



Election 2026



A complete guide to the races, candidates and issues on the November ballot

A supplement to the Sanpete Messenger

Congressional candidates talk party lines in debate

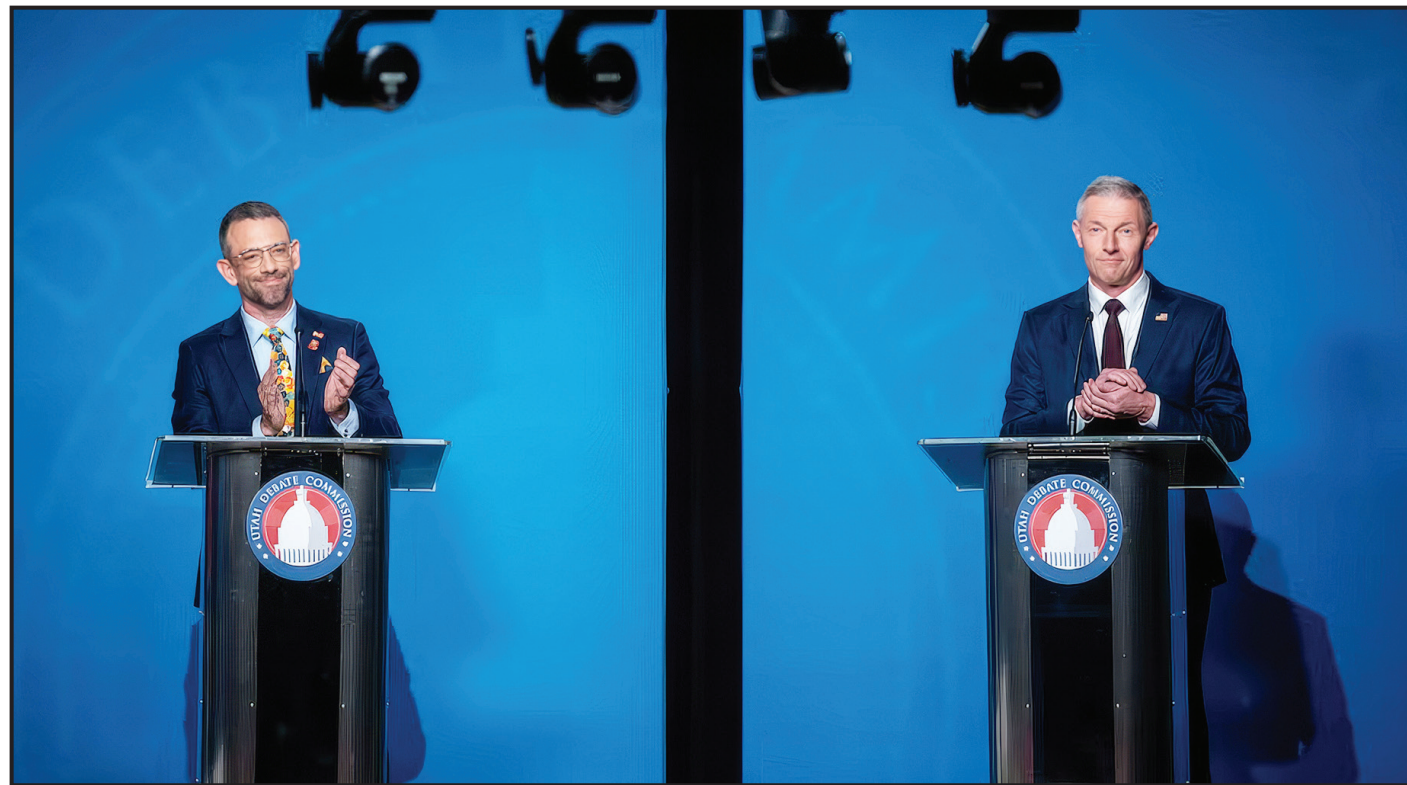
By Suzanne Dean

Publisher

EPHRAIM—Mike Kennedy, who has defined himself as a principled Republican, and Jonny Larsen, who describes himself as a Blue Dog Democrat, pretty much talked their party lines during a 4th Congressional District debate Oct. 8 at the Snow College Eccles Center.

During the debate, which was moderated by Doug Wilks, executive editor of the Desert News, the two candidates expressed sharply divergent views on the war in Iraq, healthcare, access to assistance programs such as food stamps, public lands and immigration.

The candidates had some things in common, including getting through difficulties in their youths and appreciating the neighbor-helping-neighbor Utah culture.



COURTESY SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Rep. Mike Kennedy of Utah County (left), who is serving his first term in Congress (left) faces off with Jonny Larsen of West Jordan in a 4th Congressional District debate at the Eccles Center at Snow College on Oct. 8. In the center is moderator Doug Wilks, executive editor of the Desert News. Kennedy is a Republican and Larsen a Democrat. The winner in the Nov. 3 election will represent Sanpete County in Congress.

Sanpete voters to decide on possible sales tax hike

By Robert Stevens

Staff writer

There are three propositions on the ballot, but the one greatest local interest is Proposition 11, which asks voters to authorize a sales tax of up to 1% for eligible healthcare and emergency services, including enhancements to the county's 911 dispatch system.

Proposition 11 asks Sanpete County voters to authorize a sales tax of up to 1% for eligible healthcare and emergency services, including enhancements to the county's 911 dispatch system.

The measure emerged from months of discussions about rising dispatch expenses, equipment upgrades and how those costs should be divided among Sanpete County

communities, all of which rely on the Sanpete County dispatch center to answer 911 calls from their locations.

At the maximum proposed rate, the additional tax would amount to \$1 on \$100 in taxable purchase or \$10 on a taxable \$1,000 purchase. The proposition does not affect

See "4th" on page 2

See "Measures" on Page 10

4th (from page 1)

and Sevier counties. The winner will be Sanpete County's new congressman.

After a court ordered Utah boundaries redrawn, Rep. Burgess Owens, the county's current congressman, faced running in a Democratic district or possibly facing Kennedy in a primary. He decided not to seek reelection.

Two other candidates—Taylor Wright, a Libertarian, and Steve Burt, who is unaffiliated—are also running in the 4th District. However, the Utah Debate Commission, which sponsors debates in statewide races, voted not to include candidates not affiliated with the two major parties, in this year's debates.

Early life challenges

Kennedy said his father was an immigrant who was naturalized during the Reagan administration. "I'm a first-generation American," he said. "I was a free-school-lunch child....My parents divorced when I was young. As a result, we had significant financial challenges.

