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Utah Legislature to Discuss Options for Biden's Vaccination Proposal

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After a two-month summer recess from interim hearings and other legislative work, the Utah Legislature has returned to a busy fall agenda to prepare for the 2022 Session. Below are updates on vaccine mandates, the state budget surplus, and redistricting.

Vaccine Mandates

Utah's lawmakers are hoping the state can find a legal path to fight President Biden's proposal to increase vaccination rates in the country. Biden's plan calls for businesses with 100 or more employees to require its employees to be vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus or be subject to weekly testing for the disease. Businesses that fail to comply could be fined \$14,000 per violation for not following the proposal if implemented.

Legislators in the state are calling this an overreach by the federal government. While lawmakers have stated public support for vaccinations and even supported businesses requiring vaccinations, Republicans have said the government should not force citizens to get vaccinated. Lawmakers have asked Governor Cox to reject Biden's plan and to join a multi-state effort to combat the mandate.

In addition, the Legislature's Business and Labor Interim Committee has scheduled a special committee meeting for October 4 to enable lawmakers to obtain feedback from businesses about Biden's plan. The meeting is scheduled for 9:00 a.m. and will be held in the House Building, Room 30. The Committee also will simultaneously host the meeting online to enable businesses and individuals to attend virtually. To register, visit the legislature's website at <https://le.utah.gov>.

Utah State Budget Update

Utah continues to do well on the financial side of things. The state's fiscal year ended June 30 and the state realized a healthy increase in revenue: Utah gained over \$700 million more than projected in the budget. A portion of that increase will be allocated to a "rainy day" fund as well as other contingent appropriations, but the revenue surplus is an indicator that Utah will have a significant amount of money to spend throughout the 2022 legislative session.

There is already legislative chatter about a tax cut with the new increase in revenue. Lawmakers have cautioned that the major revenue increase could be a result of the stimulus money sent to many households during

the COVID-19 pandemic and questioned whether the strong revenue is sustainable in the long term. Because of that uncertainty, any tax changes may face a tough road next year.

Utah's transportation fund also saw a higher than expected increase in the fiscal year. The fund, which is largely financed through gas taxes, netted \$648 million, which is an 8.6% increase from the previous year. Revenues were mostly on target for much of the year, but saw an uptick towards the fiscal year end, reflecting the point in time when many started to return to commuting to work and summer tourism travel increased.

Utah Redistricting Process

Redistricting is another item that soon will take center stage at the Capitol. Following the 2020 census, the legislature is tasked with redrawing the boundaries for Utah's Congressional offices, legislative offices, and state school board positions in an effort to ensure all Utahns have equal representations. Once those boundaries have been redrawn, the legislature will meet in a special session to approve the redistricting.

Leading up to the special session, two individual committees will tour the state seeking public input for how the state should be redistricted. The legislature has its own redistricting committee, while voters in 2018 approved of the creation of an independent redistricting commission. Both groups will submit maps to the full legislature for their consideration. However, it is possible that the Legislature will not approve exactly what either group submits. For more information about the legislative redistricting committee, you can visit <https://redistricting.utah.gov>. For information about the Independent Redistricting Commission, visit <https://uirc.utah.gov>.