

**JOINT RESOLUTION SUPPORTING A NATIONAL
HOCKEY LEAGUE FRANCHISE IN UTAH**

2024 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Daniel McCay

House Sponsor: Jon Hawkins

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This resolution recognizes Utah as an incredible state for sports and entertainment and supports efforts to bring a National Hockey League franchise to Utah.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- recognizes that Utah is the fastest growing state, has the strongest economy in the United States, and is consistently ranked among the top three states to live and work in;
- recognizes the plethora of year-round attractions and amenities Utah has to offer locals and visitors to the state alike;
- recognizes the world-wide reputation Utah has for hosting historically successful sports and entertainment events such as the 2002 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games and the 2023 NBA All-Star Game;
- recognizes that Utah is the ideal place for a National Hockey League franchise;
- recognizes that there is a great hockey legacy in Utah with the history of professional ice hockey in the state dating back to 1969;
- recognizes that Utah offers an abundance of amazing locations where a state-of-the-art hockey-specific arena can be constructed;
- recognizes the deep and successful history of professional sports teams and events in Utah, and the strong community support for those teams and events;
- recognizes the many benefits and opportunities that a National Hockey League franchise would provide to the state and its residents; and
- expresses strong support from the Legislature and the Governor to bring the National Hockey League to the great state of Utah.

Other Special Clauses:

None

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

WHEREAS, Utah's strong economy, growing population, and rich sports history makes it uniquely prepared to become home to a National Hockey League (NHL) franchise;

WHEREAS, reputable, third-party authorities consistently rank Utah highly for its fiscal stability and job growth;

WHEREAS, in April 2023, the U.S. News and World Report ranked Utah as the best state in the United States and the state with the best economy;

WHEREAS, in January 2024, WalletHub named Utah the best state in which to start a business;

WHEREAS, in January 2024, Archbridge Institute called Utah the best environment for social mobility;

WHEREAS, over the past decade, Utah has consistently been one of the fastest growing states in terms of population and economic outlook;

WHEREAS, Utah has an extensive and rich sports history;

WHEREAS, currently, three leagues have successful franchises in Utah: the Utah Jazz of the National Basketball Association (NBA), Real Salt Lake of Major League Soccer (MLS), and the Utah Royals of the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL);

WHEREAS, Utah is home to the longest-running and largest youth basketball program in the NBA, the Utah Jazz's Junior Jazz, with approximately 60,000 annual participants and more than 2 million participants since its inception in 1983;

WHEREAS, Utah's sports legacy includes amazing scholar-athletes in major collegiate athletic conferences, including the Big XII, PAC 12, Mountain West Conference, and Western Athletic Conference;

WHEREAS, the world has continually been impressed with Utah when people from across the globe flock to the state for events such as the Salt Lake 2002 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the 1993 and 2023 NBA All-Star Games, and Ultimate Fighting Championship 278 and Ultimate Fighting Championship 291;

WHEREAS, the vibrant sports infrastructure maintained throughout the state by the Utah Olympic Legacy Foundation, the Utah Sports Commission, and others would be dramatically enhanced by a new, state-of-the[]-art hockey arena;

WHEREAS, Utah is preparing to again host the world as the presumptive host of the 2034

61 Winter Olympic Games, including what are sure to be epic hockey contests;

62 WHEREAS, five national parks, 11 world-class ski resorts, and some of the best outdoor
63 attractions on earth, including the "Greatest Snow on Earth" can be found in Utah;

64 WHEREAS, Utah is the most family-friendly state with the youngest population, and
65 hockey in Utah has seen youth participation increase 17% in the past 10 years;

66 WHEREAS, despite having the 29th biggest media market in the country, Utah is
67 consistently in the top three for NBA local television ratings;

68 WHEREAS, Utah would create an amazing new destination for an NHL franchise, as it is
69 directly in line with the travel paths of many other NHL cities;

70 WHEREAS, the Delta Center, one of the most vibrant sports arenas in the United States, is
71 immediately available to serve as an interim host arena for an NHL franchise;

72 WHEREAS, Utah offers an abundance of desirable locations where a state-of-the-art,
73 hockey-specific arena can be constructed in the coming years, sparking an influx of jobs and a
74 massive economic impact for Utah and its residents;

75 WHEREAS, having an NHL franchise and corresponding arena would ensure the long-term
76 vitality and legacy of Utah, and create a plethora of benefits now and for future generations of
77 Utahns;

78 WHEREAS, Utah has a great hockey legacy, dating back to 1969 with the debut of the Salt
79 Lake Golden Eagles of the Western Hockey League;

80 WHEREAS, the Salt Lake Golden Eagles operated for 25 years, winning two regular
81 season titles, three division titles, and two Turner Cups;

82 WHEREAS, in 1995, professional hockey returned to Utah, when the Denver Grizzlies of
83 the International Hockey League became the Utah Grizzlies;

84 WHEREAS, the Utah Grizzlies won the Turner Cup in its inaugural season in Utah;

85 WHEREAS, today, the Utah Grizzlies continue to boast an avid fan base as a part of the
86 East Coast Hockey League (ECHL), and is an affiliate team of the NHL's Colorado Avalanche;

87 WHEREAS, Utah has loyal and passionate fans who are wildly supportive of local sports
88 teams, giving strong home-court and home-field advantage to the Utah Jazz, Real Salt Lake,
89 Utah Royals, Salt Lake City Stars, Real Monarchs, and other professional and college sports
90 teams;

91 WHEREAS, the Smith Entertainment Group led by Ryan and Ashley Smith brings
92 unparalleled passion, dedication, and expertise for bringing the NHL to Utah;

93 WHEREAS, the Smith Entertainment Group is well positioned to continue to invest in Utah
94 as a major sports and entertainment destination due to their experience owning and managing

95 three professional sports franchises in Utah;

96 WHEREAS, sports have the unique power to bring people from all different backgrounds
97 together;

98 WHEREAS, Utah is the most giving state in the country, and Utahns are committed to
99 giving back to their community by making deep investments to support each other and people
100 around the world through a variety of philanthropic endeavors;

101 WHEREAS, countless individuals, companies, and organizations have expressed their
102 enthusiasm and support for an NHL franchise in Utah;

103 WHEREAS, a new, state-of-the-art hockey arena will be activated year-round, providing
104 another home to professional hockey, as well as concerts, events, conferences, and other
105 sports, entertainment, education, and cultural activities; and

106 WHEREAS, an NHL franchise in Utah would be a strong and welcome economic,
107 educational, and cultural benefit to the entire state:

108 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah supports
109 the efforts of Smith Entertainment Group in the pursuit of bringing the National Hockey
110 League to the great state of Utah.

111 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature supports the Smith Entertainment
112 Group's efforts, knowing "you miss 100% of the shots you don't take."