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### **ROYCE**

Good evening. [00:04:01] My name is Royce Van Tassell. I am the executive director of the Utah Association of Public Charter Schools. We are one of five organizations that make up the Utah education debate coalition. Those five organizations, as you can see, include the Sutherland Institute, KSL News Radio, United Way Salt Lake, and the Hinckley Institute of Politics. We are sponsoring and hosting eight debates this month- one in each of the state school board races [00:04:41] that are up this fall. And so we'll complete those by the end of this month. We're thrilled that you can join us. Let me just give you a brief outline of what's going to happen and tell you sort of who's in charge and fortunately I am not that person. The debate moderator this evening is [00:05:02] Christine Cooke. Once we turn this over to her, she will run the show. She'll explain to you the rules that we have talked to each of the candidates with, and you'll hear an opportunity for the candidates to get to introduce themselves. Roughly for the first half hour, we'll have questions that Christine will pose, and then about halfway through, we'll throw it out to you as members of the audience. I'll take this microphone and you'll be able to pose a question for the second half hour. Then, we'll conclude with closing statements from each of the candidates. I want to take a brief - but very important - moment to thank Tuacahn High School for the Performing Arts, where we are here, for putting this on. In particular, their tech class, for arranging all of this. We very much appreciate their willingness to give us a beautiful facility to work with. I have to say, this is probably the nicest facility we get to work with in the state. We are just thrilled that they can be here. We're going to have Drew Williams, who is the director here at Tuacahn, lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Then, Christine will take it away.

### **DREW**

Before I ask you to all stand, I just want to officially welcome you to Tuacahn High School. This is a fantastic place, and we appreciate your support of the charter debates and so forth. So thank you for being here. If you will all follow me in the Pledge of Allegiance. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. Thank you, you may be seated.

### **CHRISTINE**

Thank you. On behalf of the education debate coalition, welcome to your state school board debate. My name is Christine Cooke. I am an education policy analyst with Sutherland Institute. We are excited to host this conversation between voters and candidates. First, I just want to remind us why we are all here. Education is important. It's more than a political topic - it's a moral one. It goes to the core of

who we are as people. As human beings we ask questions, we reason, we reflect. We're created to learn and to fulfill unique potential, so the work of the state school board is important. That's why these races are also important. Candidates, this is your opportunity to articulate your vision and philosophy of education. Voters, this is your opportunity to engage your candidates, hear their ideas, and not focus on personalities or low-level rhetoric that sometimes dominates election cycles. With that, let's start this meaningful conversation with some opening statements. Let's begin. We will start with Wes. I'll give you two minutes to make an opening statement, and then we'll turn it over to Michelle.

### **WES**

Hi. I wish you were closer and I could see you through those lights. My name is Wes Christianson. Originally, I was born in Nephi and raised there, and then I moved down to go to Dixie College a long time ago. I met my wonderful wife, Cathy Burgess, down here while I was going to school. We got married and this next Groundhog Day – we got married on that day so she could remember our anniversary – it'll be 49 years. We've had a good marriage. We've raised five children, four foster children, we've got 14 grandchildren, and I'm very proud of that. That's the best accomplishment that I've made – my family and children. I'm a lucky dad and a lucky grandpa. I've been involved in education my whole life. My father was a builder, and I heard enough of dollar Layton on a dime, trying to keep up with a mix of mud. He really instilled in me to get an education. So I came to Dixie, I graduated from the University of Utah, and I'm thankful for my education. I'm thankful for teachers I had. I had some teachers when I was in school that inspired me and influenced me and made a great difference in my life. One of them was named Mr. Dowby, who was my history teacher. He instilled in me a love of our country and this Constitution. So I've spent quite a bit of time in the military and teaching and coaching, and I've been involved in public education for my whole life. All of those things I should have done, I didn't have an opportunity to raise my salary. That's okay. None of them paid, except I felt good about helping the youth of our state and nation achieve things. I still work with the youth, by the way.

