

Stimulus money to wire Utah schools

Technology» Federal grant to make Internet available requires \$3.5 million state match.

By **BRIAN MAFFLY**
The Salt Lake Tribune

Utah education officials have secured a \$13.4 million federal grant to pipe broadband into dozens of elementary schools, making Internet access available to thousands of students. But the project requires a hefty state commitment that some lawmakers fear could be undermined if the Legislature takes a hatchet to higher education spending.

There are about 150 elementary and charter schools in Utah served by inadequate,

low-capacity Internet connections, according to Michael Peterson, executive director of the Utah Education Network. The grant, which UEN secured through a competitive process, will underwrite the first phase in a statewide effort to bring fiber-based Ethernet lines into every school.

"Imagine if you had several hundred students, plus staff and teachers and they're all sharing a T-1 line. They can't do online testing that's now required," Peterson said. "They can't use media-intensive instruction. Those children cannot receive a 21st

century education with that kind of connectivity. Network connectivity in a school is as important as electricity and phone service."

The grant comes from a \$4.7 billion pool of federal stimulus money distributed by the U.S. Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The money will expand broadband infrastructure and public computer center capacity, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service.

"In today's society, if you don't have regular access to high-speed Internet, you don't have access to all the educational and employment opportunities it provides," said

NTIA administrator Lawrence Strickling in a statement. "Fast, reliable Internet connections can help Americans gain job training and skills, open doors for small businesses, and give students the opportunity to explore vast libraries and archives from their local school or library."

Efforts by UEN, which handles communication and Internet services for the Utah System of Higher Education, to extend these services to the lower grades enjoys broad support from education officials, who supplied endorsements in the grant application.

"This grant means that students and teachers will gain access to a wide variety of video and multimedia content

and interaction available via broadband connectivity," wrote Superintendent Barry Newbold of the Jordan School District.

U.S. Rep. Jim Matheson, D-Salt Lake City, lauded the grant, which he says will benefit almost 1 million Utahns and create 450 jobs.

"Economic growth is powered by the 21st century infrastructure that connects students and businesses to the global classroom and marketplace," said Matheson in a statement. "Money spent building this digital superhighway benefits every Utah family that has access to a computer at home, in a library or school, now and for years to come."

The state is required to put up a \$3.5 million match during the next three years. Given the uncertainty surrounding state support for higher education this legislative session, there is some concern whether UEN will have the funds and staff to meet obligations that come with the grant.

UEN intends to use the grant to wire 88 public and charter schools, 35 public libraries, and seven Head Start centers, benefiting more than half the state's elementary schools. Peterson's office has another grant application in the works to provide broadband to the remaining schools.

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Senate-approved retirement bills await gov's pen

By **ROBERT GEHRKE** and **CATHY MCKITRICK**
The Salt Lake Tribune

Two retirement bills that would dramatically alter the state's pension system and halt double dipping are headed to Gov. Gary Herbert's desk.

The Utah Senate agreed to tweaks made in the House to SB43 and SB63, both sponsored by Sen. Dan Liljenquist, R-Bountiful, sending them on to the Republican governor.

The two bills cleared the Senate on mostly party-line votes, with Sen. Jon Greiner, R-Ogden, being the lone Republican to vote against SB43.

The House had amended SB43 to require that retired workers returning to full employment after a full year's separation have the option of either suspending their pensions and earning additional service credits or keep their pensions without further enhancement to their retirement benefits.

Greiner, Ogden's police chief who draws a paycheck and a retirement check, objected to the change, saying it treats the retired Utah worker differently from retirees coming from outside Utah.

SB63 would push retirement eligibility from 20 to 25 years for police and firefighters, and from 30 to 35 years for other public employees hired after July 1, 2011. Workers currently in the system would not be impacted.

The House amended SB63 to make it more friendly to future employees, Liljenquist said.

The bill would increase the employer retirement contribution for new workers from 8 percent to 10 percent, expand service credit per year from 1 to 1.5 percent, and preserve vesting for employees — often working mothers who take time off to rear their children — for 10 years away from the job rather than five.