"But through hard work and determination, I went to college. I went to medical school. I went to law school." He said he and his wife "have built a family and a life." He said the American dream is still alive and well, "and I've lived it."

"I grew up in a trailer park," Larsen said. "We ripped out food stamps to pay for groceries. I even went through Utah's foster care system. And my grandma rescued me. And she was afforded this opportunity because of her social security and her union pension from the teamsters".

Larsen joined the Marines at 17, served two tours in Iraq, including time in combat. After he returned to Utah, he got a degree in math and physics from the University of Utah. Neighbor helping neighbor

Larsen said he now owns a home and knows all his neighbors. "And those community values, knowing your neighbors, being able to know what they go through, is exactly what Utah understands."

Both candidates talked about Utah being the top state in the nation in charitable giving. "The fact (is) that our people are healthy, they help each other, and every year, shockingly but not mysteriously, our state government balances its budget," Kennedy said.

Gasoline prices

The moderator asked the candidates what they would do to bring down gasoline prices. That led to discussion of the war in Iran.

Kennedy didn't deny that high gas prices are a symptom of the war in Iran. But he said the United States had learned that Iran has ballistic missiles that can reach 2,500 miles. "If this despotic regime were to get nuclear weapons, that would be a threat to the world," he said.

See "4th" on page 5

Sanpete County 2026 Voting Guide

Key dates, locations and what voters need to know

**Important Dates****Friday, Oct. 23**

- Last day to register in person at the Sanpete County Clerk's Office: 8 a.m. to noon.
- Last day to register online at vote.utah.gov: until 5 p.m.
- If you are registered but have not received your ballot, call 835-2131, ext. 5.
- Recommended last day to request an absentee ballot.

Monday, Oct. 26–Thursday, Oct. 29

- Early in-person voting at the county clerk's office: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 29

- Recommended last day to mail your ballot so it reaches the clerk's office by Election Day.

Tuesday, Nov. 3 – Election Day

- In-person voting: 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Vote at the county courthouse in Manti or the Mt. Pleasant Senior Center, 101 E. 100 North.
- Registration and provisional voting at the county courthouse: 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Outdoor drop box deadline: 8 p.m.
- Indoor drop boxes at city and town halls close at office closing time.
- First results released: 8:30 p.m.
- Final or near-final results expected around 11 p.m.

**Need Help?**

Sanpete County Clerk's Office
835-2131, ext. 5

Call with questions about registration, ballots or voting.

**Where to Return Your Ballot**

- **Outdoor drop boxes** (available until 8 p.m. Election Day):
 - South side of the courthouse in Manti
 - Mt. Pleasant City Administration Building
 - Ephraim City Hall
 - Gunnison City Hall
- Indoor drop boxes are available at other city and town halls, except in Manti and Sterling, during office hours only.

**Registering or Voting Provisionally**

- If you miss the Oct. 23 registration deadline, you can still register and vote provisionally in person.
- Bring two accepted forms of identification: one proving your identity and one proving your current address.
- A recent utility bill can serve as proof of address.
- The clerk's office will verify eligibility before counting the ballot.

**Who Can Vote?**

- U.S. citizen
- At least 18 by Election Day
- Utah resident for at least 30 days before Election Day
- Resident of Sanpete County on Election Day

**ID Basics**

- Online registration requires a valid Utah driver's license or Utah ID card.
- Voting in person can require one valid photo ID or two accepted forms of ID that together show your name and current residence.
- Examples of photo ID: driver's license, state ID, passport, tribal ID or current U.S. military ID.

Races and Candidates

U.S. House of Representatives: District 4

Sanpete County voters will choose among four candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives in the Nov. 3 election. The winner will represent Sanpete County and surrounding counties in Washington, D.C. for the next two years.

Republican Mike Kennedy, Democrat Jonny Larsen, Libertarian Taylor Wright and unaffiliated candidate Steven Burt are competing for Utah's 4th Congressional District seat.

The race follows a court-ordered redrawing of Utah's congressional boundaries that placed Sanpete County in a district covering a substantial portion of western and central Utah.

The new 4th District includes all of Sanpete, Juab, Millard, Sevier and Tooele counties, along with portions of Salt Lake and Utah counties.

The district's current representative, Republican Burgess Owens, announced in March that he would not seek reelection. Kennedy, who currently represents Utah's 3rd Congressional District, is seeking election in the newly configured 4th District.

Mike Kennedy

Republican

Kennedy is completing his first term in Congress. He previously served in both the Utah House of Representatives and Utah Senate. He also practiced family medicine in Utah County for more than two decades. Kennedy and his wife, Katrina, live in Utah County.

Kennedy earned a medical degree from Michigan State University and studied law at Brigham Young University, subsequently becoming an attorney. His campaign says he also helped operate a small business and volunteered medical services for uninsured families.

His campaign emphasizes reducing federal spending, lowering household costs, increasing



Mike Kennedy

domestic energy production and strengthening border enforcement.

Kennedy supports reducing taxes on certain forms of income, including tips and overtime, along with expanding tax credits and deductions intended to benefit working families.

He also advocates stronger congressional oversight of federal agencies, restrictions on government spending and term limits for members of Congress.

On energy issues, Kennedy favors reducing federal permitting requirements. His approach draws on oil, natural gas, nuclear and geothermal energy, along with other available sources.

Public lands and natural resource management also figure into his priorities. Kennedy supports reducing federal restrictions that he argues impede economic development and access to Utah's resources.

Healthcare remains another focus of his campaign. Drawing on his experience as a physician, Kennedy advocates policies intended to support rural hospitals, expand telehealth services and provide patients with more control over healthcare spending.

His campaign also emphasizes immigration enforcement, combating drug trafficking and human trafficking, protecting gun rights, opposing abortion and supporting parental involvement in decisions affecting children.

Kennedy has promoted his congressional work on wildfire prevention, energy development and healthcare legislation. His campaign identifies those efforts as accomplishments of his first term, although its broader claims about legislative results were not independently established in the research provided for this article.

Jonny Larsen

Democrat

Larsen, a Marine Corps veteran who served from 2000 to 2004, is running as a Democrat in the 4th District.

According to his campaign biography, Larsen enlisted at 17, served as an infantry rifleman and reached the rank of sergeant. He says his military

service included two deployments to Iraq.

Larsen describes himself as a Blue Dog Democrat, a term associated with moderate, fiscally conservative Democrats. He emphasizes cooperation between political parties on issues where lawmakers share common ground.