### **CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Now to Michelle.

### **MICHELLE**

Thank you, Wes. My name is Michelle Boulter, and one of the things that Wes said that stood out to me was that he outlined his great family heritage. That's what Utah's about. It's about a heritage of families. That's what the state school board needs to be sure that we continue to do: uphold and defend that beautiful heritage that we have of family and parental control within education. That's why I'm running. I'm running to make sure that the voice of parents are heard and that local education is upheld. We have too much of a power-down thing that's happening in education. We need to uphold and defend the heritage of the family. We need more people in the state school board that understand that the family is the fundamental unit of society. It is the family that is the first form of government, and then

everything else builds from that. As long as we understand that, then we will have an amazing educational opportunity for our children here in Utah. That is why I'm running.

### **CHRISTINE**

Thank you for those opening statements. We'll move now to the debate questions. We'll give you two minutes for each response, we'll open it up for rebuttal, and you'll have one minute for rebuttal. We'll start with Michelle. She'll get the first question. In order to make sound decisions on specific policy matters, one must have a vision of what education ought to be in the first place. What is your vision for education in Utah?

### **MICHELLE**

My vision for education in Utah is 100% parent-lead. There are a lot of policies coming down that sound good, but in the long run, it seems to be turning things on its head. We used to have the parent and the teachers working together for the education of their children, and then working with the principals. The principals would decide what was happening in the schools and what was best. In the local school districts, it was there as well. Now we have this removed government that is telling us what standards to teach and how to teach in our classrooms and what to teach in our classrooms, and parents are being pushed out further and further. They're not even being brought to the table when any of these education policies are being discussed, like competency-based education or mastery-based or whatever we want to call it. The discussion was never "Should we do this?", it was "How do we implement this?". The discussion in the first place should have been "Should we do this?" and let's hear the voice of the parents, because parents are the foremost experts on their children.

### **CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Same question for Wes.

### **WES**

I have a vision for education that the closer we are to the student and the teacher, which makes up the basic education unit in our school systems, the closer we are to them - let them make decisions, let them decide on what is studied - the better education system we're going to have. I was looking at some statistics the other day. I worked with about 35 seniors last year, and none of their parents had a college degree. By the time they graduated, these 35 students had almost \$800,000 in scholarships and financial aid. I looked at all the scholarships that they got. Not once did it say "How did you do on the SAGE test?" or "How did you do on the end of level course tests?" or their grades, which is the test between the student and the teacher, and their ACT score. I think I would like to redo testing in the schools. Let the teachers teach and test and give a grade, add the ACT score, and then the kids are prepared for college and we don't waste time. I want to be a problem-solver. I don't have a narrow focus. I have a broad focus. I want to pursue on the premise of what's best for the kids. Put students first. Too many times education lately has been a

political football. I get really upset at people throwing out these gross statements that there's waste. Utah spends by far the least and we rank 13<sup>th</sup> in the nation in our productivity. We do a great job in Utah, no waste, and if we get out of a teacher's way, things are going to be better.

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. To follow up on that question, I want to ask what one principle guides your decision-making approach to education.

**MICHELLE**

Parents are the fundamental drivers of their children's education. That is the one principle that guides me. The family is the smallest level of government and then everything grows from that. Everything needs to be focused on the lowest level that can handle the problem, which are the local school districts. The state school board is there to set guidelines, but they need to step back, step out of the way, let the parents with the teachers work in teaching the children. It's the parents. We're the ones entrusting our children to the schools for most of their formative years. That's a big trust that parents place on these teachers. We need to make sure that parents are always brought to the table whenever any policy is discussed. We cannot eliminate them [00:16:34] and we cannot bring about any policies or rules that come between parent and their child.

00:16:43

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Wes, one minute for you. [00:16:45] What one principle guides your decision-making?

