

President J. Stuart Adams
2026 General Session Opening Day Speech

Welcome

It is an honor to be here today. Join me in welcoming our newest Senator, Emily Buss.

This year, we celebrate 250 years of American liberty... Two and a half centuries filled with lessons of courage, sacrifice and heartache that shaped our nation.

From the Revolutionary War to Gettysburg, Normandy and Afghanistan. American service members have stepped forward in moments of our greatest need. They endured unimaginable hardship so that the liberties we debate, defend and preserve in this chamber might endure.

And today, that courage continues. Just as in centuries past, American warriors confront new challenges with the same valor as freedom continues to be tested in Ukraine, in Israel, across the Middle East, in Northern Africa and around the world.

In these uncertain times, Utah and the United States continue to stand as a force for stability, opportunity and hope.

Again and again, our military has shown that no enemy is too powerful and no challenge insurmountable because America's military never gives up, never surrenders and never, ever quits.

As lawmakers, we carry a responsibility to honor that legacy through our service. This year, our Senate coin recognizes the brave men and women who served our country.

We live in the land of the free because we are the home of the brave, and today, we proudly recognize their service to our state and our nation.

Military – Gold Star

Today, we have a special guest, who just led the pledge of allegiance, a father who carries the legacy of a fallen hero.

Darin Hoover is a Gold Star father from Utah. His son, Staff Sergeant Taylor Hoover of the United States Marine Corps, was killed in action during the 2021 Afghanistan airport attack.

Darin, your son's bravery and sacrifice will never be forgotten. Please join me in honoring his sacrifice.

Thank you for representing those who have given their lives to protect our freedom and the families who have lost their loved ones.

Abraham Lincoln said in the Gettysburg Address. "We have come to dedicate a portion of it, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that this nation might live."

We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it.

“It is for us the living rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.”

That responsibility to carry on now falls on us—the living—to carry on the work of those who gave their all to make America what it is today.

We all talk about why Utah is so great. It is the people of Utah. People who have naturally taken President Lincoln’s challenge and dedicated themselves to the unfinished work that those who gave the ultimate sacrifice began.

We are going to recognize a very few of them today.

Energy

We all know that the country that controls A.I. will control the world. And we also know A.I. needs energy. Our competitors are building more energy. Nuclear energy. Using technology, America developed. Almost all of the recent nuclear production has been built by our competitors. We are going to change that. In Fact.

A few months ago, we announced a partnership between Hi Tech Solutions and Holtec International to build a fleet of small modular reactors in Brigham City, Utah. This effort represents the future of American energy and that future is being built in Utah.

We have with us today Chris Hayter, Co-Founder of Hi Tech Solutions. Please join me in recognizing him.

Chris and his team are going to help Utah become one of the world's energy capitals.

Critical Minerals

One nation mines over 60% of the world's critical minerals. That same nation processes over 90% of the world's critical minerals.

Without critical minerals, Japan’s, Europe’s and America’s auto industry would shut down.

Our pharmaceutical industries would shut down.

It would affect our ability to produce fighter jets, drones and weapon systems.

Many of that nations critical minerals come from Halloysite deposits that are not found almost anywhere else in the world until now.

Ionic MT has discovered Halloysite deposits in Utah, thousands of acres full of critical minerals. Probably the most significant critical mineral reserve in the U.S., this Utah discovery will shift the entire global economic balance.

Please join me in recognizing Andre Zeitoun, the founder and CEO of Ionic MT.

National Lab

As we lead the world in critical mineral production, Utah needs a national lab for critical minerals.

Our state is one of the few states that have 50 of the 60 critical minerals needed in the world.

Our mining industry is supported by world-class research and education, with the University of Utah, one of only 14 accredited mining schools in the country.

A national lab for critical minerals belongs here—and Utah is ready.

Dr. Adam Cohen with AUI has worked for many years and has laid the groundwork for this new lab.

During his time at the Department of Energy, Dr. Cohen oversaw 13 of the 17 national energy labs.

He has been studying the entire United States over the last seven years and has determined that Utah is the best location for a critical minerals lab.

Dr. Cohen lives in the DC area but came here to be with us today. Please join me in recognizing him.