His campaign centers on reducing costs for working families, improving healthcare access, supporting veterans and protecting public lands.

Larsen says his personal experiences helped shape those priorities. His campaign biography describes being raised by his grandmother, and credits her pension, Medicare and Social Security benefits with providing financial stability.

He supports maintaining those programs and argues that the government should do more to help working families and seniors.

He calls for expanding rural healthcare access, reducing prescription drug costs and increasing accountability for health insurance companies.

His campaign specifically identifies Sanpete County among rural communities where he believes veterans need improved access to Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare services.

On agriculture and public lands, Larsen supports farmers and ranchers while opposing the transfer of federally managed public lands into private ownership.

He also supports measures intended to reduce housing and childcare expenses.

His housing proposals include protecting first-time homebuyers and restricting corporate purchases of single-family homes for investment purposes.

Larsen opposes trade policies that he says raise costs for consumers and businesses, including tariffs affecting everyday purchases and agricultural equipment.



Jonny Larsen

See "Congress" on page 4

Congress (from page 3)

Taylor Wright

Libertarian

Wright is campaigning on individual freedom, reduced federal authority and free-market economics.

His campaign presents decentralizing political power as a central objective, with more decisions made by the people and communities directly affected.

Wright is a physical education teacher who also works with adults who have special needs. He connects that experience to his belief that individuals should have greater control over decisions affecting their lives.

Wright advocates limiting federal bureaucracy and strengthening constitutional restrictions on government power.

He argues that the federal government has accumulated responsibilities that should rest with states, local communities and individuals.

He also calls for Congress to exercise stronger oversight of the executive branch, particularly regarding military operations and the authority to conduct war.

On economic issues, Wright supports free markets and opposes tariffs. His campaign argues that tariffs interfere with competition and increase costs for consumers.

Wright favors reducing government intervention in economic decisions and allowing businesses and individuals greater freedom to participate in markets.

While supporting military defense when necessary, Wright argues that the United States should avoid foreign conflicts that do not directly serve national security interests.



Taylor Wright

Steven Burt

Unaffiliated

Burt is running without a political party affiliation, positioning himself as an alternative to the Republican and Democratic candidates.

Burt was born and raised in South Jordan, where he says he continues to live with his family. He has practiced law for nearly 20 years and has specialized in the solar energy industry.

Burt says he has also provided volunteer legal services, particularly involving immigration matters.

Burt argues that representatives should concentrate on their constituents' needs rather than political party loyalty.

He identifies the rising cost of living and the



Steven Burt

STEVEN BURT for U.S. HOUSE

District 4

UNAFFILIATED INDEPENDENT

ACCOUNTABILITY IN D.C. AFFORDABILITY FOR YOU!

- No party-line politics—
answering only to
Utah's 4th District
- Tackling inflation & the
rising cost of living
- Restoring common-sense
leadership



ONE TEAM -- YOUR TEAM!

VOTE NOVEMBER 3

stevenburt.com



Paid for by Vote Steven Burt

See "Congress" on page 6

4th (from page 2)

“The most immediate thing that we can do right now (to bring down gasoline prices) is end this illegal war,” Larsen said. He noted that the Constitution gives Congress the power to declare war. Under the War Powers Act, the president can wage for 60 days. After that, the law says he must get approval from Congress. Yet Larsen said Kenndy had voted against bringing the war to a vote in Congress six times.

“To tie the president’s hands in the middle of a national security crisis is not the right thing for us to do,” Kennedy responded. He said Americans need to support President Trump “in trying to move forward and help not only the United States but the whole world.”

Healthcare

Wilks asked both candidates about healthcare. Larsen, a cancer survivor, said he was very lucky to have access to U.S. Veterans Administration health-care system. The system isn’t perfect, he said, but “it’s better than what most everyone else has right now....I know it’s something that we can bring to every American to make sure they have the same kind of healthcare at a lower cost.”

He also called for restoring the federal subsidies offered under the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) but cancelled under President Trump’s “big beautiful bill.”

He said removing the subsidies increased insurance costs to “thousands of dollars a month” for many people. And, he said, one in eight residents of Sanpete and Juab counties can’t afford insurance.

But Kennedy said, “...When Obamacare passed, we saw some of the worst mistruths quoted and forced on American society that I...have seen in my adult life...” He said the bill “was written by insurance companies for insurance companies.”

Obamacare, he said, led to physician practices and other healthcare organizations being consumed by large institutional investors. Prices went up,

he said, “because Washington, D.C. got more involved in healthcare than it’s ever been.”

Solutions, he said, include telehealth, requiring doctors and hospitals to post their prices, and health savings accounts. “Bring the consumer back into the healthcare debate and you will find costs will go down.”

Assistance programs

The candidates also had a fairly sharp exchange about assistance programs such as food stamps. “Is it the federal government’s job to...feed everybody, to house everybody, to charity and welfare everybody?” Kennedy asked.

When the federal government steps in, “everybody else backs out,” he said. The end result is programs that create problems for the states and communities that receive them.

Larsen said Democrats would rather feed 100 people rather than let one go without food. But Republicans would allow 100 people to go hungry to make sure one person they don’t think is deserving doesn’t get that benefit.

“The idea that any Republican, let alone myself, wants people to go hungry is nonsense,” Kennedy said. “But I also believe the federal government has a responsibility to be careful with tax dollars. And if you’re an able-bodied, working-age adult, you should go out and get a job before you get food stamp benefits.”

Colorado River and Great Salt Lake

The candidate agreed, at least in principle, about the need for Colorado River states to continue negotiations until they reach agreement on an updated Colorado River compact.

And they agreed the Great Salt Lake must be restored to health. Larsen called for the federal government to help farmers develop more efficient irrigation systems. “And we can take the conserved

water and help move it to the Great Salt Lake.” He said when water levels in the lake rise, there is more snow, which contributes to the mountain snowpack.

Kenndy said President Trump and Republicans in Congress “are working to get a billion dollars into this state to help the Great Salt Lake survive.” He said other Utah representatives, Celeste Malloy and Blake Moore, (both Republicans) are working with him to get the funding through congressional appropriations committees.

Public Lands

However, Kennedy and Larsen were at opposite ends of the spectrum on public lands. Kennedy did not go so far as to say federal land should be turned over to the states. But he said, “The best people to manage the land are the ones that are closest to it. That includes tribal interests as well as local communities. And I have worked diligently to try to get the land as close to the people as possible.”