**WES**

One principle that guides me is pursue what's best for the kids, for the students. More than half the students in our school system today come from single-parent homes. Or even more, homes where both parents have two full time jobs or more. And there's a lot of pressure on parents and families and the schools have been asked to step in and teach and do a lot of things some parents can't and some parents struggle with. And I don't want the schools to replace the parents but I want the schools to be a helping hand and a hand up for [00:17:26] those who do struggle to educate their children. And we have teachers that love these kids and and treat every kid like their own and to me that's the teacher and the student. That's the essence of the education system.

00:17:43

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. A lot has been said about parents from both of the candidates so I'm going to move the question to parents. We have a lot of parents are listening to these debates. Some that are listening live and some that will be listening later on

KSL.com. Parental rights and education are protected in both federal and state law. Are Utah code's that parents have the primary responsibility for educating our children. What does it look like for the state to play a secondary and supportive role to parents in education? I'll let Wes start this question.

00:18:18

**WES**

Parents should be in charge of their student's education and the states try to pass laws to involve the parents making them graduation requirements to come and register their kids and be with parent teacher nights and parents, like I say, they are responsible and they should always be asked, and they should be brought into every decision is made. Our shareholders and stakeholders, too many times you're left out. I think we need to be more creative in involving them - going out and talking to the parents so they have the time and they can have input into the educational system. I know we [00:18:57] had back-to-school night in high schools and there would be maybe 24 parents come. We have back-to-school nights in elementary school, and every parent comes. [00:19:11] It's important for parents to - [00:19:27] Every student should be home-taught but the fact of it is, is that [00:19:31] that's kind of a hard time for some parents and some families.

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you, Michelle.

**MICHELLE**

That kind of threw me off - the mic mess up. [00:19:47] And in answer to the question are the primary drivers of education for their children and the state is secondary. But all too often what I'm finding and seeing is that rather than the parents be talked to, the state is bringing in stakeholders and special interest groups and they are having them make decisions. For example, attendance works is a big one. They were brought in to discuss the attendance policy instead of listening to parents. And we can't do that. We cannot bring [00:20:27] anyone and elevate them to a level of what parents have in the eyes of their children. And in what is being done with their children. That's what I'm finding is done all too often. So one thing that I would love to see is stakeholders and special interest groups need to take a back seat to parents. And parents need to be brought to the table.

00:20:55

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. One final question that has to do with vision. In your opinion, what is the main purpose of education? Michelle, if you would like to start this question.

00:21:07

**MICHELLE**

The main purpose of education is really - I spoke about this at the state capital ot too long ago. It all goes back to our family heritage. We have an amazing heritage here in Utah that was brought in by the people that settled in this area. We have a beautiful heritage of how they prospered and turned the desert into a blossoming, beautiful place to live. And we need to be teaching those kinds of character traits - the character [00:21:46] traits from our family heritage and from other heritage that uphold the Constitution and freedoms and liberties. And that's what we need to be focusing on. Yes, we want our children to be gainfully employed but we cannot focus too much on the technical skills. They are important but they're not the same as wisdom and moral character. And so we need to make sure that while we're focusing on the one, [00:22:16] we can't be pushing out and diminishing the other.

00:22:28

**CHRISTINE**

Wes -

**WES**

I think it's important to challenge your children and give them the best, most challenging education, the most well-rounded education that's possible. But you know, I keep thinking of a situation where 85 percent of the people get fired from their jobs and it's not because they can't do the job. They get fired because they don't get along with people. I was reading Tuacahn's mission statement out there and quite a bit of it was working together, inspiring each other. You know, that's important in our education system. That's why I love public education. The children learn to problem solve, [00:23:09] the children learn to socialize, to get along, to make friends. That's so important. I see kids that are young as they go through middle school - what a tough age - then high school and they start to grow up a little bit and that maturity on relationships is really important. I think that anything we do in life, I don't care what the company is or what the organization is, people who know how to get along, form relationships, work together, [00:23:46] then they're going to be successful. I think that's an important part of our education process. Sometimes we focus on the end-of-level tests, the plays you're in, the end, the teams, getting along in the halls. These things are really makes a person successful later on in life. In fact, the ACT test doesn't statistically prove that a person's going to do well in college. What does is how many extracurricular activities are involved in, which of course is teamwork. That's a relationship. That's problem solving. And so [00:24:25] that's what I love about the public education: watching those kids mature and learn to get along. You know I went to a training, and [00:24:36] that training said we can't protect our kids anymore. We have to make them strong.

