

President J. Stuart Adams Opening Day Speech 2022 General Session

Opening

It is my privilege to stand before you today to open the 2022 General Session of the 64th Legislature.

Having just recovered from COVID, I feel blessed to be here. Thanks to so many who reached out for your concern and prayers.

Senator Mayne, we miss you. I hope you're listening, and I want you to know that you are in our thoughts and prayers. We miss you and look forward to having you back.

This year, so many people have done so much, and I have many people to thank.

I want to recognize and thank Sen. Scott Sandall for heading the redistricting process, which is constitutionally required of the Legislature. It is an incredibly difficult and complex process, made more difficult this year because of a condensed, COVID timeline.

Together with his committee—senators Kirk Cullimore, Don Ipson, Lincoln Filmore, Gene Davis, Karen Mayne and Mike McKell—they made sure public input opportunities were held to the usual high standard, and the committee maintained an open and transparent process. Chairman Sandall also did it during a challenging time in his personal life.

The week before we voted on maps, he lost his mother. Though it was an extremely difficult time for his family, Scott continued to press forward and finished the work in front of him. This year's redistricting cycle would not have been possible without his dedication. I cannot let this moment pass without also thanking his wife, Christie, for her endless support. Please join me in recognizing Sen. Sandall, and the entire redistricting committee.

Other heroes from this year again include our highway patrol officers, healthcare workers and teachers.

Highway patrol officers continue to safeguard our state and our Capitol, rain or shine. They put themselves in harm's way protecting the citizens of Utah. Thank you. And thank you for being part of our color guard today.

Teachers and healthcare workers have continued to amaze us throughout the pandemic. They have faced every challenge head-on. Teachers have worked day in and day out to help our children, especially the kids who have fallen behind from learning remotely. Thank you.

Health care workers have had a never-ending stream of COVID patients along with their normal patients to care for. Your resilience and endurance are amazing. Thank you.

In August, we lost 13 American troops in a suicide bombing in Kabul, Afghanistan, including one of Utah's own, Staff Sergeant Taylor Hoover. My heart breaks for these families and others who've lost loved ones in the line of duty while serving and protecting our country.

My thanks and prayers are with our troops and our Afghan allies, who also put their lives on the line to aid American soldiers. We will never forget you or your sacrifices and dedication to freedom.

I have two flags in my office from the night we honored Sergeant Hoover. They help me remember him and other good, courageous people—from Utah and throughout our nation.

Staff Sergeant Hoover's dad, Darin, is here with us today. Your son paid the ultimate price while protecting others and we will never forget your son's sacrifice. Thank you!

This past year, we also commemorated the 20th anniversary of 9/11. Although it is one of the most tragic events in our nation's history, it united us, it brought us together and we saw some of the very best in our nation's people. It is a day we will always remember.

I want to thank Jennie Taylor, a Gold Star widow and mother of seven, for being with us today and leading us in the pledge of allegiance. The sacrifice of our nation's military families is immense. The freedoms we treasure are available because of the brave, selfless men and women in our nation's military. Please stand and join me in expressing our appreciation for our entire military and their families for their service.

I want to take a moment to recognize our Senate staff. Mark is doing an excellent job managing and leading our wonderful staff, including Aundrea, Brian, Dawn, Jen, Nikaela, Kennedie, Lori, Jason, Emily, Kendly, Bennett, and Chad.

The same goes for all our legislative offices—The Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel, The Office of Legislative Fiscal Analysts, The Office of Legislative Auditor and Legislative Services led by our directors John Cannon, John Fellows, Jonathan Ball and Kade Minchey.

You help make this all possible.

For the last 22 months, all of our staff have been working late nearly every night, including weekends. They continue to go above and beyond to meet our needs and the needs of the state. We could not do what we do in the Senate without you.

Benjamin Franklin

On each of your desks, there is the Senate coin, which this year features Benjamin Franklin.

Benjamin Franklin was an essential figure in founding our great nation. As a member of the Constitutional Convention, Franklin helped draft our Constitution.

He was also the only man to sign the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Alliance with France, the Treaty of Paris and the U.S. Constitution, *all four* key documents that helped establish the United States as a free and independent nation.

I think Benjamin Franklin would have been engaged and interested in the work we have done and what we are doing.