“I think public lands must remain in public hands,” Larsen said. “My opponent actually said earlier this year that our public lands are being treated like a museum. I think that this is the wrong way to be looking at our public lands.”

“There is wildlife and an ecosystem that we have to protect...(Public lands) allow cheaper grazing rights for our ranchers...” And he said, Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), federal money given to counties in lieu of property taxes on public lands, helps pay for schools, police, sheriffs, county buildings and roads.

Immigration

Toward the end of the debate, moderator Wilks turned to immigration. “We often hear descriptions of the U.S. immigration system as broken with different stakeholders arguing we should prioritize border security, humanity or workforce needs. Would you agree it’s broken? And if it’s broken, how would you fix it?”

“It’s often thought that Democrats don’t care about our borders,” Kennedy

said, “and I’m here to tell you that’s false. I care very much about the security of our borders, and I don’t want people who want to come in here, commit crimes, or sell drugs or anything horrible like that.

“But I’m also reminded of what’s on the Statue of Liberty. ‘Give me your poor, your hungry and your tired.’ We offer the land of opportunity and liberty and freedom. Our immigrants, for the most part, while they’re here...are paying taxes into the system. They don’t get the benefits from that, though, until they become naturalized.

“We need to improve the process, make it less bureaucratic, bring it back to an easy time where you don’t have to pay thousands of dollars to a lawyer to actually become an American.”

Kennedy said, “Biden and the four years of nonsense and reprehensible behavior where they opened our borders to more than 10 million people...is a terrible policy. I’m proud of President Trump and the current administration for securing our borders such that the criminals, the gangsters are not coming across our borders. Our citizens are safer.

“The second thing is we need to make legal immigration easier. And I’m dedicated to that...And finally, we need to deal with the more than 20 million people that are in this country illegally. And I’m working on it. It’s going to take a while.”

Through the debate, Kennedy’s refrain was, that he wants “to make Washington smaller and Utah stronger.”

In his concluding statement, Kennedy said, “I would like to address all the Republicans. If you’ve been listening and you feel like, wow, I kind of actually agree with that Democrat, I’m pleading with you to put down your party identity politics.

“I swore an oath to the Constitution that never expired. I want you to be part of a country coming together instead of coming apart...I’d like to ask you, ‘Would you like a blue dog or a lap dog for this administration?’”

Utah House of Representatives: District 66

Russ Hatch

Constitution

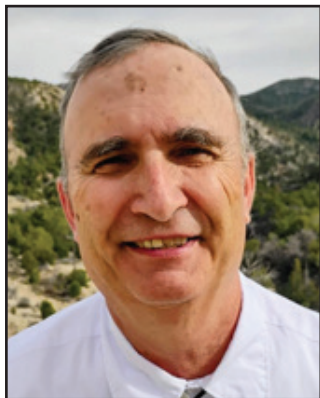
Russ Hatch and his wife, Becky, moved to Manti nine years ago. They have two children and a number of grandchildren. Both are retired but remain active in community and church activities.

Hatch earned a bachelor of science degree in political science from the University of Utah and served five years on active duty as a United States Army officer. He has participated in political-party functions at the county, state and national levels.

Hatch supports the Constitution Party platform, which he says represents traditional American values better than other party platforms.

Hatch says Utah leaders should judge legislation by whether it helps or hinders residents, rather than by the number of bills they introduce or pass. He identifies minimum wages, cost of living, quality of life, health care, education quality and taxes as concerns, and says he would focus on improving residents' quality of life.

Hatch identifies agriculture and limited water supplies as major issues in House District 66. He



Russ Hatch

would consult local communities on conservation measures, support state action to preserve water sources and keep control of resources close to local users.

He says local communities know their resources and planned-growth needs best. However, when communities compete for a shared water source, he says, the state should act as a broker.

Breanne Mashek

Democrat

Breanne Mashek moved to Fayette, Utah, with her family after a period of nomadic living that followed the family's departure from Denver in 2020. She has lived in Fayette for the past five years.

Mashek says decisions about rural water, public schools and Snow College should reflect the needs of Juab and Sanpete residents. She would protect Snow College by urging the Legislature to consider rural workforce needs, not only statewide wage data, when assessing programs. She also calls for a legislative audit of how state water programs, including conservation grants and leasing, affect rural water rights.



Breanne Mashek

Mashek says rural Utah has much at stake as population growth along the Wasatch Front increases pressure on water. She supports voluntary agricultural water-optimization grants, water banking and short-term leasing that lets farmers earn income in dry years without permanently selling water rights out of the valley. She also supports state help with secondary irrigation metering and water infrastructure for growing communities. She says policy should protect existing water rights and farms first, ensure growing towns have reliable supplies and pursue conservation.

Troy Shelley

Republican

Troy Shelley began exploring business as a child, raising farm animals and participating in high school and college business clubs. He built a marketing career that included 12 years with local radio stations, where he studied business strengths and weaknesses.



Troy Shelley

See "House" on page 7

Congress (from page 4)

gap between household incomes and expenses as his principal economic concerns.

His campaign calls for restoring economic opportunities that allow working Americans to afford housing and maintain financial stability, although his published materials provide limited details about federal legislation he would pursue.

Burt supports constitutional limits on government authority, separation of powers, federalism and the rule of law.

Immigration reform is another prominent issue in his campaign. Burt

has criticized current federal immigration enforcement practices and called for changing the priorities of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, commonly known as ICE.

Rather than eliminating the agency, he advocates concentrating its enforcement efforts on dangerous criminals while reforming the broader immigration system.

Burt has criticized the two-party political system and argues that unaffiliated representatives can place greater emphasis on constituents rather than party organizations.

District Issues

The district, with its combination of rural counties and more populated communities along the Wasatch Front, poses several concerns before its next representative.

Agriculture, public land management, water resources, transportation, healthcare access and federal spending are among the issues that can directly affect Sanpete County residents.

The four candidates approach those concerns from different perspectives.

Kennedy emphasizes reducing fed-

eral restrictions, expanding domestic energy production and limiting government spending.

Larsen focuses on healthcare and veterans' services, working-family expenses and keeping public lands under public ownership.

Burt emphasizes economic opportunity, constitutional principles, immigration reform and representation independent of political parties.

Wright advocates reducing federal authority, expanding individual choice, supporting free markets and limiting military intervention.

North Sanpete School Board

Jeremy Madsen

Jeremy Madsen grew up in Fairview and graduated from North Sanpete High School. After living in Orem, Ephraim and Guatemala, he returned to Fairview. He attended Snow, Ricks and UVU before completing a bachelor's degree in information systems at Western Governors University.