00:24:44

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you so much. You mentioned the ACT. I want to ask a question about testing. Wes, you'll take this question first. Utah policy makers are constantly addressing

state assessments and concerns over excessive testing. What rules should testing and assessment play in education?

00:25:05

**WES**

For my basic belief, I think testing between the teacher and the student in a class and the student gets a grade. That's all the testing you need except for prepare for the ACT test, for college scholarships, and college entrance. All of these tests – we've over tested. It's taking too much time, it's taking focus really away from teaching students to be independent critical thinkers that can make up their own mind to being a bunch of multiple choice test-takers. And that's a bad direction that we're going in. [00:25:48] I personally don't believe in testing beyond that. I know a lot of people want a test so that we can evaluate teachers, or we want to test so we can evaluate schools. [00:26:00] Our country, when World War One and World War Two, we look at our country and all of that was done before we had the end of level testing and I think it's something that's really a distractor for what we need to do in education today.

00:26:19

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Michelle.

**MICHELLE**

I, too, believe that the testing just needs to be between the teacher and a child. Right now, the SAGE testing that's being given - that teacher can't even look at it, and yet she is expected to teach to this test that she can't even see. And then, she's given an arbitrary number that she's supposed to know what that means and where this child is and the parents are given the same thing. The best evaluation of a child is the teacher. When this child is given a math test, that teacher will know whether or not the child understands the concept. Just like when a math test was [00:26:59] brought home to me and I looked at it. I knew immediately what my son understood and what he didn't understand and that's the same. We don't need successive tests, we don't need all these time wasters in the classrooms. We just need the teachers to write the tests themselves. We have brilliant teachers, absolutely brilliant teachers in our classrooms. We need to utilize them and allow them and give them the opportunity to test the children. They know. I guarantee you they know where these children are.

00:27:32

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Let's move to teacher shortage. So, Utah is dealing with a teacher shortage. How would you attract and retain teachers? We'll start with Michelle.

00:27:45

**MICHELLE**

Remove all the mandates out of the classrooms that are currently happening with the Common Core top down heavy hand that's in the classrooms. We're micromanaging our teachers too much [00:27:58] and teachers teach because they love to teach. They love to see the student learn. I know when I was growing up, the best teachers I had were the ones that really just got to know me and knew what I was capable of. And now we've got teachers where they don't have time to read full books and really discuss them and make their classrooms just an amazing - transform their classroom to something amazing like what they're reading in the book. Now it's just excerpts from bits and pieces of books and we're supposed to teach characters out of that [00:28:36] and character traits and we need to step out of the classroom and the state school board needs to have trust. And that's really what it boils down to, is trust in our teachers and in our principals to do the right thing for our students. And I know that if we got out of the classroom, and allowed the teachers to do what they need to do and to teach the way they know how, then we will see the growth of teachers desiring to come back to the classroom. There's something that has happened in the last few years that has caused teachers to exit out the classrooms, [00:29:15] retire early, look for other employment. And students are no longer being inspired to become teachers and we need to look at why. I believe it's everything that's been coming down from the federal government and this top down approach. It's got to stop.

00:29:35

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Wes.

