

Debate Committee Amendments
 2025 GENERAL SESSION
 STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: Nelson T. Abbott
 Senate Sponsor:

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill creates the Utah Debate Committee at Utah Valley University.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- defines terms;
- creates the Utah Debate Committee;
- creates an executive board and advisory board that make up the committee;
- describes the membership of the committee; and
- establishes certain duties and powers for the:
 - committee;
 - executive board; and
 - advisory board.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

This bill appropriates \$600,000 in operating and capital budgets for fiscal year 2026, all of which is from the Income Tax Fund.

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

ENACTS:

53B-29-401, Utah Code Annotated 1953

53B-29-402, Utah Code Annotated 1953

53B-29-403, Utah Code Annotated 1953

53B-29-404, Utah Code Annotated 1953

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **53B-29-401** is enacted to read:

Part 4. Utah Debate Committee

31 **53B-29-401 . Definitions.**32 As used in this part:

- 33 (1) "Advisory board" means the Utah Debate Committee Advisory Board established in
34 Section 53B-29-404.
- 35 (2) "Committee" means the Utah Debate Committee created in Section 53B-29-402.
- 36 (3) "Executive board" means the Utah Debate Committee Executive Board established in
37 Section 53B-29-402.

38 Section 2. Section **53B-29-402** is enacted to read:39 **53B-29-402 . Utah Debate Committee created.**

- 40 (1) There is created the Utah Debate Committee at the Utah Valley University Herbert
41 Institute to:
- 42 (a) promote fair, nonpartisan debates for state and federal elections;
43 (b) educate voters by providing direct access to candidate debates; and
44 (c) encourage civic engagement and informed voting.
- 45 (2) The committee shall include an:
- 46 (a) executive board; and
47 (b) advisory board.
- 48 (3) The executive board shall:
- 49 (a) govern the committee;
50 (b) oversee debate planning and administration; and
51 (c) appoint members to the advisory board in accordance with Section 53B-29-404.
- 52 (4) The executive board of the committee shall include:
- 53 (a) four individuals:
- 54 (i) two of whom, the president of the Senate appoints; and
55 (ii) two of whom, the Senate minority leader appoints;
- 56 (b) four individuals:
- 57 (i) two of whom, the speaker of the House of Representatives appoints; and
58 (ii) two of whom, the minority leader of the House of Representative appoints; and
59 (c) three individuals with relevant experience, whom the governor appoints.
- 60 (5) The governor shall appoint or reappoint the members of the committee described in
61 Subsection (4)(c) to serve at will.
- 62 (6)(a) The president of the Senate shall designate an individual appointed under
63 Subsection (4)(a)(i) as a cochair of the committee.
- 64 (b) The speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate an individual appointed

- 65 under Subsection (4)(b)(i) as a cochair of the committee.
- 66 (7) The committee shall determine what constitutes a quorum for purposes of:
- 67 (a) transacting business at a meeting; and
- 68 (b) voting.
- 69 (8)(a) Except as described in Subsection (8)(b), a member of the committee may not
- 70 receive compensation or benefits for the member's service but may receive per diem
- 71 and travel expenses in accordance with:
- 72 (i) Section 63A-3-106;
- 73 (ii) Section 63A-3-107; and
- 74 (iii) rules made by the Division of Finance in accordance with Sections 63A-3-106
- 75 and 63A-3-107.
- 76 (b) Compensation and expenses of a board member who is a legislator are governed by
- 77 Section 36-2-2 and Legislative Joint Rules, Title 5, Legislative Compensation and
- 78 Expenses.
- 79 (9) The Herbert Institute at Utah Valley University shall provide staff support to the
- 80 committee.
- 81 Section 3. Section **53B-29-403** is enacted to read:
- 82 **53B-29-403 . Duties and powers of committee.**
- 83 The committee shall:
- 84 (1) schedule, coordinate, and host debates for:
- 85 (a) gubernatorial elections;
- 86 (b) congressional elections; and
- 87 (c) other major elections;
- 88 (2) ensure fair and professional conduct in debates;
- 89 (3) ensure that during an election cycle no institution of higher education hosts on the
- 90 institution of higher education's campus more than one:
- 91 (a) primary debate; and
- 92 (b) general election debate;
- 93 (4) partner with the appropriate media outlets, universities, and civics organizations to
- 94 broadcast debates;
- 95 (5) establish criteria for candidate participation in a debate;
- 96 (6) determine locations, dates, and formats for debates;
- 97 (7) provide public access to debates through live broadcasts and recordings;
- 98 (8) select moderators and venues for debates; and

99 (9) maintain political neutrality in debate organization and moderation.

100 Section 4. Section **53B-29-404** is enacted to read:

101 **53B-29-404 . Committee advisory board.**

102 (1) The executive board shall create an advisory board of no more than 10 members and
103 select the advisory board members from:

- 104 (a) media organizations operating in the state;
- 105 (b) public and private institutions of higher education operating within the state; and
- 106 (c) other organizations or sectors the executive board determines relevant.

107 (2) The advisory board members shall designate the chair of the advisory board.

108 (3) The advisory board shall:

- 109 (a) provide guidance and recommendations to the executive board regarding debate
110 planning and execution;
- 111 (b) provide input on debate topics, formats, and moderation standards;
- 112 (c) recommend best practices for nonpartisan and inclusive debate structures; and
- 113 (d) advise on public outreach and accessibility efforts.

114 Section 5. **FY 2026 Appropriations.**

115 The following sums of money are appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1,
116 2025, and ending June 30, 2026. These are additions to amounts previously appropriated for
117 fiscal year 2026.

118 Subsection 5(a). **Operating and Capital Budgets**

119 Under the terms and conditions of Title 63J, Chapter 1, Budgetary Procedures Act, the
120 Legislature appropriates the following sums of money from the funds or accounts indicated for
121 the use and support of the government of the state of Utah.

122	ITEM 1 To Utah Valley University - Education and General	
123	From Income Tax Fund, One-time	600,000
124	Schedule of Programs:	
125	Public Service	600,000

126 Section 6. **Effective Date.**

127 This bill takes effect on May 7, 2025.