Jeremy Madsen

strong programs and educators.

He says North Sanpete should preserve its rural culture and community while giving students opportunities equal to or better than those available elsewhere. He supports planning for the future without placing undue burdens on educators or the community.

Madsen says he weighs board decisions by asking whether they support students, help educators support students, and help parents and the community do the same. He recognizes that some decisions place deserving groups in conflict. He says the board should balance state, district, community and educator voices and let the shared goal of educating, caring for and preparing students guide its work.

Tyler Lee

Tyler Lee lives in Fairview with his wife of 18 years, Ashlee, and their three children, Raiden, Riddick and Sawyer. He holds a bachelor's degree in general education and manages Family Tines, a nonprofit that creates opportunities for youth to participate in activities that support mental well-being and community connection. Lee also coaches youth at multiple levels throughout the community.

He says through coaching and community involvement, he has developed a passion for helping young people succeed, supporting families and giving back to the community.

Lee identifies funding, community involvement and the retention of qualified teachers and staff as North Sanpete's most important challenges. He calls on the board to use taxpayer dollars responsibly, prioritize student needs and make financial decisions that provide the greatest benefit to schools.

He favors open communication and greater involvement from parents, teachers and community members, saying everyone deserves a chance to be heard. He also supports retaining effective employees while holding staff accountable when expectations are not met.

Lee says the board should remain impartial, listen to all perspectives and make decisions that best serve students and the district. While the district must follow state requirements, he says it should use available local flexibility while respecting parent input and educators' professional judgment.

Drawing on his coaching experience, Lee says he would hear both parents and educators in a policy dispute, consider the facts and work toward common ground. He says the district can always improve.



Tyler Lee

House (from page 6)

Shelley now works through his management company as a business consultant and partner in an industrial gas supply business, a landscape rock business and other ventures. He has also mentored businesses and individuals.

Shelley has served as a volunteer EMT, held church leadership positions, chaired the Sanpete County Republican Party, served as a state delegate and worked on local and state campaigns.

During his first year in the Utah House of Representatives, he passed legislation that protected access to public land, established parameters for carbon-credit sales, addressed a property-tax assessment issue involving out-of-area property owners, created a state park and removed regulations affecting automobiles and small businesses.

Shelley and his wife, Melanie, have five children and grandchildren. He enjoys riding horses and

four-wheelers, spotting wildlife and spending time in Utah's mountains.

Shelley says Utah can help Sanpete and Juab counties by respecting local control. He argues that residents who live in the area understand its needs better than people outside the region. He also calls for attention to the amount of federal land in the counties. Shelley says the federal government has a constitutional obligation to transfer that land to the state and should make fair Payments in Lieu of Taxes while it retains the land. He says those payments could help rural schools, aging water infrastructure and high-mountain water storage.

Shelley calls energy, farming and natural resources the foundation of the economy. He says Utah must compete in the energy race and maintain reliable, available and dispatchable energy. He says a weak energy supply would damage the economy.

Shelley says federal forest management affects local communities because each tree consumes significant amounts of water. He supports what he calls common-sense projects that strengthen the community and quality of life. He also says local, state and federal leaders should prioritize affordable housing. Shelley opposes state housing subsidies, arguing that government intervention in the market disrupts its balance, picks winners and losers and lets some people profit from taxpayer dollars.

Shelley encourages residents to participate in the political process and learn how Utah develops state policy. He supports regulations that address real needs and repealing policies that do not. He says policies should build the economy, strengthen youth, secure freedoms, improve health and prevent abuse of power. He asks residents to weigh their views against the Constitution and basic human dignity.

South Sanpete School Board

Mark Olson

Mark Olson is a fifth-generation Sanpete County resident who grew up in Ephraim and graduated from Manti High School.

After serving a Spanish-speaking mission in Texas, he returned to Snow College and completed his associate degree.

He married Cynthia Cox of Manti and earned a bachelor's degree in biological education with a provisional certificate in animal and plant science.

Olson taught one year at Richfield High School before returning to Manti High School, where he taught biology and ran the agriculture program. He served as FFA adviser and head baseball and wrestling coach until 2001.

He then joined the family turkey and cattle operation, where his children took on responsibility and worked alongside him. Olson and his wife have five children and 11 grandchildren. He has served in youth sports programs and 4-H, spent several years on the Manti Fourth of July committee and currently serves on the Palisade Water Board.

He has also served as a school board member and values professional-development opportunities that help the board make informed decisions and carry out its duties with greater clarity.

Olson identifies literacy, student learning and



Mark Olson

engagement, people, finances and facilities as South Sanpete's priorities. He calls literacy the district's top priority and points to reading and literacy coaches in every elementary school, science-of-reading instruction, kindergarten progress monitoring and targeted interventions. He says the district should tie every budget and policy decision to classroom impact.

Olson supports giving teachers and paraprofessionals the resources they need. He points to the new career-technical education centers at Manti and Gunnison Valley high schools, additional counseling and teen centers as supports for student learning, college and career readiness and student well-being.

He says the district has a good record of retaining teachers and has sound financial management. He points to more than \$20 million in grants for security improvements, elementary additions, gym renovations, parking lots, teen centers, computer science and school exteriors. He supports long-range planning for building upgrades and additions, and continued pursuit of grant funding.

Tim Miller

Tim Miller devoted his career to education and remains focused on helping every student reach his or her potential.

He retired after 33 years in education, including 22 years as a school principal. He has worked at the elementary, middle school and high school levels.

Miller holds a master's degree in educational leadership and a bachelor's degree in education.

He says he will listen, work hard and make decisions in the best interest of students and the community.

His priorities include transparency and accountability, livestreaming board meetings, supporting effective teaching, and listening to parents and community members. He is committed to being accessible to all these interests.

Miller says South Sanpete schools face declining enrollment despite area growth. He supports better outreach to families who home school or use online alternatives and asks the district to consider hybrid part-time public-school and part-time home-school options.

He also says schools rely too heavily on screens, iPads and laptops. He supports more hands-on learning, lab work, group projects and classroom discussion, along with expanded arts education in music, theatre, visual arts, dance, drama and speech and debate. He calls for a strong emphasis on early reading in preschool and elementary years.

Miller says the district should assess the long-term maintenance and staffing costs of the new school-to-career buildings and seek community input about their use. He says quality teaching requires interactive, curriculum-driven classrooms and calls on South Sanpete to match teacher pay scales in neighboring districts teacher while conserving money in nonteaching areas.



