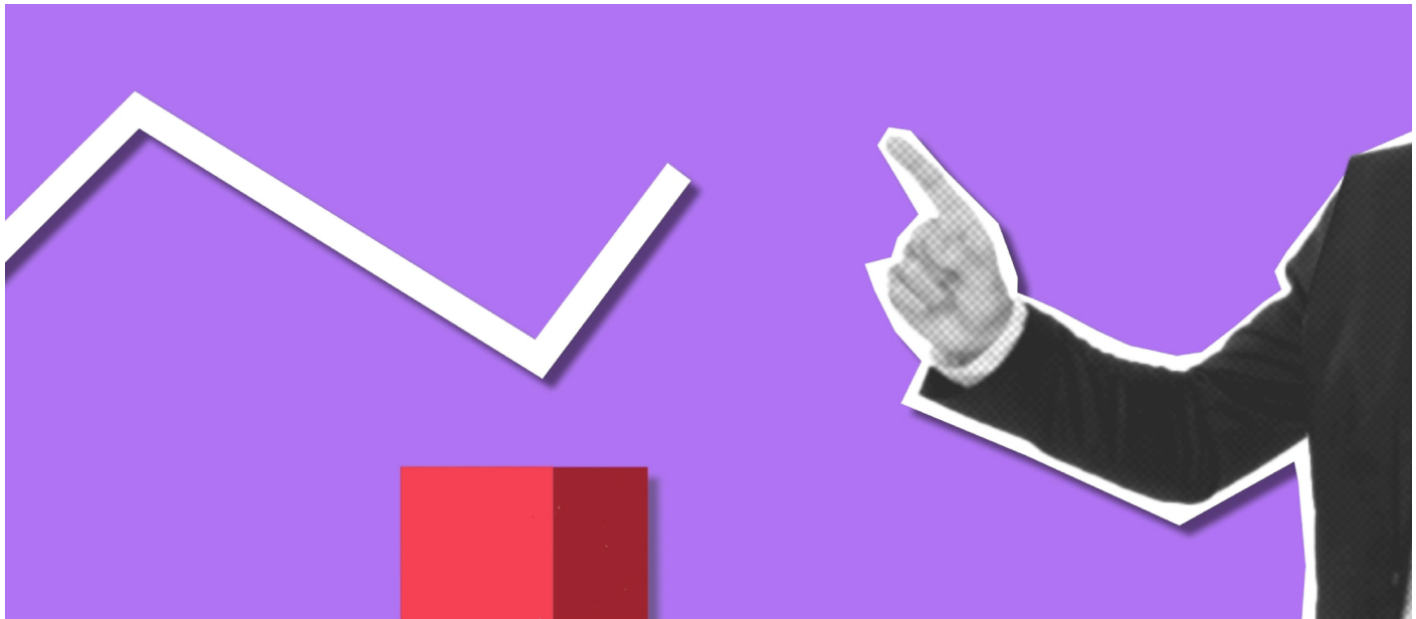


Commentary: The Story Utah Is Writing With Its Tax Policy

Published: Monday, 23 February 2026 23:54

Written by: Moe Hickey



Let me start with a question.

What if I told you, that some Utah families will get about \$13 from the tax cut being proposed this year...and other families will get nearly \$2,000?

Same policy. Same state. Very different outcomes.

Now, this is not a talk about whether taxes are good or bad. This is a talk about something bigger.

Because tax policy is storytelling. It tells the story of what we value. It tells the story of who we invest in. And most importantly, it tells the story of whose future we believe in.

And right now, Utah is writing that story. The question is, do we like where it's going?

Over the past ten years, Utah has steadily lowered its income tax rate. We went from 5% to 4.5%.