He has advanced our understanding of how industry, academia and government can work together to solve national challenges.

Thank you, Dr. Cohen.

Northrop Grumman

Utah is home to Hill Air Force Base and a robust National Guard presence. They stand ready every day to defend our nation and deter our adversaries.

When the United States needed a site for the new land-based missile defense system, our great state delivered in record time.

After Northrop Grumman was awarded the contract, zoning, site plan approval and building permits were completed in a single meeting just days after the bid was received.

The first building was constructed and occupied within fifteen months.

Today, there are four buildings, more than 5,000 new employees, and the entire land-based missile defense system for the United States is headquartered just east of Roy, Utah.

Please join me in recognizing Ben Davies, the President of Northrop Grumman, who is here with us today and our partners at Northrop Grumman.

We know America is safer because of the important work you are doing.

Universities

Utah is leading the way. because our higher education institutions are driving innovation and shaping the future. They don't just educate, they ignite and spark the passion that enables these great breakthroughs.

Here are a few of the remarkable and exciting things they are doing.

University of Utah

At the University of Utah, our good friend Dr. Joshua Schiffman and researchers at Peel Therapeutics are working to beat cancer. Their work is offering hope. One patient with advanced-stage pancreatic cancer has been cancer-free for a year and a half while continuing treatment.

They are still in clinical trials, but this amazing news is proof that progress is possible, and it's happening in Utah at the University of Utah. And it's just one example of the many groundbreaking clinical trials underway where our universities are pushing boundaries and because of that, hope is becoming reality.

Please join me in recognizing the President and Co-Founder of Peel Therapeutics, Dr. Joshua Schiffman.

Brigham Young University

Brigham Young University recently announced a new medical school. That is exciting because BYU has the capacity to distribute humanitarian medical aid. almost all over the world. Think about it. Cutting-edge medical technology development in Utah and distributed around the world. Utah will be a world leader in the distribution of medical humanitarian aid.

Please join me in welcoming me Dr. Justin Collings, BYU's Academic Vice President.

Weber State University

And it doesn't stop there. At Weber State University's Millar Advanced Research and Solutions Lab, "MARS" engineers are designing and testing high-performance composites built to withstand extreme heat and stress.

Think Top Gun supersonic environments, hypersonic and commercial space re-entry vehicles. Fun stuff.

Recently, the lab was approached by the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee to see how Utah's advanced materials capabilities could help our winter sliding athletes. At MARS, students and engineers are pushing the limits of high-temperature materials and applied engineering work that is critical to national security.

By applying the same technology used in supersonic fighter jets to bobsleds and skeleton sleds, MARS is helping U.S. athletes shave seconds off the clock for more gold medals during the 2034 Winter Games.

Please join me in recognizing Dr. Benjamin Garcia, Executive Director of the MARS Center.

Southern Utah University

Southern Utah University shows what's possible when vision turns into action.

The aviation program produces 10 percent of America's helicopter pilots, preparing skilled professionals who keep our economy moving and our skies safe. That kind of impact doesn't happen by accident.

It's the result of clear vision, strong partnerships and a commitment to real-world opportunity for Utah students.

Please join me in recognizing Mike Mower, the Executive Director of SUU Aviation.

Snow College

At Snow College, students aren't just preparing for work—they're already in it. Through a partnership with ACT Aerospace and local high schools, students are recruited in their junior year, begin earning money their senior year while earning Snow College credentials in Composites.

Last year, more than 30 students did just that. Snow College is proving that technical training and college degrees don't compete; they connect and when they connect, Utah wins.

Join me in recognizing Chad Avery, Industrial Composites Instructor for Snow College.

Utah Valley University

And speaking of innovation, Utah Valley University recently opened its new FinTech Center.

The Personal Financial Planning program is ranked number one in the West. Graduates pass the CFP exam at 91%, well above the national average, with over 90% stepping straight into careers.

The FinTech Center is a launchpad for the next generation of financial innovators ready to thrive in the age of AI.

Please welcome Dr. Rachel Bi, Director of the UVU FinTech Center.

Utah Tech University

In 2021, Utah Tech launched a genomics program that puts first-year undergraduates into gene editing and disease modeling work usually reserved for graduate students.