00:29:37

**WES**

The value of teachers started to go down when they passed No Child Left Behind. And then, of course, to opt out of No Child Left Behind states are given the opportunity to [00:29:55] bring in the Common Core. [00:29:56] And then they could opt out of No Child Left Behind. Both of them are top down and both of them require the testing in the classroom. And so I, you know, we need to decentralize education and put it on the local level, local school boards. It would be great if parents could come to our school board and say, "We want this for our children" and that'd be a great thing I think. So that's why it all started but also, I had a legislator apologize to me who was instrumental in changing the way we finance education in the state and allowed higher ed to come into the educational pot. Which if they had not done that, Utah [00:30:36] wouldn't be 51<sup>st</sup> in the nation for supporting public ed. [00:30:42] But that's the way it is and so we need to go back and go the original way, education was funded in Utah because teachers actually for seven years had a reduction in pay pressures and then my pay goes down. And then they reduced their



retirement. Then they made it so if they retired they couldn't get another job an education in the state of Utah. And so all of those things, young educators look at those things and to Wyoming or they go to Nevada, where instead 7.5% retirement they get 2.68% retirement. Then a lot of them [00:31:23] say "Golly, if I get an HVAC certification, I can go out and be a teacher and [00:31:34] start out at \$15 an hour." So we need to talk about funding and pay also for teachers.

00:31:42

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. We're going to stay on this topic and I'll give you a minute to address this next question. We'll also start with Michelle again. The state board recently passed the academic pathway to teaching rule. This allows somebody to receive a license if they have a bachelor's degree, a demonstrated expertise area and a willingness to work with a mentor for three years. What do you believe will be the impact of this additional route to licensure?

00:32:11

**MICHELLE**

I like the way the state school board has done it. They've left it completely up to the local school districts as to whether or not they want to use this alternate route. I believe that the impact will be a temporary Band-Aid on the overall problem. Like I said, until we remove the mandates that are happening with our teachers, until we stop micro-managing them in the classrooms, we're going to continue to see an exodus of teachers leaving the classrooms and we can bring in all different kinds of teachers. But if we keep mandating and telling them how to teach and what to teach [00:32:48] Then they're not going to stick around. Thank you.

00:32:53

**WES**

We have a shortage of 900 teachers and what we have to do to address things like this, I think it's important to look at why there's a shortage of 900 teachers in this state of Utah. And I've always started it's retirement, it's pay, it's testing. So we've got to make teaching attractive. You look at all these countries that say they're better than the United States. I don't know if they are because here we teach every single kid. In all those other countries, they don't. In the eighth grade, they have tests. After the eighth grade, they put them on a different track. The only children that that they teach are the ones that are on that academic track. We [00:33:38] test and measure everybody. Our education system in this country is actually doing great. Our education system here in Utah is actually doing great. We need to let the teachers know that and thank them and make them feel like what they're doing is good.

00:33:59

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. This next question, we'll start with Wes. We often hear about the principle of local control. In your opinion what does it mean to have local control in education?

00:34:15

**WES**

If I could get elected president in November, I'd eliminate the department of education and turn all that tax money back to the states and let the states make the framework for the education system in my state. On the state school board level, I would make a framework and then I'd let the local school boards work within that framework. [00:34:46] With any organization, if you want to be efficient, you make the problem solving and the decision-making as close to the individual or the customer as possible. That's a great economic rule and that's what we need to do in education. Right now, all the rules in education made as far away from the child as possible and the parent as possible and the teacher.

00:35:13

**MICHELLE**

We have a lot of politicians that continually talk about local control and we have a lot of talk regarding local control. It's time to move from the talk about action. If we really truly want local control in education and in the state of Utah, if we want to regain our autonomy, we need to stop taking the federal dollars. That is the only way. Then, we will receive our autonomy back and we'll be able to do what we need to do within the classrooms.

00:35:45

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. The responses so far have been very thoughtful and I'm actually going ask one more question and then I'm going to open up to the audience, so be thinking about the question that you want to ask. All right, we'll start with Michelle. In what ways do you believe your approach to education differs from your opponent?

