

## Fighting for the Next Generation

...Rick Palmer, UniServ Director

*Editor's Note: You were saved from a very negative, cynical, and depressing article by our UniServ secretary Tina who convinced me to forego my first article and start again. If you are*



*overly happy about life and need a buzz kill, email me and I will be glad to send it to you.*

Lainey Gardner was born around 12:25 pm Thursday, February 11th. February 12th, I woke up at 1:00 AM (not sleeping well) and saw the cell phone picture of my new granddaughter. Lainey is my only daughter's first girl joining her two brothers. I would be lying if I didn't admit of a tear of happiness and pride. (Forgive me for this "point of personal privilege.") My daughter, Karisti, is special. She was born one year and one day after we had lost a baby girl, Melissa Jean, at birth. It was especially nice to see her get another vote in her household of boys.

After a little bit of sleep, I left the house before 6:00 AM to attend the Chamber of Commerce Caucus with the Weber County legislators at 7:00 AM in the West office building at the Capitol. Members of the Davis Chamber and several of the Davis County legislators were also in attendance. I met with our UEA Legislative Team, **Susan Kuziak, Kory Holdaway and Sarah Jones** and discussed the different bills they were tracking. You can access that

bill tracking sheet at our UEA website, [www.utea.org](http://www.utea.org) and click on "Under The Dome."

I came back to the UniServ office and listened to the internet broadcast of the Retirement Committee. The committee (sans Sen. Greiner) listened to testimony from several groups (including police, state employees and UEA Pres. Kim Campbell) asking the senators to go slow on change to the benefit system. After a couple of hours, the two democrats voted no and the three republican senators voted to pass the three bills out to the main senate floor for debate. Absent was our Senator Jon Greiner, who later said in an article that he had promised Sen. Liljenquist, the chair, that he wouldn't stop the bills (even though he disagreed with two of the three) from moving forward. His vote would have tied the committee at 3-3 and the bill would have been stopped. Our best chance of stopping the bills, now, is probably in the House. By the time you read this, we should know the final decision on retirement. We do want to thank **Sen. Jon Greiner** for his eloquent debate against the retirement bills that he presented in the Senate.

### "Educator on the Hill"

Several of our leaders and teachers have taken the opportunity to visit the legislature on the UEA's "Educator on the Hill" days, where they meet early before contacting legislators about our priorities. They then spend lunch debriefing and have the opportunity to share conversations and messages from their legislators. It is also a great time to visit an education committee hearing and see the process up close and personal.

By now we will also have seen more of where the budget is headed. February 16th, new revenue numbers

were released. The deficit was lowered by \$50 million. That will help mitigate the cuts to public education a little bit. We have already heard of draconian cuts in the Jordan and Box Elder Districts. By now other districts will have presented ways to cut teaching days, teachers and/or increase class sizes to balance a very lean budget.

We hope that the legislators will spend more time on public ed funding and less time on their "message" bills: Global Warming Conspiracy, Eliminate the 12th Grade, Fight Federal Health Care Reform, Counter Federal Firearm laws, Kill the wolves, Eliminate tuition for illegal immigrants, and on and on.

Thanks Tina, for reminding me that I am supposed to inspire and lead you all to believe in the legislative system. I taught my 8th and 9th graders for many years in class that the system worked. If we give up now, who will stand up for the next generation of teachers and students in Utah? Who will fight for my new granddaughter, Lainey?



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