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Now, half a percent sounds tiny. It sounds like rounding error math. But across an entire state economy, that equals roughly: \$1.4 billion less in ongoing annual revenue. And supporters of these tax cuts say something very reasonable:

- Lower taxes help families
- Lower taxes strengthen the economy
- Lower taxes keep Utah competitive

And there's real evidence Utah has grown:

- Utah is one of the [fastest-growing states](#) in America
- More than 400,000 people have moved here since 2015
- Utah consistently ranks [near the top](#) nationally in job growth

Those are real successes. But here's the part of the story most people don't hear. Utah's Constitution [links](#) income tax revenue directly to public education and services that support children.








So when income taxes go down, pressure increases on the very systems kids rely on. That's not ideology. That's structural math.

Let's look at what these tax cuts actually mean for families.

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Income Bracket	Low-Income		Middle-Class		High-Income		Ultra-Wealthy
Salary Range	<i>Bottom 20%</i> Up to \$34,600	<i>Lower-mid 20%</i> \$34,600 to \$63,100	<i>Middle 20%</i> \$63,100 to \$102,800	<i>Upper-Mid 20%</i> \$102,800 to \$157,300	<i>Top 6-20%</i> \$157,300 to \$333,600	<i>Top 2-5%</i> \$333,600 to \$835,200	<i>Top 1%</i> \$835,200+
Professions	<i>Childcare Educator or Cashier</i> 	<i>Firefighter or Teacher</i> 	<i>Nurse or Accountant</i> 	<i>Lawyer or Engineer</i> 	<i>Chief Executive</i> 	<i>Surgeon</i> 	<i>Tech CEO or College Coach</i> 
Annual savings from the new 2026 tax cut	\$13	\$24	\$36	\$57	\$96	\$194	\$1,212
Total annual savings from the last 5 tax cuts	\$117	\$222	\$347	\$562	\$912	\$1,998	\$19,290

This chart shows how a recent proposed [\\$87 million Utah income tax cut](#) is distributed.

Let's walk through it.

If you are a lower-income worker — maybe a childcare teacher, or a cashier, or a service worker. The average savings is about: \$13 per year. That's about two fast-food meals.

If you're middle class — maybe a nurse, teacher, or accountant. You receive about: \$35 per year. That might fill your gas tank once.

But if you're in the highest income bracket, the savings approaches \$2,000 per year.

And when you combine Utah's last five income tax cuts? Lower-income families received about \$117 while the Highest-income households receive over \$19,000!

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Same tax policy. Different financial realities. And again, this isn't about blame. It's about understanding how policy distributes opportunity.

Now here's what makes Utah different. Utah is the [youngest](#) state in America. We have more [children](#) per capita than almost anywhere else.

That means Utah's success depends heavily on whether children thrive. But here's where the numbers get complicated.

Utah [spends](#) about: \$9,500 per student. The national average? About \$15,600 per student.

Utah is trying to educate one of the largest youth populations in the country with one of the lowest per-student investments.

And that shows up in real ways:

- Larger classroom sizes
- Teacher retention challenges
- Limited school mental health staffing
- Long childcare waitlists

This isn't because Utah doesn't value children. It's because Utah is balancing rapid growth with tight fiscal structures.

Now let's talk about one of the newest chapters in Utah's education funding story.

The [Utah Fits All Scholarship](#). This program provides education savings accounts families can use for:

- Private school tuition
- Homeschooling
- Customized learning options

Families can receive up to about \$8,000 per student annually. Supporters call this [educational freedom](#). And for many families, it genuinely expands options.

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But critics ask important questions: How do we ensure accountability? How do we measure outcomes? How do we protect funding for public schools that still educate the majority of Utah's children?

Because here's the key connection to tax policy.

When Utah reduces income tax revenue and introduces new education spending models we are fundamentally reshaping how education dollars flow. And Utah already spends less per student than nearly every other state.

So the question isn't simply: "Is school choice good or bad?" The question is: Should public tax dollars fund private choice?

That's the [policy tension](#) Utah is navigating right now. We have allocated over [\\$100M](#) without answering these questions in a meaningful way. Meanwhile, Utah families are feeling economic pressure in other ways.

