



Mayor Jenny Wilson
2019 State of the County speech
We Are Here for You
March 26, 2019
(As Prepared)

Good Morning. After campaigning for two years straight, I'm used to two-and five-minute speeches so we'll see how I do! I'll try not to keep you here all day!

Thank you, Council Chair Snelgrove; members of the County Council and elected officials, Deputy Mayors Erin Litvack, Darrin Casper and Catherine Kanter; department heads, county employees, citizens of Salt Lake County, media and family members who are here today.

After 10 years serving Salt Lake County as a Council Member, on January 29th, I had the honor of walking off the Council dais and raising my hand to serve as the county's chief executive. I am so proud to be here today, as your Mayor, delivering my first State of the County address.

My thanks go out to former Mayors, Peter Corroon, and now Representative, Ben McAdams. Thanks to the mayor's administration and staff for helping make my transition as seamless as possible. In fact, I've been in touch with Rep. McAdams several times and thanked him for building an amazing team, which I now see through a different lens.

And standing here on day 49 – I can assure you Salt Lake County has excellent systems, exemplary employees and is an incredibly efficient government. With our essential services, we are the backbone of our broader community by running elections, providing essential revenue tax and record services and running a jail. But we are also its heart -- serving the elderly, the young, the needy and providing stability and true joy to families.

And for all the important services we provide to our residents in Salt Lake County, it is our job to ensure we are watching out for your bottom line. I'm here to tell you that our County's financial health is excellent. Salt Lake County continues to enjoy a AAA bond rating, the highest rating possible, meaning we are recognized as an organization that can easily meet its financial commitments. And for you, the taxpayer, it means we can provide more services at a lower cost.

With all the great work and services provided, it would take hours to share all the remarkable recent successes here at Salt Lake County. I'm not going to do that, but I am going to share some amazing recent milestones made possible by committed and visionary employees and elected officials:

- The recent opening of the new Salt Lake Public Health Center which houses a primary care clinic. The clinic will provide services for low-income families, ensuring they have the quality health care and services they deserve.
- The passage of our “expungement bill” this legislative session, which provides automatic record clearance for low-level offenders who have paid their debts to society and remained crime free. When Governor Herbert signs this bill, we will lead the nation as only the 2nd state to implement this change. I'm told there was a standing ovation in the committee room when this bill was being considered. When does that happen????

- Our Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau, under the leadership of Sheriff Rosie Rivera, Utah's first female sheriff, just earned accreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. Salt Lake County is one of only two counties in the state to receive this honor. We are proud of the high level of healthcare provided in our jails. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office also transitioned its former Protective Services Bureau to the Public Safety Bureau, which provides a clearer description of the services provided to the public.

- Nothing is more enjoyable than watching emerging young musicians, dancers and artists at one of our performing arts centers or theatres that our county has invested in. Or attending world class performances at the opera, symphony or ballet, long supported by Salt Lake County. Or catching a Broadway show such as Wicked or Hamilton, not possible just a few years ago. We continue to expand the footprint of the performing arts and have begun construction on the new Mid-Valley Performing Arts Center in Taylorsville.

- Our libraries are not the hushed spaces of our childhood days. They are gathering places and community centers. We continue to expand resources and programs and are rolling out remodels, expansions or new libraries in Kearns, South Jordan, Holladay and South Salt Lake City with upcoming projects in West Valley and Herriman.

- Parks and Rec, in partnership with Draper City and the Canyons School District, will bring a 60-thousand square foot aquatic facility in Draper in 2020 and will serve Southeast Valley residents for generations to come.

- While hospitality for our own residents is important, our county also plays host to thousands of annual visitors. After years of

coordination, our SLC Convention Center Hotel is slated to break ground later this year and open in 2022. This private-public partnership helps strengthen our investment in the Salt Palace Convention Center and brings expanded tax revenue, conventions and visitors to Salt Lake County.