Tim Miller

If you have not received a ballot in the mail,
and want a ballot,
call the Sanpete County Clerk 835-2131 x. 5

Uncontested Races

Utah State Board of Education

Linda Hanks (R) of Levan, Juab County



Running in Board of Education District 14, which covers 10 rural counties including Sanpete, Juab, Sevier and Emery

Seeking her first four-year term

Sanpete County Commission

Jim Cheney (R), Fairview



Won a special Republican Party caucus in 2025 to fill a vacancy.

Seeking his first full four-year term.

A.W. Mower (R), Manti



Won the Republican primary in June.

Seeking his first four-year term.

Sanpete County Attorney

Kevin Daniels (R), Ephraim



Seeking his third four-year term.

Sanpete County Auditor

Stacey Lynn Lyon (R), Sterling



Seeking her third four-year term.

Sanpete County Clerk

Linda Christiansen (R), Manti



Seeking her second four-year term.

Sanpete County Sheriff

Jared Buchanan (R), Manti



Was appointed to a partial term in 2021-22,

Elected to complete three years of a four-year term in 2023

Seeking his second four-year term.

North Sanpete School Board: Dist. 4

Rhett T. Larsen, Fountain Green



District 4 includes Fountain Green, Wales and Spring City.

Seeking his first four-year term

South Sanpete School Board: Dist. 4

David Warren, Ephraim



District includes the north end of Manti and south end of Ephraim

Seeking his fifth term

South Sanpete School Board: Dist. 5

Connor Thompson, Ephraim



District 5 includes the north end of Ephraim and unincorporated areas around Manti and Ephraim.

Seeking his second term



**Because you
can't complain
if you don't
participate.**

Ballot Measures

Measures (from page 1)

property taxes.

Grocery food would be excluded from the additional tax. But prepared foods, nonfood merchandise and certain bundled transactions could be subject to the tax. (When someone purchases two or nonfood items, or two or more prepared food items, with a grocery food item, the transaction is considered to be "bundled," and the whole purchase is taxable.)

While the focus is the 911 operation, the ballot language tax proceeds to be used for a broader range

of eligible expenditures.

Utah's rural healthcare tax statute allows local sales tax revenue to support rural emergency medical services, qualifying healthcare facilities, fire protection, search and rescue and law enforcement activities associated with visitor impact.

During discussions reported by the *Sanpete Messenger*, officials described a budget for 911 services that had increased from approximately \$400,000 in previous years to about \$700,000, with approximately \$850,000 projected for the next bud-

get cycle.

Officials considered dividing dispatch expenses among municipalities and other agencies receiving services. That raised questions about how smaller communities would pay their shares.

Supporters of a countywide sales tax have argued it would distribute some of the cost among shoppers and visitors rather than relying entirely on local government.

During the Aug. 18 Sanpete County Commission meeting, commissions estimated that visitors could account for as much as 22% of collections.

On Aug. 18, the County Commission unanimously approved placing the question before voters. During that meeting, Sanpete Valley Hospital CEO Aaron Wood urged commissioners to consider alternative funding through the federal Rural Health Transformation Program before implementing an additional tax.

However, the federal allocation is statewide, and it's not clear Sanpete County's dispatch expenses would qualify.

Commissioners agreed to continue exploring possible alternatives while proceeding with the ballot question because of election deadlines.

The proposed tax would not automatically take effect at the full 1% rate. The ballot authorizes a rate of up to 1%, leaving implementation details to subsequent county action.

The rural healthcare tax statute provides for a 10-year levy, with reauthorization requirements. The county's resolution also contemplates reviewing allocations and possible reauthorization.

A vote FOR Proposition 11

would approve county authority to implement the proposed tax. A vote AGAINST would reject the proposed authorization but would not eliminate the county's existing dispatch expenses.

The Sanpete County Commission has scheduled a final public hearing on the proposition Thursday, Oct. 29, at 6 p.m. in the commission chambers at the Sanpete County Courthouse in Manti. Residents may also submit written statements to the county clerk's office.

Constitutional Amendment A

Constitutional Amendment A would change Utah's requirements for notifying the public about proposed amendments to the state Constitution.

Currently, the state is required to publish proposed constitutional amendments in at least one newspaper in every county.

Amendment A would remove the newspaper requirement and instead require publication for 60 calendar days before through methods established by state law.

If voters approve the amendment, legislation already passed by the Utah Legislature would require publication of proposed constitutional amendments and other ballot questions on the Utah Public Notice Website and the lieutenant governor's website.

The amendment would not eliminate the requirement to notify the public or change the voting threshold necessary to approve constitutional amendments. It would only change the method of publication.

Supporters, including Rep. Anthony Loubet and Sen. Daniel McCay, argue that government-oper-

See "Measures" on page 11

PROP 11

Sanpete County sales tax measure



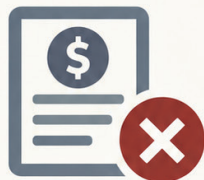
VOTE FOR

Authorizes Sanpete County to impose an additional sales and use tax of up to 1% on qualifying purchases for eligible emergency and healthcare services, including E911 dispatch.



VOTE AGAINST

Rejects the proposed tax authorization. Existing emergency dispatch and related service costs would still need to be funded through other sources.



Important: The measure authorizes **up to 1%.** Qualifying grocery food is excluded from the additional tax.

Measures (from page 10)

ated websites offer a more modern way to distribute information and could reduce publication expenses.

The state's impartial fiscal analysis estimates the change could save up to \$1.4 million every two years.

The proposal received unanimous approval in both chambers of the Utah Legislature before being referred to voters.

Concerns have been raised about residents who continue to depend on printed newspapers for public information.

Those concerns have particular relevance in rural communities, where access to reliable Internet service and residents' preferences for receiving public notices can vary.

The change could also affect newspapers that receive revenue from publishing notices, although its financial effect on the *Sanpete Messenger* has not been quantified.

A vote FOR Amendment A would replace the newspaper publication requirement with a requirement for publication through methods established by state law, which currently would be on state websites.

A vote AGAINST would retain the existing requirement for newspaper publication.

Constitutional Amendment B

Constitutional Amendment B would change the percentage of votes required for approval of

certain statewide ballot initiatives proposed by citizens.

Under current law, most statewide citizen initiatives require a simple majority for passage. Amendment B would require at least 60% approval for any initiative that increases taxes.