00:36:06

**MICHELLE**

Goodness. I feel like I have true understanding on the principle of local control and parental rights. I also understand the unique heritage that Utah has and the principle that the family is the fundamental unit of society. There cannot be anything that we make – rule, policy, anything that comes between parent and child. That has to be the utmost thing that needs to be understood. And as a good friend of mine always said, "Parents are and must always be the resident experts of their children." I stand by that principle and I stand [00:36:47] by the principle of local

control. I know that the family is the first form of government and everything else branches from that and that is what we need on a states school board. I've defended the family at the United Nations. I've defended it for three years in the state of Utah, and [00:37:05] I will continue to defend it.

00:37:10

**CHRISTINE**

Wes, in what ways do you believe your approach to education differs from your opponent?

00:37:20

**WES**

I think I have a broad definition of what I want to do. I want to involve everybody, have a great working relationship with a lot of legislators and school board members statewide, and I've never been a yes-man. I want people to know that. I've been in trouble most of my life because I haven't been. But it means that I have their ear. I can talk to them and I can negotiate with legislators to make these changes. To move the education system way from centralized down to the [00:38:00] local level. Like I say, success depends upon relationships. So I think that I've already made those. I think that'll help me be successful in the state school board right from the beginning.

00:38:20

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Let's move to audience questions. If you have a question, raise your hand. We'll bring you a microphone. Please state your name, please keep it brief, and focus your question on principles and policy, not personalities. Thank you.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER #1**

Hi, I'm Jenny Baker. I would like to know what your opinion is on [00:38:38] technology or competency-based education.

00:38:50

**WES**

There's a big move to almost replace teachers with technology because they've done scientific studies that shows when kids get the right answer with a computer, dopamine is released in the brain and they get reinforcement and they love to learn that way. And I think that that's good for a little bit of the area and but I think that students need to be inspired. It's not enough to pass a test. It's not enough to get the information and release some dopamine. The students need to know how to use that information. They need to be inspired for service and to go out and work and I don't know how you do that [00:39:31] with totally competency-based education, which

just means we're going to let them learn by a computer. I think that there's too much of that and we need to get along. We need to interact. There is a place for it, but we have to be careful and not go overboard with it.

00:39:56

**MICHELLE**

Our students already sit in front of a computer too much and we cannot allow a computer to take the place of the one-on-one interaction that we have between parent and child and child and teacher. And the other issue with competency-based education is who sets these competencies? Is it going to be a national group with [00:40:21] global ideas? Will it be [00:40:26] our college school board or will it be our local school board? Who will be the ones that will be in charge of setting the level of competency? Will it be a new group, a new competency board that will be created to set competency levels? But I can tell you this: It will not be the parents that will be setting competency and that is the very people that should be setting it along with the teachers and the principal, not an another far-removed group that sits on some board that will be created. That is the rub, that's the actual issue is [00:41:06] who will be setting the competency for these computer based programs and who will be monitoring what is coming across on the screen to the students. Instead, what the students will be getting is whatever is written by the content writers directly to them. There will be no filter. The parent won't be there as a filter, the teacher won't be there as a filter. I feel that this will take the role of teachers as a mentor and turn them into facilitators. We do not want facilitators. We want mentors for students. We want someone that some students can look up to and desire to become like, not just to set [00:41:46] up something computer for them so that they can get right to work.

00:41:52

**CHRISTINE**

Great. Do we have another audience question?

00:41:54

**AUDIENCE MEMBER #2**

Yes. My name is David Bates and there are local organizations that support public education. I'd like to know what each of the candidates has served on you know, like PTA or local school board, [00:42:10] or a similar organization.

**CHRISTINE**

Michelle, if you'd like to start.

**MICHELLE**

This is kind of my first exodus out of being a mom. [00:42:22] For the past 17 years, I have been a stay at home mom. I worked briefly at George Washington Academy

and I helped out a lot on their parent-teacher organization. But as far as serving on any boards, I haven't. I have served my family. And that's what I've done. I did attend, like I said, the United Nations a year ago. I attended on the education committee and I went to with the sole purpose of defending my family and I've done [00:43:01] presentations, and I've spoken up the state capitol but that's pretty much it. I have mainly just been at home with my children and I wouldn't change any of that. Thank you.

