lynette wendel
UTAH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Air Quality

Improve personal health with clean air

No kids on the playground during red air days is hard on everyone involved in school day management. Our beautiful scenery is distorted by the haze and we just feel plain "gross". But, that is just the start.

Air pollution shortens the life expectancy of the average Utahn by two years. For example, 75% of Utahns lose one year of life or more because of air pollution and 23% lose five years or more. Even when pollutants are below legal limits and the air quality is described as "healthy" or "good," pollution still degrades human health.* It makes perfect sense why air quality consistently ranks in our top three areas of concern in every survey. We all have to breathe. We need to promote optimal health for all of our citizens, all of the time.

*https://pws.byu.edu/ben-abbott-lab/human-health-and-economic-costs-of-air-pollution-in-utah

Support economic development and sustainability through investments in air quality

Air pollution costs Utah's economy $1.8 billion annually. This economic damage is split roughly equally between direct costs (such as healthcare expenses and lost earning potential) and indirect costs (such as loss of tourism, decreased growth, regulatory burden, and business costs).* The long-term costs of unhealthy air must be calculated in terms of health care, tourism and loss of business. It is fiscally irresponsible to forego investing in effective air quality abatement in the short-term to transfer greater costs through those channels in the long-term.

Economic development and sustainability are directly tied to air quality. A talented workforce and a business-friendly environment are the top reasons businesses establish themselves in Utah. It's within our ability to keep air quality from being the number one reason our families and businesses leave the state.

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Implement programs that are proven to give us the greatest gains

As a planning commissioner, I have prioritized and studied our best options to improve our air quality for five years. Cleaning Utah's air could result in billions

of dollars of economic growth and reduce billions of dollars of expenses currently associated with health, education, and the economy due to bad air quality. Cities, states, and countries that have invested in reducing air pollution have universally seen immediate and long-lasting economic and health benefits.

Increasing the efficiency of vehicles and buildings, investing in awareness, removing subsidies for nonrenewable energy, pricing carbon pollution, and expanding alternative transportation could all result in double-digit decreases in air pollution. Similar measures elsewhere have had immediate benefits for human health and a large economic return on investment, averaging $32 in economic benefits for every $1 invested towards improving air quality.* Utahns overwhelmingly support such measures and the legislature has failed to act.

*https://pws.byu.edu/ben-abbott-lab/human-health-and-economic-costs-of-air-pollution-in-utah