

As the 2026 Utah Legislative Session unfolds (January 20 – March 6, 2026), several bills aim to reshape public education funding, local governance, and classroom operations. Below are details for the requested bills along with common points of opposition from the public education community.

- **HB241: Charter School Amendments (Pierucci)**

- **Detail:** Grants charter schools the first option to purchase decommissioned school district property and establishes a **Charter School Revolving Fund** to assist with facility costs.
- **Education Opposition:** Districts often oppose losing the ability to sell surplus property on the open market for a higher price, which would otherwise provide flexible revenue for district-wide needs.

- **HB256: School District Election Amendments (Kyle)**

- **Detail:** Proposes changes to how school board members are elected, potentially shifting them to **partisan elections** or altering term structures to increase accountability to voters.
- **Education Opposition:** Educators typically oppose partisan elections for school boards, fearing that political ideologies will take precedence over local student needs and educational best practices.

- **HB161: Property Tax Modification (Koford)**

- **Detail:** Adjusts the methods for calculating property tax assessments, often aimed at capping increases to provide relief to homeowners.
- **Education Opposition:** Since schools rely heavily on local property taxes, any modification that caps or reduces these revenues can lead to **funding shortfalls** for essential programs and teacher salaries.

- **HB170: School Board Referendum Amendments (Shipp)**

- **Detail:** Modifies the process by which citizens can challenge school board tax increases or bond issuances through a public referendum.
- **Education Opposition:** Boards argue that these changes make it harder to secure the funding necessary for **school infrastructure** and emergency repairs, adding layers of bureaucratic delay to critical projects.

- **HB267: Public Employee Compensation Amendments (Sawyer)**

- **Detail:** Implements new standards for how public employee salary adjustments are negotiated and reported, focusing on performance-based metrics.
- **Education Opposition:** Teachers' unions often oppose these metrics because standardized test scores or narrow performance data may not accurately reflect the **full scope of educator impact** in diverse classrooms.

- **HB273: Classroom Technology Amendments (Defay)**

- **Detail:** Part of the "Balance Act," this bill limits screen time in early grades and requires schools to draft specific rules for **artificial intelligence** usage.

- **Education Opposition:** Educators worry this "one-size-fits-all" statewide standard ignores local curriculum needs and may hinder the integration of modern digital literacy tools required for future jobs.
- **HB293: Public Education Student Athlete Protections (Hall)**
 - **Detail:** Establishes statewide standards and safety protocols for student athletes, potentially including mandatory health screenings and injury reporting.
 - **Education Opposition:** Districts often cite the **unfunded mandate** aspect of such bills, where schools are required to implement new oversight without additional funding to cover the administrative costs.
- **HB300: School District Taxation Amendments (Kyle)**
 - **Detail:** Reevaluates the taxing authority of local school districts, potentially limiting their ability to raise levies without direct legislative or broader voter approval.
 - **Education Opposition:** Districts value **fiscal autonomy**; limiting their taxation authority reduces their ability to respond to local community growth or specific district crises.
- **HB329: State Employee Maternity and Leave Amendments (Defay)**
 - **Detail:** Expands paid maternity and parental leave for state employees, including public school staff, to align with broader state family support goals.
 - **Education Opposition:** While the benefit is liked, the opposition usually stems from the **lack of funding for long-term substitutes**, placing a strain on school staffing and budgets when multiple teachers are on leave.
- **HB364: Certified Teacher Librarian Amendments (Arthur)**
 - **Detail:** Requires every public school to have a certified teacher librarian to manage digital resources and literacy programs.
 - **Education Opposition:** Amidst a teacher shortage, schools oppose this as a **rigid staffing requirement** that may force them to prioritize a librarian over a classroom teacher if funds are limited.
- **HB347: Artificial Turf Placement Modifications (Nguyen)**
 - **Detail:** Regulates the materials and safety standards for artificial turf on school athletic fields, focusing on environmental and health impacts.
 - **Education Opposition:** Districts may oppose this due to the **increased cost of maintenance** or replacement of existing fields that might not meet the new, more expensive standards.
- **HB365: Taxation Notification Requirements (T. Peterson)**
 - **Detail:** Increases the transparency and frequency of notifications that districts must send to taxpayers regarding proposed tax hikes.