Also, SB63 would allow spouses of employees who die within 120 days of retirement to collect their husband's or wife's retirement.

Herbert will review the legislation before taking any action, said spokeswoman Angie Welling.

He supports efforts to reform the retirement system in a way that makes it more sustainable while protecting current state employees, Welling added.

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New liquor stores must have 'state' tag

By **BRANDON LOOMIS**
The Salt Lake Tribune

Utah state liquor and wine stores would have to display "State" or "State of Utah" on their building signs under a bill that passed easily Monday in the Utah House.

Rep. Kraig Powell, R-Heber City, said he sponsored HB419 at the request of constituents who were disturbed by a trend away from the Utah label on state-owned stores in their neighborhoods. His bill would not require replacing existing

signs, but would change the rules for new signs.

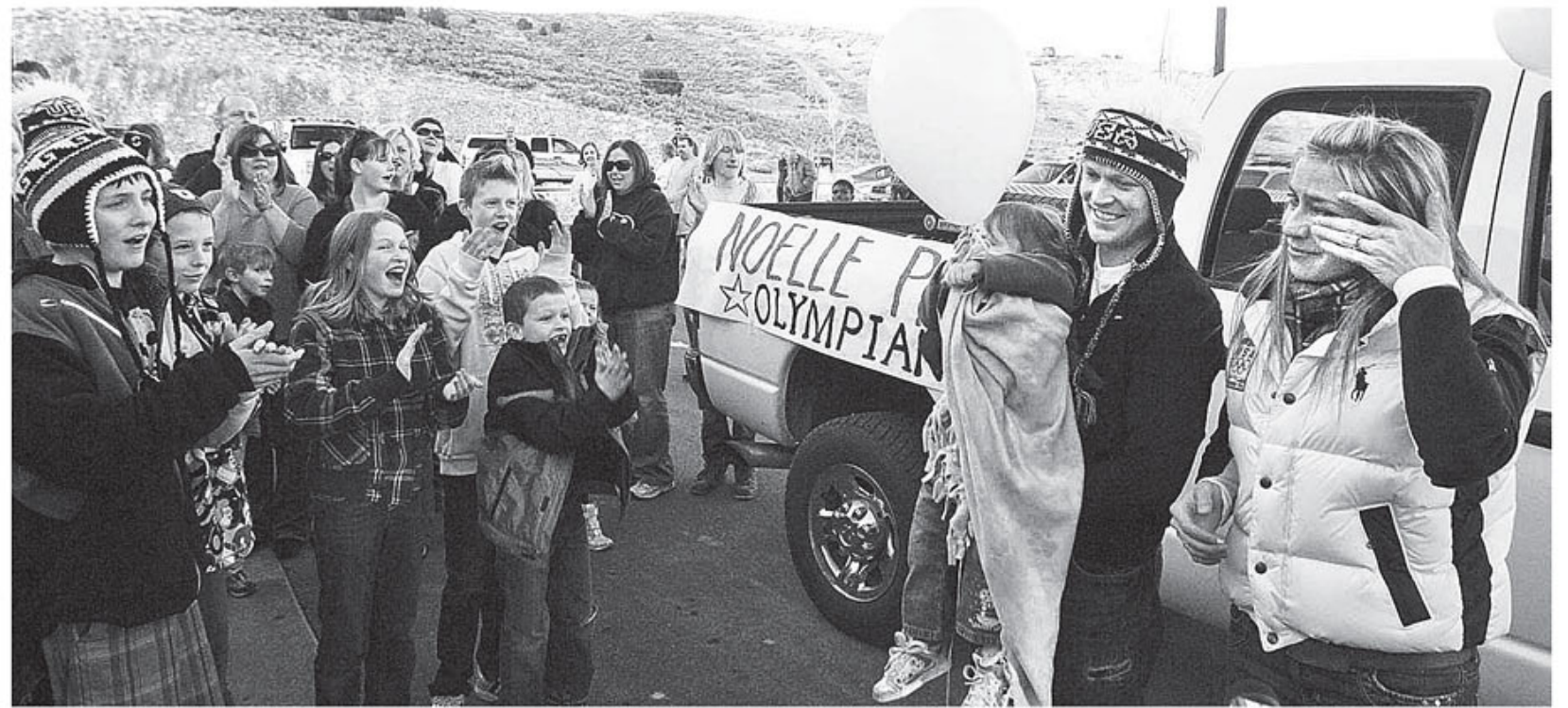
The stores have downplayed their state ownership to be more appealing to tourists and have less "obtrusive" signage, Powell said.