The average cost of infant childcare in Utah is now over [\\$11,000 per year](#). Many families [spend](#): 20% to 30% of their income on childcare alone. And behavioral health [demand](#) among youth is rising dramatically across our state.

Families are not asking for luxury systems. They're asking for: Stability. Access. Affordability. Reliability.

And all of those rely, directly or indirectly, on state revenue decisions. Utah collects about: [\\$6,200 per person](#) in state and local taxes.

That's relatively low nationally. And again — that helps economic competitiveness.

But again, Utah is also:

- One of the fastest-growing states.
- One of the youngest states.
- One of the states with the most children to serve.

So here's the real question Utah faces: can we maintain low taxes, and still build strong systems for children and families?

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Because if we don't invest in children today, we will pay for it later.

In workforce shortages. In healthcare costs. In [economic inequality](#).

Tax policy is not just accounting. It is a mirror of our values.

Every tax decision asks us:

- Who do we prioritize?
- Who do we invest in?
- Who do we believe in?

Utah's future workforce is not theoretical. They are sitting in classrooms. They are waiting for childcare openings. They are sitting in pediatric waiting rooms. And the story we write with tax policy, will shape their opportunities for decades.

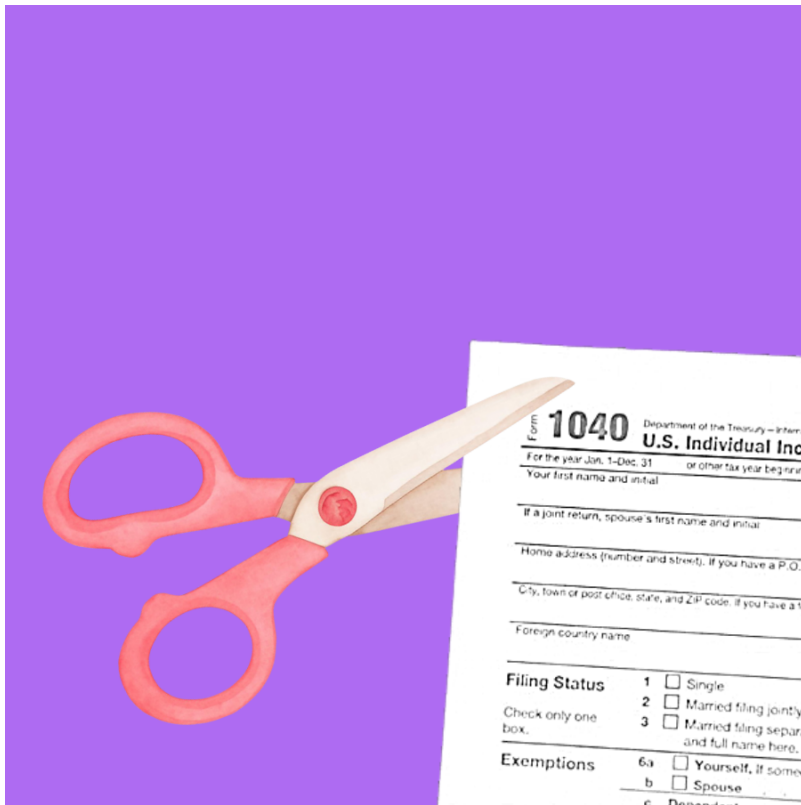
Utah's story is still being written. The question is, what ending do we want?

Want to learn more?

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2026 Tax Cut

Lawmakers are eyeing a sixth tax cut this year.

These repeated income tax cuts reduce funding for schools and services, shift costs to local governments and families, and deliver the biggest benefits to high-income earners.

READ TODAY

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Read Our Storybook Report

A Village Without Kindness: How Eliminating Utah's Income Tax Hurts Kids explains how income tax cuts affect schools, families, and local services – and why eliminating the income tax would leave communities with an impossible gap to fill.

[READ TODAY](#)