

# OPINION

**The Salt Lake Tribune, Inc.**  
In its 134th year of keeping Utahns informed, now as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

## Board of Directors

Tessa Arneson  
Randy Dryer  
Fred Eglin  
Jorge Fierro  
Sarah George  
Tom Love, Chair  
Ashish Patel  
Dave Patel  
James E. Shelly

**Executive Editor**  
Lauren Gustus

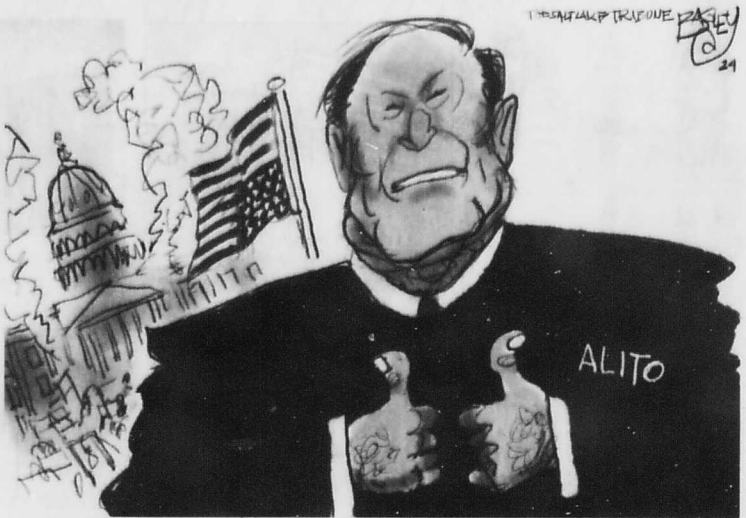
**Chief Revenue Officer**  
Chris Stegman

**Editorial Board**  
Pat Bagley  
Aldra Gorder  
Lauren Gustus  
Tom Love, Chair  
Dave Patel  
George Pyle  
James E. Shelly

**Volunteer Editor**  
Sara Weber

**Past publishers**  
John F. Fitzpatrick  
(1924-1960)  
John W. Gulliver  
(1960-1983)  
Jerry O'Brien  
(1983-1994)  
Dominic Welch  
(1994-2002)  
William Dean Singleton  
(2002-2013)  
Tony Orme  
(2013-2016)  
Paul Hunsman  
(2016-2020)

## BAGLEY'S VIEW » "RUN IT UP THE POLE"



## Utah's congressional delegation should back the downwinders

*"Let us strive on to finish the work we are in to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."*

— Abraham Lincoln,  
Second Inaugural Address

The United States is good at paying for war — current annual Department of Defense budget, \$841.4 billion — but not so good at paying to aid those who have been harmed by it.

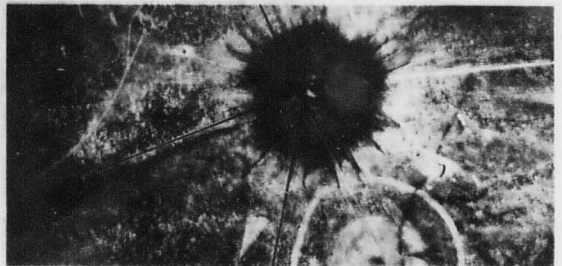
Members of Congress who vote against any weapons program risk getting labeled as unpatriotic.

But propose compensation for service members who were sickened by Agent Orange in Vietnam, or y burn pits in Iraq, or for first responders who became ill and died from contaminated air at the site of the World Trade Center, and some can only complain about the cost.

Witness that the entire Utah congressional delegation is opposed to the newest version of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act.

Utah Sens. Mitt Romney and Mike Lee shamefully voted against the bipartisan bill that passed the Senate, 69-30, March 7. They said the estimated \$50 billion over the six-year life of the bill was too much.

Utahns should contact their representatives — Blake Moore, Celeste Maloy, John Curtis and Burgess Owens — and demand that they support the new



A July 16, 1945, photo shows an aerial view after the first atomic explosion at Trinity Test Site, N.M.

RECA. The fact that none of them now backs it is appalling.

RECA first became law in 1990, Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch leading the way. It provided compensation for people in Utah and a few other states suffering from the extraordinary number of cancer cases linked to being downwind of open-air nuclear weapons testing, from 1945's Trinity test through the 1960s.

The many thousands of people affected have become known as the downwinders. They are casualties of war, the Cold War, just as much as are those who were maimed or killed in combat.

They have borne the battle. Except they didn't volunteer,

were in uniform, and, like the rest of us, were lied to by their own government about how dangerous those tests really were.

The original RECA only applied to those living in a small number of counties, vastly underestimating the continent-wide spread of radioactivity, and only to those suffering from specific ailments. It also didn't include anyone in other parts of the country exposed to radiation from mining, refining and storage of nuclear materials.

The proposed extension of the law would remedy those shortcomings and raise the per-person benefit from \$50,000 to \$100,000. Which, for a case of terminal cancer, ain't much.

It's the least we can do. But Lee and Maloy, among others, don't even want to do that.

They only want to extend the existing, insufficient, RECA, which expires next month, for two more years. It is as if some in Congress want to keep stalling until all those in need of aid have died.

You might think a bill to help Americans who were harmed by their own government — the dreaded Deep State — would be right in Mike Lee's wheelhouse.

But Lee also opposed extending aid for the Ground Zero first responders. Lee and Romney both opposed legislation to help veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars suffering from the effects of toxic burn pits, counting pennies against human lives.

PHOTO BY AP/WIDEWORLD

## OUR VIEW

By the Tribune  
Editorial Board

## UTAH HOMELESS SERVICES BOARD

*Temporary shelter isn't enough. To truly help the chronically homeless, we must focus on trauma.*

Utahns take pride in our exceptionally high quality of life — a testament to the strength of our local communities. These communities form the bedrock of our success, providing safe and supportive environments. However, as Utah attracts new investments and sustained growth, we are faced with evolving challenges that jeopardize our state's livability. Among these is the familiar issue of homelessness.

Homelessness isn't limited to the Wasatch Front. During Utah's 2023 point-in-time count, 3,687 individuals experienced homelessness from Logan to St. George when counted on a single night in January. Furthermore, according to the Utah Homeless Management Information System, nearly 30,000 individuals accessed some form of homeless services in 2023. These individuals are all familiar faces; they are our neighbors, our friends and our family.



RANDY SHUMWAY



WAYNE NIEDERHAUSER



ERIN J. MENDENHALL



SPENCER P. ECCLES

Much like the rest of the nation, the challenges of homelessness in Utah extend beyond mere economic factors. While employment and affordable housing are crucial, they alone are not enough to solve the issue. This is, in part, because we must recognize and address the different types of homelessness affecting our communities — differentiation is vital for creating solutions that uplift those in need and provide them with the tools to achieve human dignity.

The Utah Homeless Services Board, created by HB298 in the 2024 General Legislative Session, is intended to be a nimble response to a rapidly evolving crisis. This week we met for the first time to begin the next chapter in Utah's efforts to end homelessness. As members of the Board's executive committee, we are eager to share our vision.

PHOTO BY AP/WIDEWORLD