More than 200 students have already been trained, with many moving straight into biotech jobs,

graduate programs and research roles right here in Utah. Utah is leading the world in AI biotech.

Please join me in recognizing Aaron Davis, Executive Director of the Atwood Innovation Plaza at Utah Tech.

Utah State University

The Space Dynamics Laboratory at Utah State University is one of our nation's premier research centers, home to 1,400 talented engineers and students. It has been involved in more than 420 successful space missions.

This isn't just research; it's hands-on innovation that trains the next generation of scientists and space engineers who explore the universe.

This is where opportunity meets innovation, where the future is not just imagined. It's built.

Please join me in recognizing Dr. Jed Hancock, who leads the Civil Space Division at the Space Dynamics Laboratory at Utah State University.

Universities

Our universities are determining the future of the free world. Thank you.

We are leading that charge with world-class education, cutting-edge research and a culture that invests in people. Our universities are finding inspiring and empowering the next generation of innovators and critical thinkers, those who will solve the world's toughest challenges.

We are joined today by our higher education presidents and the Commissioner of Higher Education, who are leading these exciting efforts.

- The University of Utah – President Taylor Randall
- Brigham Young University – President Shane Reese
- Utah State University – President Brad Mortensen
- Utah Valley University – President Astrid Tuminez
- Weber State University – Interim President Leslie Durham
- Utah Tech University – President Shane Smeed
- Southern Utah University – President Mindy Benson
- Snow College – President Stacey McIff
- And our great higher education coordinator, Commissioner Geoffrey Landward.

They control the future of America's innovation, our economic competitiveness, our quality of life and our military superiority.

Please join me in recognizing them.

Thank you for being with us today.

K-12 Education

Utah is number one!

Utah is number one in the nation for ACT scores, number one in the nation for concurrent enrollment, number one for teacher retention, best return on investment and ranks among the top states in the nation overall for education (many do not know that). That's a reflection of our students' talent and our teachers' dedication.

We have amazing and committed teachers who lay the foundation for the future, preparing students to thrive, innovate and lead.

We're honored to have State Superintendent Molly Hart with us today. Please recognize her leadership and our wonderful teachers, including my daughter, who is a teacher and is with us today in the back of the chamber.

The People of Utah

I believe that the future of America and the future of the world will be determined by finding and helping children use their talents to do great things.

Our children are the future of the world.

Track Record

Because of you, Utah is number one. I know every senator would be disappointed if I did not mention.

Our state consistently ranks number one:

- Overall State – three years running
- Economic outlook –18 years running
- Upward mobility
- Volunteerism
- GDP Growth
- Okay, I'll stop there because I know you all heard the list, but it is up on the screen for those who need a reminder.

We are on track to become a national leader and the number one state for:

- Missile defense
- Energy production
- Cancer research
- Humanitarian medical development & distribution
- Biotech
- Geneomics
- Fin Tec AI innovation
- Critical mineral production
- Advanced composites
- Space exploration
- ACT scores
- AI development

America is still, after 250 years, the hope of the world. And I believe Utah is the hope of America.

Closing

Utah is the best state in the nation because of its people. Today, we had the chance to meet some of them, and it's easy to see why we are number one. So many more.

Another reason Utah leads is because of the incredible individuals in the Senate. Your leadership, vision, foresight and dedication drive this state forward.

Together, we are:

Creating national laboratories.

Securing critical minerals essential to everyday life and advanced technology.

Solving global energy challenges while strengthening national security.

Tackling our water crisis with long-term, resilient solutions.

Accelerating medical research that saves lives.

Lowering the cost of living for families (Apartment rents are softening and we are building more first homes)

Driving innovation, from space exploration to air taxis.

Setting regulatory policies that support families and businesses.

Creating smart AI policies, protecting children online, reinvigorating civic education and ensuring Utahns' voices are protected and heard.

Strengthening education and workforce readiness while raising teachers' salaries to the highest in the region.

And we've done all this while cutting taxes – again, again, again, again, again and we hope to do it again.

As we celebrate 250 years, let us honor those who have given their lives protecting our freedoms. By dedicating ourselves to the unfinished work. Yet to be done. Thank you.