Rep. Jack Draxler, R-North Logan, said he believes the motive was to make liquor more inviting.

"I object to making liquor and wine more appealing or inviting," he said.

The measure passed the House 66-5 and now heads to the Senate.

HOMECOMING FOR AN OLYMPIAN



PAUL FRAUGHTON | The Salt Lake Tribune

Olympian Noelle Pikus-Pace wipes a tear from her eye Monday as she speaks to well wishers at Hidden Hollow Elementary School in Eagle Mountain. Standing next to her is her husband, Janson Pace, holding their daughter, Lacee, 2. Pikus-Pace was honored with the key to the city, the first time such an award has been given. Pikus-Pace had to settle for fourth place in the 2010 Olympic skeleton event, one-tenth of a second off the medals podium.

Applicants wanted for 3rd District Court bench

Applications are being accepted for a vacancy on the 3rd District Court bench. The 3rd District includes Salt Lake, Summit, and Tooele counties. The position replaces Judge Stephen Roth, who has been appointed to the Utah Court of Appeals.

Candidates must be at least 25, citizens of the United States, residents of Utah for at least three years and admitted to practice law in Utah. The deadline for applications is 5 p.m. March 31, and applications should be

sent to the attention of Margo Bird, Administrative Office of the Courts, P.O. Box 140241, Salt Lake City, UT 84114-0241, e-mailed to margob@email.utcourts.gov, or faxed to 801-238-7814.

Information on benefits, judicial retention and performance evaluation is posted on the Utah State Courts' Web site at www.utcourts.gov under employment opportunities. Job applications are also available on the Web site.

— The Salt Lake Tribune

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TODAY'S FUNERAL SERVICES

Wednesday, February 3, 2010

CONNELL, VELMA	10 AM
Tithing Hill Ward 1208 W 12400 S Riverton, UT	
COOPER, MARY	11:00AM
Saint Patrick Catholic Church 1040 W 400 S Salt Lake City, UT	
HELM, REX	11 AM
Eastmont Ward 1280 E Turquoise 992 S South Jordan, UT	
JENSEN, WESLEY	1:00 PM
Larkin Sunset Gardens 1950 E 10600 S Sandy, UT	
LAMBERT, KATHRYN	11:00AM
Granger Sixth Ward 3276 S Hillsdale Dr. Granger, UT	
LUKER, WILLIAM	11 AM
Orchard 1st Ward 3707 S 800 W Bountiful, UT	
MACPHERSON, RYAN	11:00AM
Sunset LDS Stake Center 82 North Dixie Drive St. George, UT	
MATHIS, ROMA	11:00AM
Brigham City 25th Ward 865 S 300 W Brigham City, UT	
MILGATE, JESSE	11:00 AM
Magna Central Stake 8181 W 3320 S Magna, UT	
MILLSAPS, FLORALIE	5:00 PM
Evans & Early Funeral Home 574 E 100 S Salt Lake City, UT	
STRINGHAM, MARIAN	11:00 AM
Monument Park 17th Ward 2795 Crestview Drive Salt Lake City, UT	
VELASQUEZ, JOSE	10:00 AM
St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church 210 S. Chapel Layton, UT	
WARD, BRENT	4:00PM
Memorial House in Memory Grove Park 485 N. Canyon Rd. (120 E) Salt Lake City, UT	
WILLIAMS, KELVIN	NOON
Holladay North Stake Center 4395 S Albright Dr (2145 E) Holladay, UT	
WRIGHT, CARMA	11:00 AM
Church 400 N 900 W Payson, UT	

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