



Utah House District 48 Republican Primary: Setting The Record Straight

The Utah Taxpayers Association has been formulating and promoting conservative tax policy and fighting against higher taxes and out of control government spending for nearly 100 years. We don't often express opinions on particular candidates and very rarely get involved in primary or general election races. However, when we see outright falsehoods and lies about tax policy - we feel we need to set the record straight.

The Republican primary in Utah House District 48 has reached a point where we feel the truth needs to be told. In several instances, Representative Stratton's opponent has made claims about tax legislation Rep. Stratton voted for that are not true. His opponent has claimed that Stratton's vote in January against repealing the tax reform package (SB 2001) passed in the December 2019 special legislative session was a vote to hike taxes. *That is completely false.*

SB 2001 enacted a net tax cut to Utah taxpayers of over \$160 million annually. While many have questioned and in some circumstances, spread falsehoods about the restoration of the state sales tax on food and the sales tax on gas that were contained in the bill, the fact remains that SB 2001 also included major income tax cuts that more than offset those increases.

Those tax cuts within SB 2001 that Keven Stratton voted for and which he voted to keep include:

- A cut to the income tax rate from 4.95% to 4.66% (**\$348 million**)
- A restoration of the personal exemption for Utah families that was lost in the federal tax reform of 2017 (**\$132 million**)
- A large cut to the state income tax on social security benefits for mid to low income Utah seniors. For many, it would have eliminated their state income tax on social security entirely. (**\$18 million**)
- A grocery tax credit that *more than offset* the additional sales tax on groceries would pay for middle to low-income Utahns. (**\$135 million**)

Together, these tax cuts totaled more than \$630 million dollars, offsetting the new taxes in the bill. In summary, the bill offered \$639 million in tax cuts, asked for \$478 million in increases, which would have a net tax cut of over \$160 million annually. The various aspects of the bill continue to be the subject of much debate, but the fact remains - the bill was one of the largest net tax cuts to Utah taxpayers. The Utah Taxpayers Association, the Sutherland Institute and many other organizations all supported the bill and strongly urged legislators to vote for it.

Consequently, whether you supported the referendum effort to repeal the bill or not, claims that Representative Stratton voted to raise taxes by voting for SB 2001, and voting against its repeal, are not grounded in truth.

By excluding the major tax cuts that were enacted in the bill and focusing on the smaller increase in sales tax on food and gas, Rep. Stratton's opponent in this race is twisting the truth. By ignoring significant aspects and excluding key context, the facts are being manipulated in an unclear and unfair way that seeks to hide the truth.

Representative Stratton fully understood that signers of the petition to repeal SB 2001 had serious concerns with the additional sales tax on food, services, and fuel, in spite of the \$630 million in income tax cuts. As noted in his statements to the Salt Lake Tribune at the time his vote was to keep the tax cuts contained in the bill and eliminate all of the tax increases. "I had my pruners sharpened and my saw ready to go to work to prune and trim" Representative Stratton [said to the Tribune](#) at the time.

He [also stated to KSL](#), "Lawmakers should consider at least portions of the tax reform package again this session, such as increasing the state income tax dependent exemption and removing income taxes on Social Security benefits."

We firmly believe that Utah has been the best place to live in, do business in and raise a family because of the quality of elected officials that our primary and general election voters have raised up decade after decade. We always want voters to be as informed as possible with the facts when choosing those candidates and we felt it was time to set the record straight. We appreciate you taking the time to read this letter and sincerely appreciate your involvement in the primary election.

We welcome your questions and comments.

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