Holland & Hart

Kate Bradshaw

Director of Government Affairs
801.799.5711
Salt Lake City
kabradshaw@hollandhart.com

2024 Utah Convention Recap

Insight — May 28, 2024

Utah's political party conventions kicked off what looks to be a wild primary election cycle for Utahns. From a last-minute endorsement from a popular senator to delegates booing and eventually voting against Utah's popular governor, the conventions set the tone for what is expected to be a crazy and unpredictable election season in the Beehive State. Below is a recap of what happened at the conventions and what to expect in the June 25th Primary. Ballots will be mailed to voters on June 3rd.

Cox Loses Big at Convention but Lives to Fight Another Day

Gov. Spencer Cox was defeated at the Republican State Convention by state legislator Phil Lyman. Lyman, who represents the southeast part of Utah in his House seat, beat Cox by netting 67% of the delegate vote at the convention. Despite the defeat, Cox will move forward as he gathered enough signatures to be placed on the ballot for the primary election. Polling indicates strong overall Republican support for the Governor in the Primary election.

State Representative Brian King ran unopposed at the Democratic Party State Convention and will represent the party in the General Election in November.

Who Will Replace Mitt Romney?

We don't know, though polling does seem to indicate name recognition matters in this race.

After four rounds of voting at the state Republican Convention, Trump-endorsed candidate Riverton Mayor Trent Staggs received enough support to be named the party's nominee. That only means so much in this race. Three other candidates gained enough signatures to also be on the primary ballot, so Republicans will have plenty of options to choose from in the June primary. Current Third District Congressman John Curtis, former mayor of Provo, took second place in the convention and will be on the ballot after securing enough signatures. Brad Wilson, former Speaker for Utah's House of Representatives, and businessman Jason Walton will also be on the ballot thanks to gathering signatures.

Professional Ski Mountaineer and Mount Everest Summiteer, Caroline Gleich, has been nominated by the Democrats.

Be prepared for a bevy of TV commercials from these Republican candidates for the next few weeks.

House Calls

Three of Utah's four U.S. House seats will have Republican primaries this year. In Utah's first congressional district, Congressman Blake Moore was pushed to a primary as he received only 45% of the vote at the Convention. He will be challenged by Paul Miller in the primary. The winner of the Republican primary will face off against Democrat Bill Campbell in November.

In Congressional District 2, freshly elected Celeste Maloy was also pushed to a primary. Maloy's opponent, Colby Jenkins, was the surprise of the Republican convention as Republican delegate darling, Sen. Mike Lee, R-UT, endorsed Jenkins one day before the convention. In contrast, Maloy was endorsed by Fourth District Congressman Burgess Owens.

Maloy won a special election in late 2023 to replace Rep. Chris Stewart, who retired due to family health issues. She now will face Jenkins (and Lee) in the primary to retain her seat for a full term.

Democrats nominated Brian Adams, who immediately withdrew from the race as he has been extremely critical of President Joe Biden. The Democrats, after their original nominee stepped down, have now put forward Nathaniel Woodward as their candidate for the 2024 general election. Woodward is a family law attorney from Price.

Republicans might feel like they are looking at a menu from The Cheesecake Factory when they see their ballot for the third congressional district. A total of five candidates are on the Republican ballot for the seat being vacated by John Curtis. The menu of candidates includes State Senator Mike Kennedy, State Auditor John “Frugal” Dougall, Trampoline Park Businessman Case Lawrence, Roosevelt Mayor JR Bird, and Attorney Stewart Peay. Kennedy won at the state convention, but thanks to the signature path, he has a host of challengers in the primary.

Former Summit County Commissioner and Vietnam War Vet Glenn Wright will take on the winner of the Republican battle royale in November as Wright is the Democratic nominee.

Those living in Utah's Fourth District will have to wait until November to get in on the action as Republican Burgess Owens ran unopposed for the party's nomination. Democrat delegates moved Katrina Fallick-Wang forward as their candidate for the election. Owens is known for having constituents take pictures wearing his Superbowl Champion ring; Fallick-Wang graduated from college when she was 18 and has been a web developer and an advocate for teen moms.

Lots of Legal Choices for AG

In the race for Attorney General, former-state Republican Party Chair Derek Brown did not get a warm reception from party delegates at the convention as they quickly dismissed him from the conversation, eliminating him on the first round of balloting. Brown gathered signatures, so will still be on the June primary ballot. Republican delegates moved forward Frank Mylar, an attorney in private practice, and Rachel Terry, currently the Director of the state's risk management division, to the ballot

giving Republicans plenty to choose from with three candidates.

Democrat Rudy Bautista, a criminal defense attorney, won the nomination at the state convention.

Holland & Hart attorney Michelle Quist will also be on the ballot in November as she will represent the United Utah party in the General Election.

Utah's Primary Election will be held on June 25th.

Subscribe to get our Insights delivered to your inbox.

This publication is designed to provide general information on pertinent legal topics. The statements made are provided for educational purposes only. They do not constitute legal or financial advice nor do they necessarily reflect the views of Holland & Hart LLP or any of its attorneys other than the author(s). This publication is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship between you and Holland & Hart LLP. Substantive changes in the law subsequent to the date of this publication might affect the analysis or commentary. Similarly, the analysis may differ depending on the jurisdiction or circumstances. If you have specific questions as to the application of the law to your activities, you should seek the advice of your legal counsel.