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## Legislative Update

**Thursday, March 11, 2010**

This update is published weekly during the General Session, monthly during the interim, and other times as needed.

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## Alerts and News from the Hill

### The 2010 General Session is Over...

That is it folks. We have survived another 45 days of the Utah General Session. Take a look at our legislative wrap-up ([click to view](#)).

This list of our legislative priorities provides information about bills and appropriations related to poverty issues like food, housing, work supports (formerly known as welfare), and asset building. You can see our old agendas [here](#).

## Bills and Appropriations

## Advocates Calendar

The Family Investment Coalition's Advocate's Caucus will be held during the interim on the same Tuesday as Executive Appropriations meets each month at 12:15 in the Olmstead Room (in the Senate - East - Building) and during Special Sessions as needed. We will discuss our legislative agendas, talk about items of interest, and collaborate with other advocates.

## Call your elected officials

Governor's office - (800) 705-2464

House - (800) 908-4261

Senate - (801) 538-1035

**EITC outreach / VITA program:**

Thank you to everyone who called their legislators in support of funding for the Earned Income Tax Credit Outreach / Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. We were able to secure an additional \$55,000 of one-time funding to nearly maintain last year's funding levels of around \$100,000. These funds will be used to support the efforts of volunteers in bringing more than \$15 million in federal income tax credits into the state.

**Housing Issues:**

This has been a great year for housing...

The passage of **SB45** was a major victory for renters across the state. It allows for a renter to repair and deduct (for up to two months of rent) or get out of a lease if the landlord fails to fix a "contract" issue (like repairing an oven) or a "habitability" issue (like fixing a furnace). This law supersedes local ordinances. However, only a hand-full of jurisdictions had an ordinance in respect to these issues and they were considered by many to be unenforceable.

The passage of **HB243** is the result of work that began in the 2009 General Session which provides renters in foreclosed properties with notice information pertaining to their rights. These rights include federal law which allows renters to remain in their homes for a minimum of 90 days after foreclosure.

We consider the failure of **HJR7** as a victory. This resolution would have asked for a constitutional amendment to prohibit the real estate transfer tax. There is no push to impose this tax, but it is used in states, counties, and local municipalities across the US

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to support the development of affordable housing.

Another great bill was **HB388** which gives manufactured (aka mobile) home park residents and associations certain rights and protects them from retaliation from park management.

Finally, the Pamela Atkinson Homeless Trust Fund has made it out of the Session without any current year cuts, but did find \$30,000 in cuts starting next fiscal year. (Their is a decrease this year of \$105,000 from last year's cuts.)

### **Work Supports:**

**General Assistance** has survived another year of budget cuts and will be funded at least at the same level as it was in fiscal year 2010. While this is still a substantial cut that resulted in a complete redesign of the program, we are glad that the Department of Workforce Services and the Legislature worked to make sure that General Assistance would still be around to provide case management and cash assistance to disabled individuals who are applying for supplemental security income (SSI).

We saw two major improvements to **Unemployment Insurance** this year:

More recent work history will now be able to be considered in determining eligibility for unemployment insurance if an individual doesn't qualify under the current base period (the first 4 of the last 5 completed quarters). **HB 18** provides for this "alternative base period."

**HB43** will prevent the social security offset from sunseting to a 100% offset at the end of the fiscal year and will continue the 50% offset of social security

retirement benefits of unemployment compensation through the end of the year. The offset will eventually go to a 0% offset as soon as the Federal Additional Compensation (FAC) program ends and Utah can adjust its benefit calculation formula.

Unfortunately, **SB115** did not make it out of committee so unemployment insurance benefits for part-time workers will not be a possibility this year. However, we plan on working on this issue during the interim session and will run the bill again next year.

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