

## CASE STUDY:

# IB Legislation in Utah

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## Key Players

- Sponsor of Bill HB266: Representative Carol Spackman Moss (D-Holladay)
- Senate Sponsor (D-Salt Lake City) of Bill HB266: Senator Patricia Jones
- Utah Governor: Jon Huntsman Jr.
- Senators opposed to Bill HB266: Senator Margaret Dayton (R-Orem), Senator Darin Peterson (R-Nephi), and Senator Howard Stephenson (R-Draper)
- IB coordinator, Skyline High School: Ruth Dallas
- IB coordinator, West High School: Connie Jeanne Larsen

## Overview

Currently, there are seven IB World Schools in Utah, all offering the IB Diploma Programme. West High School was the first school in the state to be authorized as an IB World School in 1984.

## Conflict

In order to help cover costs associated with implementing the IB programme, such as IB diploma tests and IB teacher training, Representative Carol Spackman Moss (D-Holladay) sponsored bill HB266, which proposed the allocation of \$300,000 to help fund Utah's IB programmes. On February 21st, 2008, the bill failed to clear the Senate Education Committee after passing without difficulty through the House Education Committee and unanimously on the House floor.

Senators Margaret Dayton (R-Orem), Darin Peterson (R-Nephi), and Senator Howard Stephenson (R-Draper) voted against the bill after receiving information on the IB that described the program's mission as one that promoted a United Nations worldview and agenda. Lawmakers had also received documents gathered by Utah's Eagle Forum accusing the IB of teaching "world citizenship and global economy" and a "one world and taking away borders" anti-American curriculum.

## Response

When the process to pass the bill began last year, no one from the IB community anticipated any problems. They had all heard rumblings of anti-American allegations before, but bill HB266 was expected to pass without incident. Ruth Dallas, IB coordinator at Skyline High School, had been asked to attend the committee meeting to answer IB-related questions. When it was announced that the bill had failed to clear, she, along with the rest of the IB community, was stunned. "Immediately following the announcement, everyone asked what the next step was," said Ruth. "We were ready to do whatever we could to overturn the lawmakers' decision."

In fact, the IB community had begun organizing itself a year prior to the committee meeting. IB World School staff had met with newspaper editorial boards, had educated themselves on the legislation process, and had requested guidance from an IB principal who had once been a Senate intern. After the decision was made and the bill rejected, raising awareness and support for the IB became the top priority.

IB coordinators Ruth Dallas and Connie Jeanne Larsen contacted the Recognition Services division of the IB North America office to provide an overview of the legislation decision and discuss a course of action. Bob Poole, Head of Recognition Services, provided contact information for the IB regional association in their area, IB Schools of Utah (IBSU), which helped get all IB World Schools on the same page via email by providing support and guidance based on previous experiences with IB legislation. In addition to cooperation from the influential Utah Association of Gifted Children (UAGC), all seven IB World Schools in Utah sent out information and updates on the legislative decision to parent groups. The schools' parent groups were extremely organized and efficient, communicating through parent chat rooms on school websites and passing along lists of all senators involved. The Senate, in turn, was flooded with emails – aids couldn't keep up with the overwhelming community response. Even the President of the University of Utah, whose son is a pre-IB student in 9th grade at West High School, called the Senate President to discuss the issue.

Another key public figure involved was Utah's governor, who commented in a *The Salt Lake Tribune* article: "It's an extraordinary program," Governor Jon Huntsman Jr. said of IB, in which his own son is enrolled. "We need more of them, not fewer."

The media in Utah also took notice. Several news articles were published covering the initial legislative decision along with the IB community's proactive reaction. The *Deseret Morning News* published an article with the headline "Students rally to back global program," in which it stated that "about 80 students from the Early Placement International Baccalaureate Program at Syracuse Junior High in Davis County visited the state Capitol Monday to meet with lawmakers and show their support for a measure that was called 'anti-American' by some legislators." In addition, a local talk radio show sponsored IB airtime, encouraging IB students to take part using their cell phones while participating in an IB English class.

Not to be outdone, graduates of the Diploma Programme enrolled in out-of-state universities also jumped into the mix, emailing senators with their permanent mailing addresses in Utah to let them know where they had gone to school and offering to fly out to Utah to help in any way they could.

## **Outcome**

In the end, the effort to reverse the initial decision on bill HB266 worked. Representative Moss, sponsor of bill HB266, told *The Salt Lake Tribune* that she "talked to wiser, more reasonable people... who realized it would be an embarrassment to our state if that story went national. The public outcry was so big."

The bill died in the Senate Education Committee, so proponents of the bill circumvented the committee and went straight to the Senate floor, where the bill was finally passed with an allocation of \$100,000.

Senator Peterson accepted West High School's invitation to visit the school and, because West High School is located two blocks from the capitol building, planned to stop by for half an hour. He ended up staying for almost two hours after visiting IB classes picked at random. Following his visit, Senator Peterson, who had initially planned to vote for the bill, apologized to the House Representative for changing his vote based on misinformation and hearsay.

Senator Dayton, influenced by fellow legislators, the media, and the IB community, also apologized for her initial comments regarding the IB. Now willing to learn more about the IB programme, she is scheduled to visit Provo High School to spend a full day in IB classrooms.

"There was one important and unexpected benefit that came out of this experience," said Connie Jeanne Larsen, IB coordinator at West Side High School. "The overwhelming response from the IB community and the public brought the IB to the forefront. Everyone in Utah has now heard of the IB."

## Conclusion

The initial decision to reject bill HB266 was unexpected, but the swift, joint effort by supporters of the bill and the IB community made all the difference.

When faced with opposition in the media or in a public forum, it is important to:

- Immediately notify your colleagues, your community, and the IB North America office of the nature of the opposition and your proposed course of action:

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- Create, cultivate, and maintain relationships with parents, students, local government, business leaders, and other community groups.
- Identify an "IB champion," an influential educator or policymaker (university president or government official) to make direct, personal contact with legislators and/or with the governmental body president. Involvement from a prominent or key figure in education is instrumental.
- Don't wait for conflict to arise to decide how to respond. Have ready answers for many of the common complaints lodged against the IB and distribute them to your colleagues.

### **Additional Information:**

- *Case Study: Opposition in the Media*

<http://www.ibo.org/ibna/actionpacks/documents/OppositionintheMedia.pdf>

- *IB Myths vs. Facts*

[http://www.ibo.org/ibna/actionpacks/documents/MythvFact\\_000.pdf](http://www.ibo.org/ibna/actionpacks/documents/MythvFact_000.pdf)

- Respond quickly and thoughtfully and enlist others, such as parents, to respond as well.

## Sources

Schencker, Lisa. "Senators change their minds on International Baccalaureate program." *The Salt Lake Tribune*. 29 February 2008.

Erickson, Tiffany. "Students rally to back global program." *Deseret Morning News*. 26 February 2008.

Lusk, Brittani. "Provo High will continue IB programs without support." *Daily Herald*. 26 February 2008.

Schencker, Lisa. "Utah lawmakers, fearing UN conspiracy, kill funds for International Baccalaureate program." *The Salt Lake Tribune*. 21 February 2008.