The 2021 Utah State Legislature wrapped up on March 5, 2021. USEA tracked and acted on many bills that affected Education Support Professionals, public education, and our students. USEA and its allies fought against bills that negatively impacted public education overall and worked together on legislation that supports our students. However, there was some legislation introduced that directly impacted Education Support Professionals.

USEA largely supported SB 1, however, the COVID-19 appreciation stipend only included Education Support Professionals (ESP’s) working directly with students such as school custodians, child nutrition, paraprofessionals, media specialists (librarians), school clerical staff, and bus drivers. USEA and our allies in the public education sector lobbied hard for this stipend to be extended to all ESPs as SB 1 did not cover I.T., maintenance, school administration building clerical staff, or security personnel. However, once SB 1 passed, we attempted for this stipend to be extended in other ways. First, through the Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee. After this fell through we focused on the Executive Appropriations Committee. This committee also did not appropriate the funds for the stipend to be extended. This is not the outcome USEA envisioned, and this stipend issue now becomes a local school district issue.

Other pieces of legislation USEA tracked and acted on are:

- HB 369 School Bus Inspection Amendments. HB 369 is a bill requiring that Local Education Agencies (LEA) establish a protocol and policy for bus drivers to conduct post checks of their buses after their route. It also requires LEAs to discipline a transportation employee for not doing this check. USEA understood the intent of this bill but found it to be unnecessary as LEA’s already have these policies in place.

- HB 299 Mental Health Wellbeing in Schools Pilot Program. This bill, sponsored by representative Watkins, would establish a pilot program in select LEAs by training students, teachers, and parents to help students with mental health issues. We advocated for the inclusion of ESPs in the list of staff trained. Unfortunately, HB 299 did not pass.

- HB 233 Education Immunization Prioritizations. This bill prohibits higher education institutions and local education agencies that offer both remote and in-person learning from requiring a vaccine-exempt student to participate remotely rather than in-person. We were against this bill because it overrules the authority of the Utah Department of Health.

To find the full list of bills tracked, go to useautah.org.

It was a very interesting legislative year. Despite the new COVID-19 restrictions, USEA still virtually attended committee meetings and contacted legislators on our members’ behalf. In many ways, the legislative process did not slow down or miss a beat. We adapted to any challenges with the normal legislative process.

Finally, the USEA Legislative team, our staff, and our leadership thank all of you who contacted your local representatives with your concerns about public education. We also need to thank the USEA Political Action Committee (PAC) members for meeting weekly to discuss the latest legislation. PAC members also were active in contacting representatives and voicing our concerns. Please let them know of your appreciation: Jason Lewis-President and PAC Chair (Weber School District)
Robert (Bob) Martin-PAC Committee Member (Canyons School District)
Robert Conder-PAC Committee Member (Jordan School District)
Brandon Wolf-PAC Committee Member (Canyons School District)
Greg Burrow-PAC Committee Member (Granite School District)
Bryan Sprague-Non-voting PAC Committee Member (USEA Executive Director)

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USEA Vision
Great Public Schools where school support professionals are recognized and respected as Essential partners in student success.

USEA Mission Statement
Our mission is to empower, support, and elevate school support professional careers to positively impact student success.

Outstanding ESP’s and scholarship winners will be announced at the award ceremony on April 30, 2021. They will also be published in the summer edition of USEA Matters.