

Matt MacPherson proposes the following substitute bill:

Government Speech Neutrality Amendments

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Matt MacPherson

Senate Sponsor:

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill amends provisions related to adoption of official and other local government flags and where certain flags may be displayed.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- defines terms;
- allows certain local government entities to adopt only one official flag;
- allows certain local governments to adopt other flags for ceremonial or other purposes;
- allows the Rules Review and General Oversight Committee to review the official and other flags by certain local governments;
- allows local governments to fly only official flags in certain locations; and
- makes technical changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

63G-1-704, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 17

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

Section 1. Section **63G-1-704** is amended to read:

63G-1-704 . Display of flags on government property -- Indemnification --

Severability.

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "City" means the same as that term is defined in Section 10-1-104.

(b) "County" means the same as that term is defined in Section 17-60-101.

~~[(a)]~~ (c) "Display" means, in regards to a flag, to place a flag in a prominent location on government property where the flag is easily visible.

(d) "Exempt flag" means a flag described in Subsection (3).

~~[(b)]~~ (e) "Flag" means a usually rectangular piece of fabric with a specific design that symbolizes a location, government entity, or cause.

~~[(e)]~~ (f) "Government entity" means:

(i) any local government entity, as defined in Section 63A-5b-901, including a school within the public education system; or

(ii) any state agency, as defined in Section 63A-5b-901.

~~[(d)]~~ (g) "Government property" means any property under the ownership or control of a government entity.

~~[(e)]~~ (h) "LEA governing board" means the same as that term is defined in Section 53E-1-102.

(i) "Municipality" means the same as that term is defined in Section 10-1-104.

(j) "Political subdivision" means the same as that term is defined in Section 17B-1-102.

(2) Except as provided in ~~[Subsection (3)]~~ Subsections (3) and (5), a government entity, or an employee of a school district or school within the public education system acting within the employee's official duties, may not:

(a) display a flag in or on the grounds of government property; or

(b) display an exempt flag described in Subsection (3) or (5) with alterations in color, symbols, or appearance.

(3) The prohibition described in Subsection (2) does not apply to the following flags:

(a) the official flag of the United States described in Title 4 U.S.C., Ch. 1, The Flag, and Executive Order 1959-10834, and in accordance with Section 53G-7-211;

(b) an official Utah state flag as described in Title 63G, Chapter 1, Part 5, State Flags;

(c) the current and official flag of another country, state, or political subdivision of another country or state;

(d) a flag that represents a city, municipality, county, or political subdivision of the state~~;~~
as those terms are defined in Sections 10-1-104, 10-2-301, 17-60-101, and 17B-1-102]
if the flag is the official flag of the city, municipality, county, or political subdivision
as described in Subsection (4);

(e) a flag that represents a branch, unit, or division of the United States military;

- (f) the National League of Families POW/MIA flag as described in 36 U.S.C. Sec. 902;
- (g) a flag that represents an Indian tribe as defined in federal law;
- (h) an officially licensed flag of a college or university depicting only the colors, logos, and marks consistent with official college or university branding;
- (i) a historic version of a flag described in Subsections (3)(a) and (b);
- (j) an official public school flag;
- (k) an official flag of the United States Olympic Committee, United States Paralympic Committee, International Olympic Committee, or International Paralympic Committee; or
- (l) an official flag of an olympiad or paralympiad that occurred or will occur within the state[; ~~or~~] .

~~[(m) a flag of an organization authorized to use a public school facility at the location and during the time in which the organization is authorized to use the public school facility.]~~

- (4)(a) A city, municipality, county, or political subdivision of the state may adopt and have only one official flag.
- (b) A city, municipality, county, or political subdivision may adopt additional flags for ceremonial or other purposes.
- (c) Adoption of a flag as described in Subsection (4)(a) or (b) is subject to review by the Rules Review and General Oversight Committee created in Section 36-35-102 to ensure compliance with this section.
- (5)(a) A city, municipality, county, or political subdivision may display only an exempt flag described in Subsection (3) in the following locations under the control or jurisdiction of the city, municipality, county, or political subdivision:
 - (i) a courthouse;
 - (ii) a public airport; or
 - (iii) a transit facility, as defined in Section 17B-2a-802.
- (b) A city, municipality, county, or political subdivision may display in any location not described in Subsection (5)(a) an exempt flag or another flag adopted by the city, municipality, county, or political subdivision as described in Subsection (4)(b).
- (6) This section does not apply to a private organization's ability to display a flag of the organization authorized to use a public school facility at the location and during the time in which the organization is authorized to use the public school facility.

~~[(4)]~~ (7)(a) The state auditor shall:

- (i) establish a process to receive and investigate alleged violations of this section;
- (ii) provide notice to the relevant government entity of:
- (A) each alleged violation of this section involving the government entity;
- (B) each violation that the state auditor determines to be substantiated, including an opportunity to cure the violation not to exceed 30 calendar days;
- (iii) if a government entity, other than a school district or a school within the public education system, fails to cure a violation in accordance with Subsection [~~(4)(a)(ii)(B)~~] (7)(a)(ii)(B), impose a fine of \$500 per violation per day; and
- (iv) deposit fines described in Subsection [~~(4)(a)(iii)~~] (7)(a)(iii) into the General Fund.
- (b) A government entity may seek judicial review of a fine the state auditor imposes under this section to determine whether the imposition of the fine is clearly erroneous.
- [~~(5)~~] (8) Nothing in this section, for a local education agency, as defined in Section 53E-1-102:
- (a) limits the authority of the agency related to student expression under applicable federal or state law; or
- (b) removes the agency's obligation to protect all students from discrimination.
- [~~(6)~~] (9) Regarding a school district or a school within the public education system, the attorney general shall defend and the state shall indemnify and hold harmless a person acting under color of state law to enforce this section for any claims or damages, including court costs and attorney fees, that:
- (a) arise as a result of this section; and
- (b) are not covered by the person's insurance policies or by any coverage agreement the State Risk Management Fund issues.
- [~~(7)~~] (10) If any provision of this section or the application of any provision of this section to any person or circumstance is held invalid by a final decision of a court, the remainder of this section shall be given effect without the invalidated provision or application.

Section 2. Effective Date.

This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.