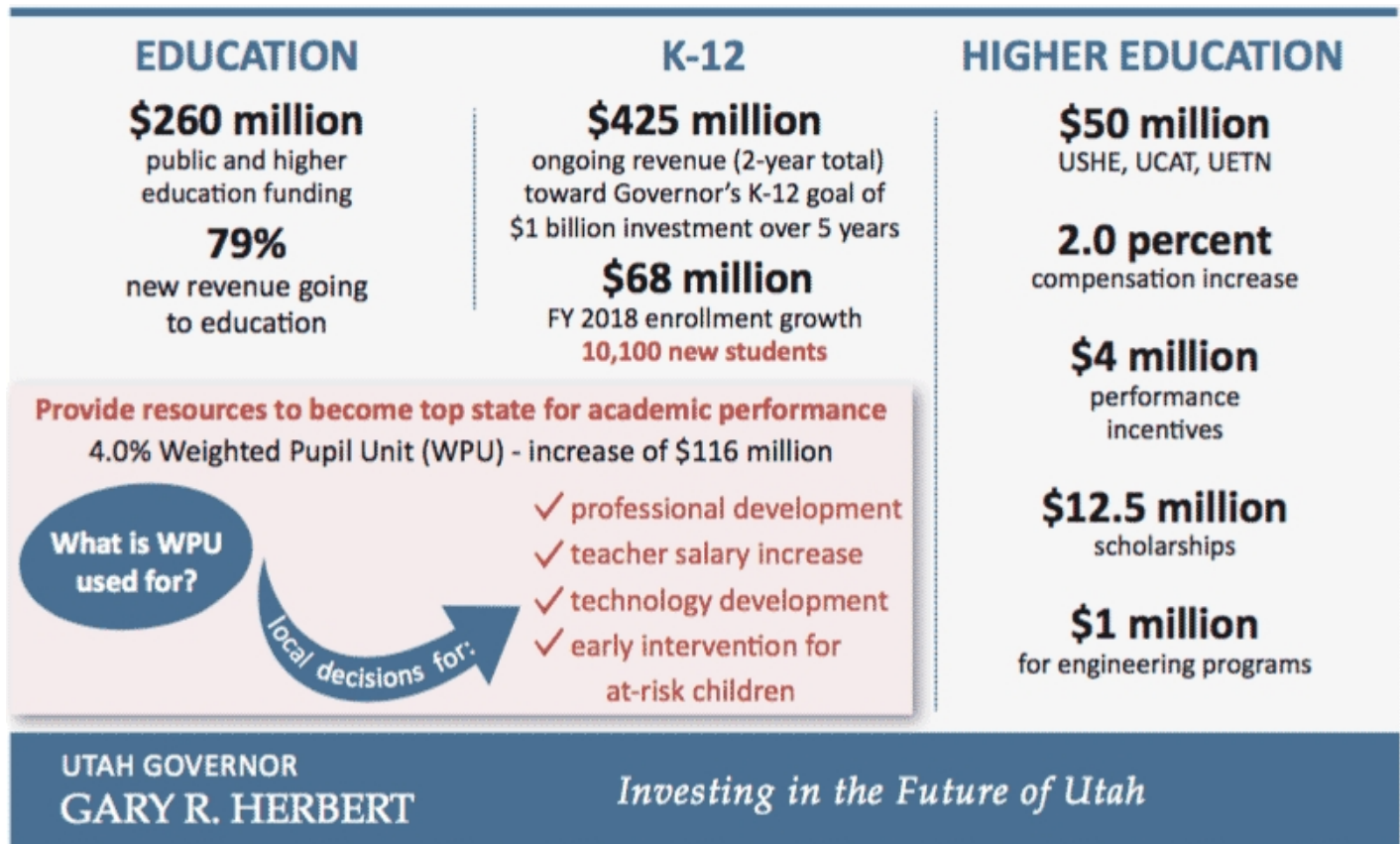


# What We Like about Governor Herbert's New Budget Recommendations

Published: Thursday, 08 December 2016 12:32

Written by: Matthew Weinstein



Yesterday, Governor Herbert released his annual state [budget recommendations](#).

The staff of Voices for Utah children found several reasons to be encouraged by his proposals.

We support the Governor and his team for their commitment to social services, and our most vulnerable children and families. Specifically, we applaud the Governor's fiscally-prudent step to support family planning. This will have important benefits for families, including those in intergenerational poverty. With this investment, the state can expect to see savings by 2019. We thank the Governor for his leadership on this issue critical to children and families.

As an organization dedicated to helping all Utah children and families succeed, we

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believe that our social safety net provides a critical role to help families who have fallen on hard times get back on their feet. As noted in the [Budget Recommendations](#), Utah has a “longstanding social fabric of self-determination.”

Our state budget priorities should support families’ ability to access and utilize public benefits in their time of need. Utah has the highest rate of children who are eligible for CHIP and Medicaid, but not enrolling in public programs. These children are uninsured and not able to benefit from health care services.

As the Governor declares, “the most effective programs, in terms of both quality outcomes and costs, prioritize preventative service delivery.” We strongly support the Governor’s focus. Health insurance coverage is the foundation to build successful prevention initiatives. We must strengthen and support our health insurance programs so that families and children can achieve their optimal health.

We are encouraged by the Governor’s recognition that early childhood is the cornerstone for lifelong learning. We support the Governor’s appropriation for the Baby Watch Early Intervention program as a critical first step. We look forward to seeing the Governor’s 10-year education plan, and hope the Governor will maintain his commitment to early childhood, so that we can establish a strong foundation for children’s healthy development, setting them up for success in school and beyond.

Voices for Utah Children welcomes Governor Herbert’s call in his FY2018 Budget Recommendations to conduct a comprehensive review of the state’s overall tax structure. In the section entitled “Taxation and a Free Market Economy” on page 9-12 (pages 13-16 of the pdf), there is an extended discussion of the trends and challenges facing Utah in terms of taxes and public revenues. The report highlights the downward trend in Utah’s overall level of taxation (including all state and local taxes and fees) and refers to the growing public sentiment that current revenues fall short of meeting the state’s minimum needs. The Governor declares his intention to address this pressing challenge with two concrete actions:

1. “the Governor will be establishing a task force of business leaders and education stakeholders to develop a comprehensive solution that aligns Utah’s tax structure with the modern economy (not just a rate increase), and
2. will request that the Tax Review Commission study and make recommendations regarding the state’s current tax structure, including alternatives for aligning the tax structure with the modern economy and identifying and reviewing tax credits, tax

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exemptions, tax exclusions, and other preferential tax loopholes.” (page 12)

The Governor and his team should be applauded for addressing these issues so thoughtfully and directly in the [Budget Recommendations](#) document and for his intent to convene further study and discussion about how to address this challenge going forward. In other states across the nation and across the political spectrum, the presence or absence of gubernatorial leadership has been a critical factor in determining whether states have been able to address their pressing challenges.

Voices for Utah Children has for a number of years raised the question of whether the current generation of Utahns is doing its part, as earlier generations did, to set aside sufficient resources each year to invest in the building blocks of our future growth and prosperity. Utah's longstanding commitment to fiscal responsibility should extend beyond balanced budgets and strong bond ratings to also include taking responsibility for making the necessary investments today that reap benefits for future generations in the years and decades to come.

The complete document is available here:

[Budget Recommendations Fiscal Year 2018](#)

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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.

## 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, our "Making a Difference All Year Long"*

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