being of our state.

Now, don't get me wrong -- our law and policy are critically important. I know from personal experience, and you do too, that few things can be more detrimental than bad law and bad policy.

Let us never forget the old adage “that the government is best that governs least.”

But I firmly believe that what is most important for our prosperity and our well-being, today and one hundred years from now, is a strong culture of work, self-reliance, shared responsibility and mutual respect.

This unique culture is not just about rugged individualism.

It is the sensibility that Utahns have always had -- an understanding that while no one else is going to come and solve the hard problems for us, “we can achieve together what none of us can do alone.”<sup>1</sup>

It is, in the words of Katherine Lee Bate’s great American hymn, that “patriot dream, that sees beyond the years.”

This is Utah’s unique spirit of collaboration.

It is based on a moral commitment that when we say “We the People” we mean all the people -- the rich, the poor, the weak and the strong.<sup>2</sup>

And when I talk about Utah’s unique spirit of collaboration, I am not just talking about government. I am also talking about the collaboration of the citizenry and the private sector.

Yes, government has a critical role in optimizing policy. But even the smartest policies will mean very little if we fail to support each other.

Last Friday night, Jeanette and I attended an opening premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. We watched a fascinating documentary called “Won’t You Be My Neighbor.” And I gained a new appreciation for the life and work of Fred Rogers -- known affectionately to millions simply as Mister Rogers.

Fred Rogers once said this:

“We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It’s easy to say ‘it’s not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.’”

He went on to say, “Then there are those who see the need and respond. Those people are my heroes.”

Here in Utah, I am humbled to stand in the presence of many, many heroes.

I am grateful everyday as Utahns see a concern and step up to address a problem where there is no playbook. And it happens all the time.

For example, could Utah’s rural schools benefit from better connections to the high tech boom along the Wasatch Front? Absolutely.

Well, enter BrainStorm, Inc., whose employees decided to adopt Mont Harmon Middle School in Carbon County and provide guidance and inspiration in coding, video editing and virtual reality.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, 124 (2007).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 124.

Could an inner city elementary school benefit from some extra classroom support? Of course.

Well, enter Intrepid, a communications and PR firm, whose employees volunteer regularly in the first grade at Meadowlark Elementary in Rose Park.

When natural disasters strike in other parts of the United States, could those states or territories use extra help? Certainly.

Enter Jarem Hallows. Jarem was in a hospital bed receiving treatments for stage four cancer when he heard about the twin hurricanes that struck Puerto Rico and destroyed the power grids. He saw beyond his own need and moved to help his fellow man.

Along with Jorge Alvarado, Lieutenant Governor Spencer Cox, Auditor John Dougall, Tani Downing from my cabinet, my son Brad and his wife Carmen and so many others, he put Operation “Light up Puerto Rico” into action, delivering light and hope to people who had been living in the dark.

Once again Utahns stepped up, when there was no playbook, to help their fellow man.

When I became governor I said that Utah would unlock unlimited possibilities through unprecedented partnerships.

Consider what we have done with education. It has been through the unprecedented partnership of all our education stakeholders that we been able to unite and focus on a ten-year education roadmap. It has been through unprecedented partnerships between businesses and schools that we have launched our nationally recognized work-based education program, Talent Ready Utah.

Consider what we have done with our economy. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, in recognizing Utah as the best performing economy in the country, identified our unique “culture of collaboration as the foundation of [our] job creation policy, enabling [Utah] to punch above its weight.”<sup>3</sup>

So, in that spirit of collaboration, let us continue to tackle our big challenges of today.

Perhaps the best example of working together on a tough issue is when we said “No more!” to the lawlessness in the Rio Grande neighborhood.

There wasn’t a playbook for this exercise. It didn’t fit neatly into anyone’s job description. It came with uncertainty, it came with risk ... but also with the potential to do some real good.

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, “Utah: Collaboration as the Foundation for Growth” p. 7.

Members of my cabinet, legislators, law enforcement, county and city leaders and members of the community convened. We asked how we could restore order and dignity to the Rio Grande area.