The higher threshold would apply to initiatives that create a new tax, expand an existing tax, increase a tax rate, or change a property tax rate so as to bring in more revenue than was collected the previous year.

For example, under the proposed rule, a qualifying initiative receiving 55% support would fail even though more voters supported it than opposed it.

The amendment would not apply to county and municipal ballot questions, including Sanpete County's Proposition 11.

The Legislature referred Amendment B to voters after the Senate approved it 21-8 and the House approved it 55-17.

Supporters, including Sen. Lincoln Fillmore and Rep. Jason Kyle, argue tax increases should require broader public agreement because of their effects on household and business expenses.

Opponents, including Sen. Luz Escamilla and Rep. Angela Romero, argue that the measure would place

See "Measures" on page 12

AMENDMENT A

Utah constitutional publication change

 **VOTE FOR**

Replaces the Utah Constitution's newspaper publication requirement for proposed constitutional amendments with publication by methods set in state law.



 **VOTE AGAINST**

Keeps the current constitutional requirement to publish proposed constitutional amendments in newspapers.



Important: This measure changes how proposed constitutional amendments are published, **not the vote needed to approve them.**

AMENDMENT B

Utah initiative tax-threshold change

 **VOTE FOR**

Requires 60% voter approval for certain future statewide citizen initiatives that increase taxes.



 **VOTE AGAINST**

Keeps the current simple-majority approval rule for those initiatives.



Important: This applies to certain future statewide citizen tax initiatives, **not** local ballot questions like Proposition 11.

Measures (from page 11)

greater restrictions on citizen-initiated legislation than on legislation passed by elected representatives.

Amendment B would not prevent residents from proposing statewide tax initiatives. It would simply change the threshold for passage.

A vote FOR Amendment B would establish the 60% approval requirement for qualifying statewide citizen tax initiatives.

A vote AGAINST would preserve the existing standard requiring 50 percent approval for ballot initiatives related to taxation.

The state's voter information pamphlet, available through vote.utah.gov, contains the full text of proposed constitutional amendments, an impartial analyses, and arguments submitted for and against the measures.

INTEGRITY MATTERS

Vote your conscience, not just your party.

Send a message to the whole state that the tide is turning.



Paid by the Sanpete County Democratic Party



Judicial Retention

In the Nov. 3 election, Sanpete County voters will decide whether to retain 10 judges, including three who serve the local courts.

Judicial retention votes are not votes between competing candidates. Voters simply decide whether each judge on the ballot should remain in office for another term.

The Utah Court System is governed by the Utah Judicial Council, which includes the chief justice of the Utah Supreme Court, members elected by the judges of various courts in the state and a member of the Utah State Bar board of commissions.

The Utah Judicial Council appoints a Utah Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission (JPEC), which oversees judge evaluations.

The JPEC examines four principal areas: legal ability, integrity and judicial temperament, administrative skills and procedural fairness.

The evaluations consider whether judges understand and apply the law, treat participants impartially, manage their workloads and provide fair opportunities for people to be heard.

JPEC also reviews compliance with judicial education, timeliness, discipline and fitness requirements.

Evaluations are based on courtroom observations; reviews of judges' compliance with professional standards; and surveys of attorneys who have practiced before given judges, as well as plaintiff and defendants who have appeared before the judges.

The JPEC recommended retaining all 10 judges on this year's ballot. It found that each judge up for retention meets or exceeds the state's judicial performance standards. In fact, no member of the 13-member commission voted against retaining any of the judges.

However, the final decision is up to the voters.

Judges serving Sanpete County courts

Three of the judges on the ballot serve courts in the Sixth Judicial District, which includes Sanpete, Sevier, Piute, Wayne, Garfield and Kane counties.

Mandy Sue Larsen

Sixth District Court

Judge Mandy Larsen joined the Sixth District Court in April 2022 after Gov. Spencer Cox appointed her to the bench.

Before becoming a judge, Larsen worked as a criminal defense attorney, mediator and prosecutor. Her experience includes serving as a public defender in Sevier County, working as a prosecutor for the Sevier County Attorney's Office and serving as city attorney for Gunnison City.

District courts handle felony criminal cases, civil lawsuits, family law matters and other proceedings.

JPEC found that Larsen met or exceeded judicial performance standards, with 94% of survey respondents recommending her retention.

Her evaluation placed her above her district court peers in integrity and judicial temperament, administrative skills and procedural fairness. Her legal ability scores were consistent with those of her peers.

Courtroom observers praised her respectful treatment of participants, clear explanations and attention to individual needs.

All four observers reported confidence that they would receive fair treatment if they appeared in Larsen's courtroom. The commission recommended retention by a 12-0 vote.

Alex Goble

Sixth District Juvenile Court

Judge Alex Goble joined the Sixth District Juvenile Court in August 2022 following appointment by Gov. Cox.

Before taking the bench, Goble worked as a prosecutor and assistant attorney general, including assignments involving child welfare and criminal matters. He has participated in drug court programs since 2016.



Mandy Sue Larsen



Alex Goble

Juvenile courts handle cases involving minors, including juvenile delinquency and child welfare proceedings.

JPEC reported that 95% of survey respondents recommended Goble's retention. The commission found that he performed above his juvenile court peers in integrity, judicial temperament and administrative skills. His legal ability and procedural fairness scores were consistent with his peers.

Survey respondents and courtroom observers described Goble as respectful, attentive and willing to explain proceedings to participants.

All four courtroom observers expressed confidence that he would treat them fairly if they appeared before him. The commission voted 12-0 to recommend his retention.

Mark McIff

Justice Court

Judge Mark McIff has served on the bench since May 2014 and presides over several municipal justice courts in Ephraim, Fairview, Fountain Green, Moroni and Spring City, as well as the Sanpete County Justice Court.

Justice courts handle Class B and C misdemeanors, traffic infractions, municipal ordinance violations and small claims.

Before becoming a judge, McIff served in several county attorney and prosecutorial positions, including as Piute County attorney, Wayne County attorney and chief criminal prosecutor for the Wasatch County Attorney's Office.

Unlike the other judges on the ballot, McIff serves as a part-time judge. JPEC does not conduct its standard surveys for part-time judges because of limited sample sizes.

Instead, the commission evaluated McIff through courtroom observation and interviews. His evaluation included observation of proceedings on three different days and 14 interviews with people familiar



Mark McKiff

Judges (from page 13)

with his courtroom work.

The evaluation report described McIff as methodical and calm, with particular attention to making sure defendants understood their rights and responsibilities.

