

**Washington County Republican Women
Regular Monthly Meeting
January 8, 2015, Abbey Inn**

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM by President Judy Houston in which a quorum was present.

President Houston welcomed dignitaries:

- **Our six Utah Legislators**
 - **Senator Steve Urquhart**
 - **Senator Evan Vickers**
 - **Representative Brad Last**
 - **Representative Don Ipson**
 - **Representative Lowry Snow**
 - **Representative Jon Stanard**
- **Bette Arial and Yolie Klawitter from the Senator Mike Lee Office**
- **Gary Webster from Congressman Chris Stewart's St. George Office**
- **Courtney Brinkerhoff from Congressman Chris Stewart's Cedar City Office**
- **Washington County Sheriff Cory Pulsipher**
- **St. George City Mayor Jon Pike**
- **WCRP Chair Nick Lang**
- **WCRP Treasurer Todd Jones**
- **Washington County Commissioner Chair Alan Gardner**
- **UTGOP VC Willie Billings**
- **Bill Swadley director of Senator Orrin Hatch Southern Utah Office**
- **St. George City Council Member Michelle Randall**
- **Spectrum Reporter David DeMille**

Prayer was given by Chaplin Diane Adams

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Caring for America Chair Wilma Courtney

Associate Member Todd Jones informed us of the Washington County Republican Party Lincoln Day Breakfast that will be held on February 14, 2015 beginning at 7:30 AM at the Dixie State University Gardner Center. President Judy Houston urged our members to purchase tickets for \$30 each through WCRW.

President Houston announced that we will be honored to have UTGOP Chair James Evens as our guest speaker at our February Luncheon. He will be speaking about the Utah GOP Challenge on SB54 that stems from the Count My Vote Initiative.

A motion to approve the minutes for our December 14, 2014 minutes was made by Lesa Sandberg, seconded by Elna Rae Page and approved unanimously.

LaStar Richins presented the following financial Report:

- **Business Account: \$10,255.51**
- **Caring for America Account: \$1,255.51**

The Membership Report was presented by Lesa Sandberg. Lesa gave a special thanks to Cleo Atkins for her Diamond Membership as well as all of our new members (please see attachment 1).

President Houston turned the meeting over to WCRW 1st VC Diane Adams who welcomed and introduced the legislators.

The meeting was turned over to Legislative Chair Bette Arial. She requested prayers and good thoughts on behalf of our member DyAnn Hickman who is having health problems.

Bette announced that the 2015 Legislature has the second largest Republican majority in 88 years, since the 96.8% majority in 1927. Our Utah Delegation for 2015 is:

- **Senator Orrin Hatch as Senate President Pro Tempore and Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.**
- **Senator Mike Lee will be counsel to Senate Majority Leader and Chair of the Senate Conservative Caucus**
- **Representative Rob Bishop as chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee**
- **Representative Rob Bishop as chairman of the House Oversight Committee**
- **Representative Chris Stewart as Chair of the House Appropriations Committee**
- **Governor Herbert's new appointment as President of the National Governors Association**

Bette introduced our panel of State Legislators including their committees (see attachment 2):

Medicaid expansion appears to be the most important topic for legislative year 2015 as is the consideration for gas tax to address the gap in transportation funding.

Please read the following Spectrum Article written by David DeMille which sums up the content of our Program:

Sunshine Caucus' talks health care, public lands and education

David DeMille, St. George 4:28 p.m. MST January 8, 2015
(Photo: Jud Burkett / The Spectrum & Daily News)

ST. GEORGE – Key issues like proposed alternatives to Medicaid expansion, the future control of public lands in Utah and how to allocate an anticipated \$600 million-plus budget surplus are still unsettled heading into the state Legislature's annual general session.

Southern Utah's "Sunshine Caucus" of state lawmakers talked those issues and more Thursday during a public forum hosted by the Washington County Republican Women, outlining some of their own questions and concerns but making it clear that most of the major issues would still need to be hashed out over the course of the 45-day session, which starts Jan. 26.

Perhaps the highest-profile issue will be the consideration of various options to provide medical care for the state's lowest-income citizens. A legislative task force chose this month not to recommend Gov. Gary Herbert's Healthy Utah alternative to expanding Medicaid, instead favoring less expensive options that would cover fewer Utahns and only if they are considered medically frail.

The federal government has offered to fund 100 percent of the initial costs of the Healthy Utah plan, which would expand Medicaid coverage to those up to 138 percent of the poverty level and fill in the current gap that leaves out those at under 100 percent of poverty.

But the federal match would gradually drop to 90 percent by 2020 and local lawmakers, like many others in the Legislature are unsure if the long-term costs would be sustainable for the state.

Under the less-inclusive options, the federal government would only cover 70 percent of the costs, but they would be easier for the state to maintain if the federal government doesn't keep up with the costs, said Rep. Jon Stanard, R-St. George.



"I think Medicaid expansion is probably one of the most impactful decisions we'll make this year, will have the most long-standing effects on the state," he said.

Sen. Evan Vickers, R-Cedar City, said he prefers in the short-term the less-inclusive plans, which would target about 10,000 of the most medically vulnerable citizens who live below the poverty line.

"I think we need to take care of at least the medically frail portion of that population for now," he said. "Let's at least do that, then sit back on the rest of it."

The legislators also weighed in on a variety of other topics, especially education.

Sen. Steve Urquhart, R-St. George, chairs the higher education appropriations committee and has been working for years toward a new performance-based model where the state's colleges and universities would compete for funds.

Thus far, the Legislature has mostly eased into the idea, allocating a small amount of funding available for institutions that meet their own individualized benchmarks, but Urquhart said he hopes to ratchet up the program this year. The Utah System of Higher Education is asking for \$5 million to go into the program, more than three times the amounts available the past two years, and Urquhart said he believes lawmakers are ready to take the next step in measuring performance and rewarding the institutions that perform well.

"We're going to start funding our institutions on outcomes, on graduations, on how well they're taking care of the students," he said. "Our students go in and they struggle unnecessarily. If we take their time and we take their money and we don't give them a degree we've really hurt them."

Urquhart also addressed an ongoing controversy over where to relocate the Utah State Prison.

A list of sites proposed along the Wasatch Front drew loud protests from residents concerned about having a prison nearby, but building on top of the current location in Draper is likely to be too costly, and the new prison needs to be nearby to take advantage of existing infrastructure and programs, Urquhart said.

Rep. Brad Last, R-Hurricane, who chairs the House Education Committee, outlined a series of bills related to education, including proposed funding for technology in the classroom and a potential change to the way the state school board is elected.

Rep. Don Ipson, R-St. George, said he is working on ways to address a forecast \$11 billion gap in transportation funding outlined in the state's 30-year transportation plan, including proposals to increase the state's 24.5-cent per gallon motor fuel tax.

He said he'd also like to see the Legislature find funding this year for a new building for the Dixie Applied Technology College.

President Houston and Caring for America Chair Wilma Courtney presented the Embracing Our Heroes Quilt to the 2014 winner, Representative Evan Vickers.

President Judy Houston thanked our participants and adjourned the meeting at 1:30 PM.

Minutes recorded by Peg Kull.