00:43:13

### **WES**

I don't think there is anymore honorable and noble thing in [00:43:19] the whole world then being a mother. I think that being a good mother prepares you for almost anything in life. So I'm fortunate that my wife is the best mother I know and the best grandmother I know and she makes our family work together and work really well. [00:43:44] And because of her, I was able to [00:43:51] serve on the Washington County Board of Education for 12 years. I've been out for three years, I've been fly-fishing. I served as President of the Washington County Board of Education and I served on the Executive Board for the Utah School Boards Association where I chartered the leadership academy on the day on hill. I served on the Board of Directors for the school board association. I served on the Board of Trustees for the Utah Musical Activates Association. I served on the Board of Directors for Dixie College of Applied Technology. I served on the Board of Trustees for the Utah Athletic Director's Association. I served on the Board of Trustees for the Sons of Utah Pioneers. That takes a really good wife and mother so I can do those [00:44:33] things.

00:44:36

### **CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Another audience question?

### **AUDIENCE MEMBER #3**

My name is Dave Brader. [00:44:48] I think that most people understand that federal money and the strings attached to it are is what destroyed our education system. [00:44:57] What ideas do you have to cut those strings?

00:45:08

### **CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Wes.

### **WES**

So I would like to go out and cut it and stop it right now. If we did that right now we have a shortage of 900 teachers in the state of Utah. That would add 500 more teachers to that. We would have to lay off 500 more teachers. We'd have to, you

know, the school lunch program takes care of a lot of a lot of children in Washington and Iron counties and that would be eliminated and then make a substantial contribution to special education. And you know, I would I'd like to cut those strings without [00:45:45] turning them loose and hanging us. It's a fact that strings are attached. You know, I think what we need to do is we need to work with our federal legislators and I hope that someday we get a president and executive branch of government that will step up and bring the Department of Education to task or just get rid of it and turn it back over to the states where it belongs. I mean, that's where education belongs on the greatest level is on the state. I'd be the first one to cut those strings if it wouldn't hang us at the same [00:46:25] time.

00:46:28

**MICHELLE**

Currently, the state Utah receives less than 10% of the education budget from the federal government but practically 100% of mandates that we have to do or obligated to do. If we do not do it, we lose that money. [00:46:44] And I would like to see a budget drawn up without the federal monies. Rather than use scare tactics and saying that we're going to lose teachers and have to lay off teachers, let's look at a new budget without the federal money and let's see what we can do. And then let's see where we can find the extra money if it's needed. The money may be there. We'll never know if we don't have a budget and look at it. So instead of saying, "We're going to lay off this, we're going to hang ourselves", Let's look at it. Let's just look at it. We don't know. To my knowledge nobody has ever done an alternative budget [00:47:23] without federal money. And if we really want our true autonomy back, then I believe it's worth looking at it and taking a good hard look at it.

00:47:38

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Is there another audience question?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER #4**

Yes. My name is Richard Faulkner. I was wondering. I haven't heard any talking about eliminating teachers tenure, [00:47:45] looking for a 401K plan, making a private business rather than running it like a government.

**MICHELLE**

Is there a question in there? Sorry...

00:48:12

**AUDIENCE MEMBER #4**

Universal school of choice: Are you in favor of each school being allowed to go to any school that they choose to go to? I'd like to follow up with other parts.

00:48:26

**MICHELLE**

Are you talking about [00:48:28] having money follow the student and they can use it where they choose?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER #4**

Basically.