Interview participants also described him as courteous, consistent and attentive to the concerns of people appearing before him.

The commission found that McIff met all five minimum performance standards and voted 13-0 to recommend his retention.

Jill M. Pohlman

Utah Supreme Court

Associate Chief Justice Jill Pohlman is the only Utah Supreme Court justice appearing on Sanpete County's retention ballot.

The Supreme Court serves as Utah's highest court and handles appeals involving questions of state law, constitutional interpretation and other significant legal issues.

Cox appointed Pohlman to the Supreme Court in June 2022 after she served on the Utah Court of Appeals.

Before becoming a judge, Pohlman spent 19 years practicing law with a Salt Lake City firm, handling civil litigation, trials and appeals.

She has also served on several judicial committees addressing ethics, court procedures and fairness.

JPEC reported that 96% of survey respondents recommended her retention.

Her evaluation found her performance to be consistent with her appellate court peers in legal ability, judicial temperament, administrative skills and procedural fairness.

Respondents praised her preparation, attentiveness and thoughtful approach to legal questions.

The commission voted 12-0 to recommend retention.



Jill Pohlman

Utah Court of Appeals

Six judges from the Utah Court of Appeals will appear on Sanpete County ballots.

The Court of Appeals reviews decisions from trial courts, including many criminal, family law and juvenile cases. Judges generally hear appeals in three-member panels.

Although these judges serve statewide, their rulings can affect the outcome of cases originating in Sanpete County courts.

Michele M. Christiansen Forster

Judge Michele Christiansen Forster joined the Court of Appeals in June 2010 after serving as a Third District Court judge.

Her previous positions include assistant U.S. attorney, executive director of the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, and general counsel to former Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. JPEC reported that 94% of survey respondents recommended her retention.

Respondents praised her preparation for oral arguments and respectful interactions with court participants.

Her scores were consistent with those of her appellate court peers across all four principal evaluation categories. The commission voted 12-0 to recommend retention.

David Ned Mortensen

Judge David Mortensen joined the Court of Appeals in May 2016 after nearly 10 years as a Fourth District Court judge.

Before serving on the bench, he practiced law as a trial attorney. He has also taught law at Brigham Young University and served on the Utah Judicial Council.

JPEC reported that 98% of survey respondents recommended his retention.



Michele Christiansen Forster

Respondents highlighted his preparedness, legal knowledge and ability to produce understandable and timely written opinions.

His performance scores were consistent with those of his appellate court peers. The commission recommended retention by a 12-0 vote.

John David Luthy

Judge John Luthy joined the Court of Appeals in October 2022 after working in private practice and serving in the Cache County Attorney's Office.

His previous experience includes working as a judicial law clerk for appellate judges and teaching legal writing at the University of South Carolina.

JPEC reported that 89% of survey respondents recommended his retention.

Respondents praised his professionalism, respectful courtroom demeanor and preparation for oral arguments.

The commission found his scores consistent with his appellate court peers across the four evaluation categories and voted 12-0 to recommend retention.

Ryan M. Harris

Judge Ryan Harris joined the Court of Appeals in June 2017 after serving nearly six years on the Third District Court.

Before becoming a district judge, Harris practiced civil litigation and served as a small claims judge.

JPEC reported that 91% of survey respondents recommended his retention.



David Ned Mortensen



John David Luthy

See "Judges" on page 15

Judges (from page 14)

Respondents praised his organization, preparation and timely written decisions. Some respondents also expressed concerns that he occasionally showed irritation during oral arguments, particularly when he disagreed with an attorney's position.

The commission found his overall performance consistent with his appellate court peers and voted 12-0 to recommend retention.

Amy Jo Oliver

Judge Amy Oliver joined the Court of Appeals in January 2023 after serving on the Third District Court.

Her legal background includes private practice, work in the U.S. Attorney's Office and service with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

JPEC reported that 88% of survey respondents recommended her retention. Respondents praised her work ethic, preparation and professional demeanor.

Her procedural fairness score averaged 4.5 on a five-point scale, compared with a 4.8 average among appellate court peers. JPEC's statistical evaluation nevertheless classified her performance as consistent with her peers across all four principal categories.

The commission voted 12-0 to recommend retention.

Gregory Keith Orme

Judge Gregory Orme is the longest-serving member of the Utah Court of Appeals. His judicial experience includes two terms as the court's presiding judge and service on several statewide judicial committees.

Orme has received multiple professional recognitions, including the Utah State Bar's Judge of the Year award in 2007.

JPEC reported that 97% of survey respondents recommended his retention. His evaluation placed him above his appellate court peers in legal ability and procedural fairness. His integrity, judicial temperament and administrative skills scores were consistent with those of his peers.

Respondents praised his legal knowledge, professional conduct and treatment of people appearing before the court.

The commission voted 12-0 to recommend retention.

What the evaluations tell voters

While all 10 judges received favorable retention recommendations, their evaluations show differences in survey results, professional backgrounds and specific performance measures.

The retention recommendation percentages among respondents to surveys ranged from 88% to 98%.

Voters can review full JPEC evaluations, including survey scores, courtroom observations and information about judicial backgrounds, at judges.utah.gov.



Gregory Keith Orme

★ ★ ★
CANDIDATE FOR
TIM MILLER
SOUTH SANPETE SCHOOL BOARD

EXPERIENCED. TRANSPARENT. COMMITTED TO OUR STUDENTS.

MY PRIORITIES



MY EXPERIENCE

- ✓ Retired after 33 years in education
- ✓ 22 years as a school principal
- ✓ Experience at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels
- ✓ Two-time top performing school award



EDUCATION

- ✓ Master's Degree in Educational Leadership
- ✓ Bachelor's Degree in Education



PARENT VOICE MATTERS



TEACHER SUPPORT



TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY



LIVE STREAMING BOARD MEETINGS



ACCESSIBLE & AVAILABLE



DR. MIKE
KENNEDY

 U.S. CONGRESS

Mike Kennedy is fighting for Utah by:

-  Passing permitting reform to help lower gas and energy prices
-  Co-leading the fight to ban congressional insider trading
-  Sponsoring legislation imposing term limits
-  Voting to cut taxes for working families
-  Working to keep the border secure
-  Protecting parental rights and your freedoms

Family Doctor. Attorney. Husband. Father.

MikeKennedyforUtah.com

Paid for by Mike Kennedy for Utah

**DON'T IGNORE YOUR
RIGHT TO VOTE!**