Recap

Over the past two years, we have met COVID head-on and on all fronts.

Though some people struggled, loved ones were lost and livelihoods were threatened, we never lost hope.

As state leaders, we've had many tough decisions to make. We've spent countless hours counseling with experts, poring over data, deliberating and praying—making every effort possible to protect lives, livelihoods, our school children and personal liberties.

Our health care systems are the best in the nation. Utah has some of the lowest case fatality rates in the nation.

Utah's powerhouse economy still ranks number one among all 50 states.

Our state unemployment rate in November was 2.1%—the lowest unemployment rate ever recorded in Utah's history!

We've just completed our 14th straight year ranking #1 for economic outlook.

We have also been rated the very best state for upward mobility.

Utah stands out again this year as the number one state for charitable giving.

Last year during my speech, I shared that Utah was ranked the 2nd happiest state in the nation. Hawaii was number one. This year, Utah ranked as the happiest state in the nation!

Important Work Ahead

Martin Luther King, whose life we celebrated yesterday, once wisely said, “You don't have to see the *whole staircase*, just take the first step.” For our purposes, I'd adjust that to say, just take the *next* steps.

Our purpose as Utah legislators is to identify and take the *next* most important steps. We've been doing that for many years, and look how far we've come!

Utah was the 45th state to join the Union. Utah is no longer the 45th state. Utah is now the first state—leading the nation in so many ways.

But we have more steps to climb.

Water

Utah's growing numbers and drought conditions make it imperative to reimagine and reshape the way we access, use and preserve our water supplies. We need to make every effort possible to ensure we have adequate water supplies both now and in the future.

This year, two of our largest lakes hit the lowest levels ever recorded, our reservoirs were depleted, and rain and snowpack levels throughout our state were at all-time lows.

We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to invest in water infrastructure.

We need to build the Bear River and the Lake Powell water projects.

Farmers are the backbone of our state, and their livelihoods and our tables rely on their ability to utilize water sources. We must preserve this life-sustaining resource.

We need to change the way we landscape our yards and do our part to conserve water.

With encouragement from city leaders, my hometown of Layton made some impressive voluntary water conservation progress. Layton city's water consumption in August 2020 was 752 million gallons. In August of 2021, Layton citizens alone conserved 267 million gallons of water – a 35% reduction in water use.

Metering secondary water systems have shown reduced water consumption of up to 30%.

Utah leads the nation in so many areas and we can and will lead the nation in water conservation efforts.

Infrastructure

With unprecedented growth, we need unprecedented infrastructure improvements. We not only need to double-track the Frontrunner, we need to electrify it and eliminate the at-grade intersections so we can increase its speed, making it faster and more convenient than driving.

We need to connect the entire state to broadband, setting up this generation and the next for success, regardless of where they live.

We need to increase our corridor preservation funding. It has always given us the best return on infrastructure dollars.

UDOT is the best transportation agency in the nation. We need to continue giving them the resources they need to build the country's smartest and most reliable transportation system.

Now is the time to set up future generations for success.

Tax Cut

You may remember last year we declared 2021 as the year of the tax cut. Well, 2022 is the year of the tax cut – again. But it will be larger this time.

We can and will cut taxes and continue to fund education at historic levels – again!

Education

Benjamin Franklin said, “An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”

Good education starts in the home, with strong, involved parents. Decades of research have shown parents are the most critical influence on a child’s success in the classroom. COVID-19 underscored the need to have parents involved in their children’s education.

During the pandemic, we have been laser-focused on saving our kids' education. We want to ensure the highest education possible is achieved for our state's rising generations.

I've heard from so many parents who wanted more choices and control over their children's education. It's our duty as lawmakers to find innovative solutions that empower parents to set their children up for success.

All our students should be taught that they have the same potential, no matter their gender, race or background.

Our state has the opportunity to lead the nation in creating a process where teachers and parents work together in a transparent manner to ensure students are prepared and can compete in the global economy.

Mental Health

Over the last few years, we've consistently focused on funding mental health resources and providing the best possible mental health care for Utahns. We took steps to appropriate \$90 million for the Utah Mental Health Translational Research Building at the University of Utah Huntsman Mental Health Institute. This facility will be one of the leading centers for mental health research in the world.

