

# The Edge News Journal

## Utah Legislature wraps up the 2008 session

By Deborah De Vos

At the stroke of midnight on March 5, the Utah Legislature wrapped up the 2008 Legislative session with a new surplus of \$613 million, which was down about \$340 million of what was expected from previous years.

The big issues going in this year's session, health care reform and I-15 reconstruction projects were quickly pushed aside for the larger issue of immigration and "alcopops."

Rep. David Clark, R-Santa Clara, started the Legislative session with HB 133, a bill that would have required every Utahn to have health insurance by 2010, create new insurance policies and plans to cover everyone without raising premiums.

Clark said his intent was to implement a plan that would "move Utah's health insurance system to a consumer-driven health care market -- enhance access and improve quality," he said.

The bill (HB 133) also held the support of Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. who said he thought it to be "the

most important thing we could do as elected officials," he said in his Jan. 22 State of the State address.

But HB 133, met resistance on the floor from legislators who believed overspending and balanced budgets should be sought first on existing health care programs before creating and mandating new programs and policies.

"Washington, D.C. does not need to be in the business of health care," said Rep. John Dougall, R-Highland. "We need to send a message to Washington that individuals can take care of themselves."

The result was a revision to the bill, which now focuses on the creation of a legislative task force to design a more palatable plan.

The task force has nine months to find a way to deliver better, cheaper private health insurance plans and options, as well as make it so more people can get government coverage.

The next stop is on Huntsman's desk, which if he signs it would create about \$18 million in tax credits for people who purchase their own health



insurance.

SB 149, a bill that raises the minimum requirement for auto-insurance liabilities, passed in the final hours of the 2008 session. Opponent of the bill and Claims Attorney for State Farm, Chris Purcell said the increase in coverage amount would be passed onto an individual's motor vehicle policy.

"You impact the premium because they have to buy more coverage without a choice in the matter," Purcell said.

Other bills that passed through include SB93, a bill that increases license regulations for midwives; HB49, a bill to create a task force to investigate federal and state laws and policies on illegal immigration; HB 242, a bill that opens the way for Interstate 15 in Utah County to be reconstructed; SB210, a bill that mandates identification is required to register to vote; and SB211 stops the sale of flavored malt beverages (alcopops) in both convenience and grocery stores.

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## Access Utah Network provides forum for quality used equipment

By Haley Cavanagh

Access Utah Network, a Utah State agency that runs an information referral line for people with disabilities, has a special used equipment program available to those in need of quality items like wheelchairs, beds and medical equipment for a fraction of the cost

AUN's Program Director Mark L. Smith said the

Sales Bank is one of the best pages their network has to offer. "People can acquire used medical equipment at much less expense than you would have with the regular rate," he said.

Smith said there are power chairs within the price range of \$300-500 and many times the chairs are brand new, but the vendor won't take it back. "A considerable deductible from a top of the

line chair that will offer the lowest price of about \$1,000," he said.

Currently AUN has 3-4 wheelchair vans, which Smith said is a popular item and he believes it's important for AUN to offer this equipment at special prices.

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## Goalball season set to begin

By Mark Miller



Top: In Goalball the ball is thrown as hard as possible into the goal.

Right top: Opponents use their bodies to stop the ball from going into the goal.

Bottom: Goalball is played by an array of ages.



*“...when I’m playing I [feel good] because I can do something [they] can’t.”*

*—Sabrina Forbush*

It’s appears to be a universal goal for parents to put their children in sports citing that it teaches them about winning, losing and the value of hard work and for the visually impaired that means Goalball.

“It was developed after WWII because of the high number of war veterans who were blinded and they wanted a very competitive, rigorous type of sport that they could continue to compete in,” said Coach Tony Jepson, The Utah Foundation for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Teams consist of three players who play on a court with raised markings on the floor so that the players can maintain their orientation during the game.

Using a fairly heavy ball about the size of a basketball and filled with bells to make it more audible to the players, Jepson said the ball is thrown as hard as possible in an attempt to get it past the other team into the goal and the defensive team will use their bodies to block it.

“It’s rigorous and physical, depending on the level of play, determines how physical it is,” Jepson said. “For kids it’s not as physical because they don’t

throw as hard and so it’s easier but as they get older and stronger--men’s competition it’s extremely physical.”

Utah Explosion player and Magna resident, Sabrina Forbush said she’s been playing since third grade. Now sixteen-years old she finds the best part of the game is “when you’re ‘in play’ you get to miss a whole day of school,” she said. “It’s fun, sometimes it can hurt like when the ball hits you in the face...it’s so rad!”