Under the leadership of Lt. Governor Spencer Cox and House Speaker Greg Hughes, and many of you here, the mantra of the operation became: “shoulder-to-shoulder; no credit, no blame.”

While we are not ready to declare victory, Operation Rio Grande has already broken up drug trafficking, reduced crime, cleaned up our streets and parks, increased treatment services and provided job opportunities -- all without disrupting the important social services for those who are experiencing homelessness.

But perhaps the most important barometer of our accomplishment comes from, my friend, counselor and homeless advocate Pamela Atkinson, who recently said of her homeless friends, “Instead of seeing hopelessness in their eyes, I and others are seeing hope!”

Unfortunately, there is another group of Utahns who also need greater hope. Far too many of our youth experience a sense of discouragement and hopelessness so severe that unfortunately, they consider taking their own lives. The fact that any of them actually do this is tragic beyond words. The fact that suicide has become the leading cause of death among our young people horrifies me.

Just as we could not ignore the human tragedy in the Rio Grande area, we must never ignore this human tragedy of suicide. That is why last week I put together a task force of community leaders to augment the good work already being done by the Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition.

Under the direction of my administration and key legislators, including Rep. Steve Eliason, this task force represents the shared concern of civic, health, educational and ecclesiastical organizations. By bringing together community connections and expertise, this task force will meet with the Suicide Prevention Coalition, prioritize their insights, and bring us a clear plan for immediate community engagement by this February 15. This session, we will find solutions.

Now this is what sets Utah apart. Instead of skirting the big issues, instead of pointing fingers, and instead of refusing to talk about them, we face them in the spirit of personal and shared responsibility. And we find answers. And we make our world and our communities better.

We are committed to being disciplined and humble enough to work together in a spirit of mutual respect -- shoulder-to-shoulder; no credit, no blame.

And because of this, the eyes of the nation are upon us.

Just as Ronald Reagan referred to America as that shining city on a hill whose good example helps light the world, I believe that Utah has become that shining city on a hill for our nation.

The next 42 days are going to be tough. There will be late nights, hard decisions and some bruised egos. Perhaps in those moments of frustration, instead of retreating into our sometimes selfish selves, we could instead remember our dear friend Matt Hillyard.

For those who didn't know Matt personally, he is the son of Senator Lyle and Alice Hillyard from Logan. Matt was born with Down Syndrome, and about three weeks ago, at age 42, Matt passed away.

Matt was a remarkable individual -- a man without guile. Matt greeted everyone with a hug. Matt loved unconditionally. In Matt's eyes there were only winners, no losers.

Matt taught me to live each day to its fullest. Matt taught me to be the best that you can be -- do the most that you can do. Matt taught me to sing loud, even when you're off key. He taught me to eat every pancake like it's the first pancake you've ever tried and the last pancake you'll ever eat.

If we really want to have a lasting influence for good, not only could we emulate Matt, we could also emulate Matt's parents. Lyle and Alice, you taught us how to sacrifice for the well-being of our children. You recognized that by including Matt in all of our lives that everyone can grow, serve and experience joy. We all want to thank you for sharing Matt with us.

So this session, let's set a goal and from now on, let's all live like Matt!

And let's make decisions that matter.

If we do our job right, one hundred years from now, our great-grandchildren will dust off the "Laws for 2018," and they will recognize that what we did together over these next few weeks laid the foundation for their extraordinary successes in the Utah of the year 2118.

If we do our job right today, Utah in the future will still be the greatest place to live, to love, to work and to serve. Where people can become the best they can be in a free society. And if we do our job right, Utah will continue to be that place -- that "right place" -- where friends and strangers come together of their own accord to lighten weary hearts, protect the vulnerable, and restore hope and dignity one individual at a time.

And this will continue to be a place where the hardest problems are solved side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, no credit, no blame.

That is my hope and my prayer.



May God continue to bless our state and may God continue to bless the great people of Utah.