I look forward to working with former Senate President Wayne Niederhauser as we work together to tackle the homeless and drug and substance addiction problems many are facing.

With the right people and the right resources, Utah will become a world leader in treating mental health issues and fostering optimal mental health – helping people in our state and around the world.

Vaccines and Freedoms

We need to make every COVID resource readily available.

Vaccines being available for everyone is not enough. We need treatments, like monoclonals and antiviral pills, to be available as well.

We are seeing people who are vaccinated and boosted still get COVID. Though vaccines help and are vitally important, they are not the only solution. COVID-19 treatments should not be an afterthought but a priority.

We should continue to take a balanced approach to saving lives, livelihoods and kids' education while preserving personal liberties.

I have full confidence in Utahns' ability to use good judgment to make personal choices without interference from the government.

Government should not push personal health decisions on individuals or businesses. Doctors and patients should decide what is best for individuals, not an employer or a government agency.

The U.S. Supreme Court got it right when they decided to not force businesses to mandate the vaccine. Government should not mandate health decisions.

I am hopeful the Omicron variant is bringing us closer to the end of the pandemic. It's been a challenging 22 months. Hopefully, life will return to normal in the near future.

Skyrocketing Inflation

Skyrocketing inflation is beginning to be a great risk to our way of life, our financial well-being and our economy. Last year, gas prices were \$2.20, rising to a shocking \$3.42 today – a 55% increase.

I started my business in the late 70s early 80s, and I watched as gas prices increased from \$.50 a gallon to \$1.50 per gallon. It caused interest rates to rise from 10% to 20%, crippling our nation's economy. Soaring inflation will ruin our country's economy and leave devastating effects on every industry and home in Utah and the nation.

We cannot let what happened in the early 80s happen again. Texas Governor Greg Abbott said it best – states can produce oil that will lower gas prices if the federal government just gets out of our way. Utah can drop gas prices if the federal government will just get out of the way.

We can and will make the move to renewables. We can make that move without increasing gas prices and crippling our economy.

Benjamin Franklin said, “A penny saved is a penny earned.” That is normally the case—unless you have runaway inflation! And then a penny saved may be a penny lost.

We cannot let that happen. We must protect the outstanding quality of life we've worked so hard to achieve in our state and our country.

Getting Back to Work

We have another problem. We need to get people working again. We've been given too many “free” federal dollars, which has allowed many people to stay home and not work.

Benjamin Franklin once said, “It is the working man who is the happy man. It is the idle man who is the miserable man.” I couldn't agree more.

Utah is blessed to have record-low unemployment and good jobs available. We're a state with excellent upward mobility. People have incredible opportunities in our state to work!

A great Utah leader once said, “Let us realize that the privilege to work is a gift, that power to work is a blessing, that love of work is success.”

I would ask today if you are not working and if you can get a job, go to work, go back to work, we need your help.

In the center of our state seal, there is a beehive and the word “industry,” which is our state motto. Being industrious and working hard together has been a hallmark of our state since its beginning. Hard work will continue to get us through.

I look forward to working with each of you – stakeholders, constituents, and all of Utah's leaders – to improve our great state today and for the next generation.

Conclusion

I have been so personally blessed with a great family. They have been so helpful and supportive. Susan, my kids and grandkids – thank you for your support and love. You are the reason I serve, trying to make Utah a better place to live, do business and raise a family.

And thank you to all of you. I know each of you cares deeply about many of the same things: We care deeply about improving the quality of Utah's education, providing good healthcare, conserving water, meeting current needs, preparing for future success and safeguarding our quality of life.

We love our state. We love the *people* of our state. We are here at this critical point in time with opportunities to contribute to Utah's continued success—both now and in the future. We are in a position to protect and strengthen the greatest state in the greatest country on earth.

Announcing the Start of the Session

Benjamin Franklin again wrote that “One man of tolerable abilities may work great changes, and accomplish great affairs among mankind, if he first forms a good plan.”

Over the next seven weeks, we will form good plans that will not only help Utahns now but those well into the future.

Welcome to the beginning of the 2022 General Legislative Session. It's great to be together again. Let's jump in and get to work!

May God bless the courageous, strong, hard-working, resilient people of Utah. And may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you.