Forbush has won eight trophies, which she proudly displays around her room “so everyone can see them,” she said. “I hate when people make fun of me in school, but when I’m playing I [feel good] because I can do something [they] can’t.”

Children can start at any age. “We have kids all over the state from about age 6 up to high school that play,” Jepson said, adding that Goalball is very important for the development of children. “Blindness has an impact on gross motor development and coordination and so we teach a lot of mo-



tor skills [such as] the very basics of body movement, orientation, simple throwing, body positioning and things like that.”

Jepson also said the sport helps the players develop physically, teaches them the value competition and allows them to grow with the sport with both youth and adult teams available to play.

“We have a state men’s team and a state women’s team that I coach. And we’ve been pretty successful,” Jepson said. “Our youth teams have won several national championships and our men’s team won a national championship in 2006.”

But it’s not just the players that gain from the sport. “It’s been a lot of fun [for me] to see how successful [the players have] been and to see the difference it’s made in so many kids’ lives,” Jepson said. “All [a new player] has to do is show up and we’ll start working with them and go from there.”

To get a schedule of the games go to [www.ufbvi.org](http://www.ufbvi.org).

## Cohabitant registry passed for Salt Lake City

By Deborah De Vos

SB29, previously called the Domestic partner registry, passed the Senate on March 5 and is headed to be signed by Governor Jon Huntsman Jr.

It allows for a catalog of Salt Lake City residents who live together and depend on one another including disabled and same-sex couples to register their names, as long as they show proof they co-exist and rely on one another as dependents. Businesses can then

determine whether to issue insurance benefits to those listed in the register.

Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker said that the purpose of the registry was to “create a way for the city [Salt Lake] to recognize relationships of mutual support, caring and commitment,” he said. “To provide all residents the same level of equality, dignity and respect.”

But the registry set off a firestorm of opposition from Legislators who saw the bill as tampering with Utah’s Amend-

ment 3, a 2004 referendum (passed) that defined marriage as the union between a man and a woman and put a ban on gay marriage or domestic unions. Former Sen. LaVar Christensen said the amendment does not allow synonyms or substitutes that approximate marriage.

Christensen may have authored Amendment 3 and objected to Becker’s registry but he was not alone.

**Continued page 3...**

# Bus Rapid Transit to replace fixed Magna line

By Deborah De Vos

Utah's Transit Authority has plans to launch a new Bus Rapid Transit system in April along 3500 S., known by riders as Route 35 which encompasses 23 stops and about 10 miles of line from Magna to the Millcreek TRAX Station at 3300 South

UTA is promoting it as a faster, more reliable bus service that will give special types of buses priority in traffic. The new buses will operate much like a TRAX train would, just without the rails and power lines.

However, UTA has plans to construct in the next two years special lanes for operators to drive the buses in. The exclusive lanes, which will only allow buses to use are planned to run down the center of 3500 S.

Phase 1 of the development will deploy a type-one

BRT, which includes buses to travel in mixed traffic, use signal prioritization, maintain high frequency service of 15 minutes or less; while passenger shelters are upgraded and stops will be reduced -- spacing them one-half to one-quarter mile apart.

Phase 2 will begin in late spring and include the construction of the center lane from 2700 West to 5600 West

"The goal with BRT is to encourage more ridership by providing a faster, more reliable service with comfort," said Stephanie Johnston, senior operations planner for UTA.

BRT lines are not subject to the federal Americans with Disabilities Act so UTA would not have to provide curbside service to dis-

abled riders who are unable to ride the fixed route buses and UTA's obligation to provide service only to those who begin and end their trips within three-fourths of a mile of a fixed route and only during times that the fixed routes operate in.

But Johnston said all of the stops in the Magna loop will still have service and that limited stop service will only be along 3500 South section of the BRT line between 8400 South and the TRAX station.

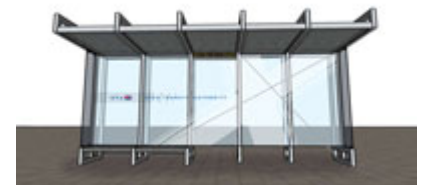
"Since service does and will exist in the Magna area, Paratransit service will continue to be provided," Johnston said.

If the project is successful, UTA plans to open other BRT lines in both Utah and Davis counties.



Above: Map of new BRT line along 3500 S.

Below: Artist rendering of BRT bus stations that will be built in phase 2 of the project.



