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## Utah to require in-person voting options

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah legislators unanimously voted during a special session last week in favor of a plan for the November election that includes outdoor voting and additional ballot drop boxes in rural parts of the state.

The bill would require counties to provide an in-person voting option this fall, which could include drive-through or walk-up voting, in addition to the state's vote-by-mail system. Most of conservative Utah already votes by mail, in contrast with recent by-mail voting skepticism from Republican President Donald Trump.

"As we all know, everybody looks to the state of Utah when looking at mail-in voting," Republican Sen. Wayne Harper said Thursday. "We do it right. This goes through and ... recognizes what we do, but at the same time requires and allows for all people who want to vote in person the option to do that."

In April, the state legislature voted to run the June 30 primary election entirely by mail and temporarily do away with traditional polling places.

Republican Rep. Stephen Handy, who is co-sponsoring the legislation, said he hopes these additional voting options will give the electorate more confidence in the process.

The bill also requires Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox's office to conduct a public education campaign on voting options included in the legislation and encourage voting by mail. Handy said the campaign's funding will come from remaining CARES Act funds.

The bill would automatically repeal in January 2021 except for one section that classifies ballot harvesting, the practice of a person sending or dropping off ballots on another voter's behalf, as a class A misdemeanor.

Handy said there haven't been documented cases of ballot harvesting in Utah. But he hopes this bill will prevent it from happening in the future.

## Hazy days

### Smoke from wildfires blankets Bear River Valley

By JEFF DEMOSS  
Editor/staff writer

Last week was a busy one for local wild-land firefighters, and if history is any guide, this week will keep them on their toes as well.

The Box Elder County Fire Department, assisted by other local, state and federal agencies, spent much of last week battling a fire that was started accidentally on Tuesday, Aug. 18 by human activity in the Hansel Valley. Crews had it under control on Friday after it had consumed about 600 acres, County Fire Marshal Corey Barton said.

A mostly dry lightning storm that came through the area on Thursday night had firefighters working through the night.

"It had our guys totally overloaded," Barton said. "It was a rough night for everybody."

The largest fire from that storm started on Wildcat Hill near Kelton and burned about 500 acres. A smaller blaze in remote territory on Red Butte in the Grouse Creek Mountains was kept to about 10 acres, but a lack of roads in the area made access difficult.

Another fire near Blue Creek,

not far from the Pocatello Valley exit on I-84, was started by a downed power line. While it didn't grow to a large size, Barton said the fire destroyed a combine, two tractors and a couple of structures worth an estimated \$750,000.

Another small fire in the Dove Creek area burned an old, abandoned cabin, and another near Beaver Dam burned just "a couple of acres," Barton said.

The skies over the Bear River Valley have been noticeably smoky in recent days, obscuring views of the mountains and impacting air quality.

Although several wildfires were burning in western Box Elder County, a combination of lightning- and human-caused blazes, the vast majority of the smoke has been coming from an epic outbreak of lightning-caused fires last week in California.

Jon Meyer, a meteorologist with the Utah Climate Center at Utah State University, noted the current air quality is rivaling that of bad wintertime inversion days but added, "The good news is that typically, daytime heating will help mix out some of the smoke choking the morning air, so conditions do tend to improve through the day but then again get worse overnight."

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LEADER/JEFF DEMOSS

The setting sun shines through smoke from wildfires over the Bear River Valley Friday, Aug. 21. The smoky air in recent days has come from massive fires in California, but also from smaller fires in Box Elder County.

## Tremonton applies to be on national historic register

By JEFF DEMOSS  
Editor/staff writer

A large portion of Tremonton is well on its way to being officially declared a historic district.

A consultant hired by the city to survey and inventory homes and other buildings recently completed her work,

and found that approximately two-thirds of the buildings in the older part of town have attributes that qualify them for historic status.

Based on the findings, the Tremonton City Council earlier this month officially applied to be included on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the publicity, sense of place and

community pride it brings, the designation would also give owners of buildings within the district boundary the opportunity to receive tax credits to help pay for improvements to their properties.

Salt Lake City-based consultant Angie Abram of Storiagraph LLC found 470 buildings that had at least

some historic qualities within an area bordered roughly by 800 North, 300 East, 700 South and 400 West.

Abram said that for an area to be awarded historic status, around 60% or more of the buildings need to found as "contributing." City materials define a contributing building as "a structure that is 50 years or older and, due to

its architectural integrity or other factors, contributes to the district's historical significance or character."

Abram said 67% of the Tremonton buildings she surveyed qualify as contributing, placing the district well above the typical threshold for receiving the designation.

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