- **Education Opposition:** Schools often find these requirements **redundant and costly**, as they already follow "Truth in Taxation" laws, and the added mailing costs pull money away from students.
- **HB407: Public Education Information System (MacPherson)**
 - **Detail:** Authorizes a centralized state database to track student data, software usage, and cybersecurity standards for Local Education Agencies (LEAs).
 - **Education Opposition:** Local districts often resist **centralized data collection** due to concerns over student privacy and the risk of a single point of failure in the event of a cyberattack.
- **HB440: School Lunch Amendments (Auxier)**
 - **Detail:** Aims to expand eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunches to a broader range of low-income families.
 - **Education Opposition:** If the state does not fully reimburse the cost, schools may be left to **subsidize the program** from their general operating budgets, impacting other educational services.
- **HB462: School Bus Internet Access (Auxier)**
 - **Detail:** Mandates or incentivizes the installation of Wi-Fi on school buses to allow students to complete homework during long commutes.
 - **Education Opposition:** Concerns often center on **unsupervised internet access** and the ongoing costs of data plans and hardware maintenance that are not always fully covered by state grants.
- **HB484: Property Tax Changes (Christofferson)**
 - **Detail:** Proposes a major restructuring of how property tax is distributed between the state and local districts to equalize funding across wealthy and poor areas.
 - **Education Opposition:** Wealthier districts typically oppose "Robin Hood" style reallocations that **divert their local tax dollars** to other parts of the state.
- **HB485: Property Tax Revenue Increase Amendments (Auxier)**
 - **Detail:** Places stricter caps on the percentage by which a school district can increase its property tax revenue in a single year.
 - **Education Opposition:** This can prevent schools from keeping pace with **inflation and rapid population growth**, leading to overcrowded classrooms and crumbling facilities.
- **SB62: School Funding Amendments (Fillmore)**
 - **Detail:** Adjusts the formula for the Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU), the primary mechanism for school funding, to include new weightings for specific student demographics.

- **Education Opposition:** Changing formulas creates "winners and losers"; districts that see a **decrease in their relative funding** will oppose the new calculation methods.
- **SB65: Minimum Basic Tax Rate Amendments (Fillmore)**
 - **Detail:** Modifies the state-mandated "basic rate" for property taxes that every district must charge to ensure a baseline level of funding for all students.
 - **Education Opposition:** Increasing the basic rate can be seen as a **state-level tax hike**, which local boards may oppose if it makes it harder for them to pass their own local levies.
- **SB85: Excellence in Education and Leadership Supplement Modifications (Fillmore)**
 - **Detail:** Amends the criteria and funding for teacher bonuses intended to reward "high-performing" educators.
 - **Education Opposition:** Critics argue these supplements create **inequity among staff** and that the funds should instead be used for across-the-board salary increases to benefit all teachers.
- **SB97: Tax Revenue Amendments (McCay)**
 - **Detail:** Proposes to further diversify the use of income tax revenue, which is constitutionally earmarked for education, to other state needs.
 - **Education Opposition:** The education community fiercely defends the **income tax earmark**, viewing any diversion as a direct threat to the long-term stability of school funding.
- **SB119: School and Classroom Amendments (Fillmore)**
 - **Detail:** Implements a "**bell-to-bell**" **ban on cell phones** in K-12 classrooms to reduce distractions.
 - **Education Opposition:** While many support the goal, some oppose a statewide mandate, arguing that **local districts should set their own policies** to allow for teacher-led digital learning opportunities.
- **SB126: School Swimming and Lifeguarding Programs (Plumb)**
 - **Detail:** Creates a grant program to support swimming lessons and lifeguarding certification within high school physical education.
 - **Education Opposition:** Schools without pools or easy access to community centers oppose this as an **inequitable program** that favors wealthier urban districts over rural ones.