## Access Utah continued from front page

Smith also said he believes it will help those who are dependent on this kind of equipment and allow them the opportunity to have a back-up. "If your first chair goes down

and you have that back up chair, you have a way to get around," he said. To list equipment you have for sale or browse go to [www.accessut.org](http://www.accessut.org).

## Summer camp around the corner

The National Ability Center in Park City is gearing up for summer camps. Registration began on Feb. 11.

The camps for Summer 2008 include a unique equestrian weeklong day camp that teaches campers how to ride and care for a horse -- Camp Giddy Up; different day camps for individuals with different disabilities like autism spec-

trum disorders, physical disabilities and cognitive disabilities -- Discovery Camps; and an opportunity for campers to "swoosh" down the mountains of Park City on a zip line, riding the alpine slide, running rivers, rock climbing and rappelling -- Camp Xtreme.

Look at your calendars and then visit their website for more information at [www.discoverNAC.org](http://www.discoverNAC.org).



Summer camps gives disabled children the opportunity to get active in the outdoors.

## Registry continued from page

Former U.S. Rep. Merrill Cook, Eagle Forum leader Gayl Ruzicka and Sen. Chris Butters, R-West Jordan joined him in the opposition.

"It's a repugnant registry," Butters said. "Some may disagree with me but since America was born, marriage is the cornerstone."

Surviving the introduction of several substitute bills to block the registry, SB29 remained largely intact as it was written, except the registry can not use the phrase "domestic partner."

The name change is believed by lawmakers to avoid any conflict or contradictions to Amendment 3.

# Letters to the Editor:

The Utah State Legislature has a history of pouring millions of dollars into reading programs for children K-12.

However, this year, a year of plenty, they have chosen to ignore the longest awaited reading program in history.

Nearly fifteen years ago the Legislature enacted a law which stated that textbooks, which could not be provided by the publisher in an electronic, could not be purchased for Utah schools.

Until now, this law was never able to be enforced. After years of negotiation nationally with publishers, the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center was formed.

Publishers have agreed to provide all text books for K-12 in electronic format.

Each state must assign an entity to protect copyrights and oversee the process of transcribing the electronic books into accessible formats; Braille, audio, PC compatible and large print.

For Utah it is USIMAC, Utah

State Instructional Materials Access Center.

The Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind (USDB) were assigned this responsibility. This means that for the first time ever, children with visual physical or learning disabilities can receive their school books in formats they can read.

This seems to be the best reading program ever conceived.

Nevertheless so far, the Legislature has chosen not to fund it.

The Educational Resource Center at USDB has the assignment but it does not have the funds to purchase the special technology or hire and train the specialists required to perform the task.

We mainstream children in the public schools and then choose to limit their ability to read their textbooks.

\$539,000 would purchase the needed technology and hire the needed staff.

While millions are being appropriated for all kinds of projects this important, formerly almost unimaginable

program is being ignored.

As a mainstreamed blind child, my family had to read all of my textbooks.

Some evenings my mother would read to me, while my father recorded another book on tape so that I could read it later.

When I studied French, they hired someone to read me the text book.

I was very lucky.

With modern technology and USIMAC this would not have been necessary. I could have recordings.

Just imagine the possibilities for those children who need assistance reading their textbooks. This program would serve all print disabled students.

If your child would benefit, let your legislator know.

Maybe they just don't understand.

Leslie H. Gertsch

## Letters to the Editor:

Are printed on a first come, first served basis as a companion piece to Edge News Journal.

Send letters to:

docpress@gmail.com

We want to hear from you!

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## BYU Study Announcement:

Brigham Young University Family, Nursing and Special Education Faculty are studying the strengths and challenges families encounter when raising a child with a disability or chronic condition such as diabetes, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, musculoskeletal condition, autism, Down syndrome and numerous other disabilities.

Researchers are searching for parents, single or married of all ages, of children with a disability or chronic condition to complete 2 sets of questionnaires. Also, a school-aged brother or sister of the child with the disability or chronic condition will: participate in a 1 hour interview and complete a 6 question daily diary for 2 weeks. Families will be given a financial incentive for their participation.

If interested, contact Tina Dyches at 422-5045 or Barbara Mandelco at 422-7199 or e-mail [tina\\_dyches@byu.edu](mailto:tina_dyches@byu.edu).

## Corrections:

In our Feb. 08 issue, "SLC band highlights competition and fans," we misspelled Cyprus High School. We had "Cypress." Our apologies to the school and the band, Seriously evan.

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