

Restoring Investment in Children

Published: Wednesday, 11 January 2017 09:20

Written by: Matthew Weinstein



Is the current generation of Utahns doing our part, as earlier generations did, to set aside sufficient resources to invest in our children and lay the foundations for future growth and prosperity?



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Over the past several years,

tax cuts have reduced
Utah's annual revenues by

\$479 million

Utah Taxes / \$1,000 Income

\$120

1995

2000

2005

2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis.
Calculations by the Utah Foundation: utahfoundation.org

Utah taxes
are at their
lowest level
in 20 years

but the state of Utah is now
investing less in K-12 education
than before the 2008-2009 recession



raising an important question...
**Are we doing enough
to invest in children?**



In January 2015, [the Utah Foundation](#) reported that Utah's overall tax burden, including all state and local taxes and fees, had fallen to its lowest level in at least 20 years: "Over the past several years, tax cuts have reduced Utah's annual revenues by \$479 million."

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As a result, our investment in education remains well below pre-recession levels. Per-pupil state formula funding for K-12 education is down 11.9% from FY 2008 to 2017 (the current fiscal year). This 11.9% drop measures just the state contribution that constitutes two-thirds of our total public education budget. But the picture is no better when we look at the older data that include both state and local funding, which showed us seventh worst in the nation with a 17% drop in per-pupil expenditure for 2008-2014. The Voices for Utah Children's [Utah Children's Budget Report 2015](#) found that FY2014 real state spending per child remained 6% below pre-recession levels. Moreover, investment in K-12 education in particular has actually fallen in real terms since the 2008-2009 recession, before even accounting for the 7% growth in the number of children in Utah from FY2008 to FY2014.

While everyone enjoys paying lower taxes and having more dollars in our pockets today, these findings raise important questions about whether the current generation of Utahns is doing its part, as earlier generations did, to invest in our children and lay the foundations for Utah's future growth and prosperity.

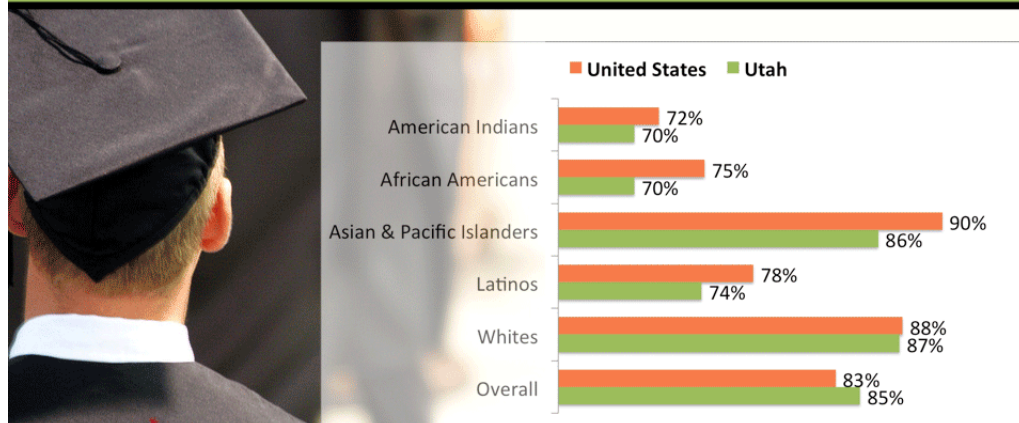
Moreover, recent data on high school graduation rates and college degrees raise warning signs that should concern all Utahns. Every racial and ethnic group in our state — including our two largest populations, whites and Hispanics — is below national averages for high school graduation rates. At the level of higher education, Utah's share of college degrees among our younger generation [has not kept up](#) with the increases seen nationally.

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Every single ethnic/racial group in Utah is behind its own group's national average in high school graduation rates.



As Utah becomes more diverse, we need to do better for Utah kids.

Opponents of new education revenues have for years counseled patience, assuring us that the economic boom that will generate new public education revenues is just around the corner or perhaps just another tax cut away. How long will we wait and watch our educational performance suffer — endangering our future prosperity — before taking seriously the challenge before us?

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[2017 Children's Fiscal Policy Agenda](#)

More Information:

[Utah Tax Reform Proposals: Who Wins and Who Loses?](#)

[Tax Reform and Utah's Most Vulnerable Populations](#)

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How Upfront Investment in Children Pays for Itself The Virtuous Cycle



For 30 years now, Voices for Utah Children has called on our state, federal and local leaders to put children's needs first. But the work is not done. The children of 30 years ago now have children of their own. Too many of these children are growing up in poverty, without access to healthcare or quality educational opportunities.

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How can you be involved?

[Make a tax-deductible donation](#) to Voices for Utah Children—or [or join our Network](#) with a monthly donation of \$20 or more. Network membership includes complimentary admission to Network events with food, socializing, and opportunity to meet child advocacy experts. And don't forget to [join our listserv](#) to stay informed!

We look forward to the future of Voices for Utah Children and we hope you will be a part of our next 30 years.

Special thanks to American Express for sponsoring our 30th Anniversary Year.



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Special thanks to American Express, our "Making a Difference All Year Long"

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