- Thanks to the work of our Office of New Americans and Refugees, in 2018, Salt Lake County became the **first** County in the **Nation** to achieve the status of “Certified Welcoming.” This means Salt Lake County is recognized as being an inclusive place for all and capitalizes on the power of immigrants to energize neighborhoods, the economy and culture. And it’s this kind of acceptance that is the foundation of our government structure here in Salt Lake County. And our own, Emma Houston, Director of our Office of Diversity and Inclusion, has been recognized for her efforts to advance diversity by being spotlighted in *Utah Business Magazine's* issue on, "Black Utah." Congratulations, Miss Emma! Emma, please stand.
- Our Division of Behavioral Health Services supports two new Medication-Assisted Treatment clinics in Murray and West Jordan and has increased treatment in downtown Salt Lake City. Medication-Assisted Treatment gives us the ability to treat individuals with lifelong opioid addictions, allowing them to manage cravings, maintain recovery and have a productive life.
- Our Internal Services and Human Resources teams at Salt Lake County continue to find efficiencies and quality services to help all of us as County employees do our jobs well in a safe and professional environment. We will soon welcome a new HR director.
- Our Salt Lake County Clerk’s Office continues to run timely, free and fair elections. In in 2018 we far exceeded expectations with

81.93% turnout. That is unheard of in a midterm election! An election well run by Sherrie Swensen and her team.

- With the return of seven Council Members and the addition of Ann Granato and Shireen Ghorbani, we continue to have a committed and energized County Council— one that I vow to work closely with and support – especially given that’s where I came from!
- This past legislative session, the Recorder’s Office, led by Rashelle Hobbs, supported a successful appropriation that provides significant new funding for its operations -- fast tracking future technological advancement for the office.
- Our Treasurer, Wayne Cushing, Auditor, Scott Tingley, Assessor, Kevin Jacobs and Surveyor Reid Demman, continue to provide the structural backbone of our county’s operational systems. Without their professionalism, no services in the county would be possible. These offices are on the front lines with our residents and I want them to know, I appreciate and recognize their work.
- And thanks to the commitment and hard work of our District Attorney, Sim Gill and his team, something I felt was unthinkable became a reality this legislative session. Individuals targeted for crimes due to their associations, the color of their skin, or because of who they love, will now receive justice due to the passage and signing of the HATE CRIMES bill!
- During my first few days on the job, I was forced to make a tough decision. In the interest of the safety of our employees and the broader community, during the huge snow storm on February 6th, we closed the county to non-essential staff. But that doesn’t mean the county stops working. In fact, those several feet of snow provided the opportunity to shine. Our Public Works employees, under the direction of Rick Graham and Scott Baird (please stand up Rick and Scott), were as always, out in force. 62 plows hit the

streets working around the clock to clear more than 700 miles of county roads, making it possible for residents, who depend on our services, to get the help they need. One of the best stories to come from that day was through our Aging and Adult Services under the direction of Paul Leggette (LEG-ET). *Preston Hutchings, Russ Stoddard, and Melinda Cudney, please stand*. These amazing county employees run our Meals on Wheels and Rides for Wellness programs. During the storm, Preston and his team embodied Salt Lake County's core value of excellence by going above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that our most vulnerable clients received services. They got to work early and worked tirelessly to prioritize safety standards, maintain positive attitudes among staff and ensure *all* 180 critical meals were delivered. I am so proud of them and all our employees. Of course, this is just one of many stories of who we are at Salt Lake County. And we all know there *is* more to be done.

In the months to come we will be making a conscious effort to better educate citizens on what the county does.

It's funny, as I travel to our various county communities, townships and cities, I've heard this:

- Hello, Mayor Wilson: I thought my Mayor was Dawn Ramsey. Or -- I thought my Mayor was Jeff Silvestrini.
- What does the county do anyway?
- And in my own Salt Lake City neighborhood, "When will you take care of my broken sidewalk? "

With 18 cities and five townships including the new municipality of Brighton, no wonder the confusion!

For this reason, and to continue to receive valuable feedback right from the source, I will be holding townhalls over the next few months at county facilities in five locations throughout the valley. Listening and engagement are core principles of my time in office.

We will soon launch a new app that allows citizens to easily connect to the county service they are looking for. And we will soon bring a plan to the County Council to launch a new website that will better serve us internally and provide better services and information to our residents.