**MICHELLE**

Okay. I would be for that as long as there are no strings attached. I don't want it to turn into the same issue we have with the federal government where the parents get their money and they can take their child wherever they want, [00:48:51] but you have to give us your autonomy. No. I [00:48:59] don't like it for our state, and I certainly do not want it in my home. I am for school choice and right now the state of Utah does an amazing job at allowing parents the right to choose what school is to go to. We have open enrollment. If there's room in a school district you can go to that school district. I currently home school and my children have also benefited from the public schools and the dual-enrollment policy. I have my 17-year-old that is currently enrolled in college. So there's a lot of options in the state of Utah. We're doing good in that front. [00:49:40] But I don't want school choice for parents to be given money that they can spend and have strings attached to it. [00:49:50] I hope that answered your question.

00:49:56

**WES**

In Washington County School District, we already have pretty much open enrollment in pretty much all of our schools. [00:50:04] The only restrictions that come is for athletic eligibility. They have to establish that when they attend the school choice in the ninth grade. So we do have open enrollment. And I know the school district tries really hard to support the charter schools within the school district. We provide school lunch for a charter school that wanted to provide school lunch for them and so the school district does that. There's a lot of places in the state of Utah where they don't have a choice. You [00:50:43] know, we have a lot of rural schools where you know they just don't have a choice - the only school in the county or in the area. And so I know it's a national debate, but I look at the schools in Washington County and every school to me is an outstanding school. Every school has produced people that have gone out and they've achieved on a world-level basis. [00:51:13] I think this is an inner city problem a lot more than it is in an area like this. I have a foster son who is a home teacher for Glen Beck, and I listen to Glen Beck all the time and a lot of the stuff he says just doesn't pertain not only to the state of Utah, but especially Washington and Iron Counties. Choice is an important thing. Our country is based on choice. Choice is very very important.

00:51:54

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you. Is there a final audience question?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER #4**

There was a follow-up question. There was another part of that. I assume that teacher's pensions and tenure are keystones to the basis of education right now. Are you looking at any possible changes to teacher's tenure or pensions?

**WES**

Every one of our administrators has the ability – our teachers [00:52:26] are evaluated continually. When teachers are hired from Washington County, for the first three years in their contract they actually have to reapply for the job and have to prove themselves over a three-year period. I think with that is there has to be sometime when teachers feel secure in their job and do the job. Like I say, they're continually evaluated throughout their career in and they don't publish it but I think everybody in this room would be really surprised if you know how many teachers were [00:53:04] let go in Washington and every year. The quality of our teachers there are outstanding. We don't have unions in the state Utah. It's not point blank. They're evaluated if they're not doing the job they are terminated. That's just the way it is. It's up on the front page of the newspaper. [00:53:27] That's what happens.

00:53:32

**MICHELLE**

As long as the tenure doesn't keep a principal from being able to get rid of a teacher if she stops doing her job, then I'm for all of those things. Unfortunately, this is a subject that I have not studied up on as much. And so I would be really interested to talking to you afterwards and getting more information if you would be willing to share it with me. I'd give you my email address. At the last debate there was a question that was brought out then I didn't know much about and I did research it and educated myself about it. And so I can promise you that I'll do the same. [00:54:13] And that is one thing that I'm definitely always willing to do. I will not look at just talking points. I won't look at what somebody says is great, what somebody says isn't. I will definitely read every document that I can get my hand on and then form my opinion. But if I can talk with you afterwards and you can send me some information I'd really appreciate it. I am sorry that I am not as knowledgeable in this area as I would like to be.

00:54:42

**CHRISTINE**

Thank you so much to the audience. It is clear you came ready to engage in a conversation, which is great. To our audience and to our candidates, thank you for joining us for this dialogue. If you either write about this race, you can go to [uteddebatecoalition.com](http://uteddebatecoalition.com). If you want to listen to these recordings again or shared



them, you can visit [ksl.com](http://ksl.com), and if you want to meet our candidates and ask them additional questions, stick around for my meet and greet immediately following out in the lobby. [00:55:12] And let's give a round of applause for our candidates.