As Recorder Rashelle Hobbs and I discussed just a few days ago – we are refocusing our communications to our citizens, so they know the services we are providing and know how to reach us.

Just two weeks ago, I rolled out a new structure for my portfolio. In order to drive the critical solutions needed, we need to implement systems that will serve change. This has been accomplished. I have streamlined our processes by the reduction of four deputy mayors to three.

And a new area of focus, regional operations, will address our expanded regional role and consolidate planning, transportation, housing, economic development and environmental services under one service line.

We need to assure growth is our friend, not our enemy. As explosive growth threatens quality of life, it is our duty as a regional government to drive regional solutions through planning, resource management and transportation solutions. Southwest Valley residents – I have heard you!

On that note, our regional development team has begun an extensive existing conditions study to understand the growth on the west side of valley and we will soon begin a public engagement process for a general plan for the west bench.

I'm encouraging our Office of Regional Development to focus on economic growth and incentives that don't just reward corporations for placing headquarters here but help economic growth within our various communities and give more opportunities to our residents from the

bottom up, rather than the top down. Every zip code in our county deserves prosperity.

And we need to guarantee that new projects – like the prison site development, Olympia Hills and the inland port, provide a net benefit to our community and address potential negative impacts. That means good planning and addressing environmental, resource and transportation concerns.

Under my administration there will be an invigorated focus on housing. The next generation is being priced out of our community. We need to make sure that housing options exist that are affordable to make sure everyone has the housing they need and the neighborhoods they want. While we need to do much more, I'm proud that Salt Lake County helped provide financial assistance for the development of six new affordable housing projects generating 619 new rental units.

Traffic problems and infrastructure needs aren't relegated to one part of the county. We must **WORK** to address all these issues in **ALL AREAS** of Salt Lake County. We need to deliver transportation options that make it easier to visit grandma or get to work on time.

The poor air quality in our valley continues to be unacceptable. No matter the area of this county I've visited, everyone is calling for cleaner air, especially during our inversion season. The place that has the greatest snow on Earth needs to continue being known for our great snow in the winter, not our dirty air. This, and other key environmental concerns have led me to double-down on this challenge through the creation of an Office of Environmental Services.

One of the greatest assets in our county are our beautiful canyons. They are loved. We have a job to do to make sure they are not over-loved and underfunded so that our kids and their kids will be able to enjoy them as we have.

Our emergency services and public safety functions will receive additional attention during my tenure in office. A safe community is the building block for our economy and quality of life, and we must continue to invest in these areas as we have in years past.

Part of my organizational reform includes lining up services to ensure a continuum of care for our residents in one efficient system.

Medicaid expansion. LONG OVERDUE, will put the county in the driver's seat to assure that health care is available and affordable to all our residents. Families should not have to forgo food or needed health procedures because they can't pay for it.

Homelessness – a priority of previous Mayor McAdams – will continue to receive my attention. There will be challenges as we roll out new homeless service centers and continue to address needs among our homeless population. Yet we have come a long way and our county will continue to be a partner in community driven solutions.

And efforts I helped launch along with Council Member Steve Deby to address the opioid crisis will continue.

And we will stay committed to those suffering from mental health concerns and addiction, so they have an effective, safe and secure place to be cared for -- before it's too late. And that EVERY child has a pathway to success no matter where in the valley they live, the color of their skin or where on the socio-economic spectrum their family lies.

And as a woman in government – I will continue to fight for equal pay and strong working conditions for our employees and the advancement of women in all sectors of society. Additionally, neither our community, nor our county nor our nation, have done enough to battle the very deep societal challenge of sexual and domestic violence. These will be a priority of my days in this office!

While this is just the beginning for me as your Mayor and I'm so excited to work on new initiatives and efforts, I recognize our elected leaders and our employees have been providing second to none services for years. I'm excited to continue to work with them in my new role and to do more and to meet future needs. Salt Lake County will continue to enrich our residents' lives. Perhaps I can sum it all up in these ten words:

WE ARE SALT LAKE COUNTY...WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!