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- Home
- News
- Sports
- Features
- Entertainment
- Business
- Opinion
- Close-Up
- Obituaries
- Classifieds
- More Sites
- Help Desk

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- Meth addicts wanted for research study
- DA tries to boost case against cop who ran red light, killed motorist
- Sandy police justified in fatal shooting, says DA
- Matheson touts superbug legislation
- Park City pushes developer for more affordable housing
- New campaign targets child porn
- Gov. gets bill revoking licenses of teachers who have sex with students
- South Salt Lake councilman under fire
- Another congressional subpoena for Crandall Canyon Mine co-owner Murray
- Lawmakers crush ID bill
- S. Jordan police identify 4-year-old victim of alleged red light-runner
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Lawmakers say no to cash for 'anti-American' International Baccalaureate program

By Lisa Schencker
The Salt Lake Tribune

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Lawmakers decided against helping Utah schools pay for International Baccalaureate (IB) programs after one legislator called IB's philosophy "anti-American" on Thursday.

"I'm not opposed to understanding the world," Sen. Margaret Dayton, R-Orem, told members of the Senate Education Committee. "I'm opposed to the anti-American philosophy that's somehow woven into all the classes as they promote the U.N. agenda."

HB266 proposes allocating \$300,000 to help seven Utah high schools pay for IB programs. IB students can earn college credit by taking rigorous courses that expose them to world perspectives. More than 800 U.S. schools offer IB.

Though the House passed the bill unanimously earlier this month, the Senate committee shot it down on a 3-3 vote. When a bill vote is tied in committee, the bill fails.

Dayton's characterization of the program frustrated IB proponents.

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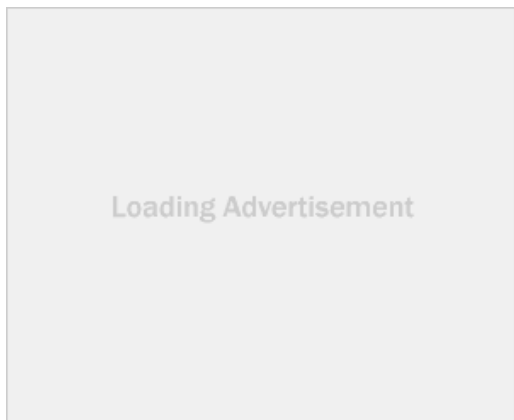
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- **Huntsman says Buttars' remarks offended him**
- **Bill would increase sex-offender monitoring**
- **Paul Rolly: Buttars gets mad when friends lose**
- **Bill would give St. George communal solar panels**
- **Lawmakers say no to cash for 'anti-American' International Baccalaureate program**
- **Lawmakers look to equalize burden**
- **Income fades, but schools still a priority**
- **Bowman likely will miss rest of session**
- **Guv backs down on CHIP**
- **Embattled therapist agrees to probation**
- **'Significant' storm to push out the pollution**
- **Schools wait for word on beef**
- **For Utah, seismic 'big one' is not if, but when**
- **After the quake: Lives spared -- homes and businesses are not**
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"It's the most preposterous thing," said Rep. Carol Spackman Moss, D-Holladay, who sponsored the bill. "I was stunned." Skyline High School IB coordinator Ruth Dallas and Rebecca Odoardi, director of Davis School District gifted programs, said IB is definitely not anti-American.

"I have seen nothing in any of these courses to indicate there would be any anti-American sentiment," Odoardi said. "In fact, quite the opposite is true."

Sen. Patricia Jones, D-Salt Lake City, the Senate sponsor of the bill, said IB emphasizes the kind of world-class education legislators have been "championing up here for a long time."

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Paul Campbell, head of outreach for IB North America, said he's heard allegations about IB being anti-American before. He said, however, IB is neither anti-American nor connected to the U.N.

"We would never have survived 40 years if we had a hidden agenda or ideology that we were trying to push on schools," Campbell said. "Ninety percent of IB schools in the U.S. are public schools that have to answer to their local school board and communities and that's exactly the way we feel it should be."

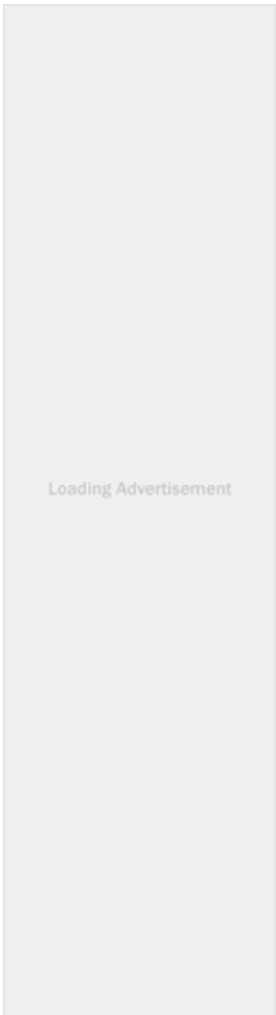
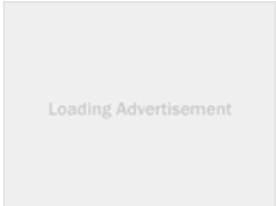
Clearfield High School IB coordinator Rebecca Van Dyke said the program gives students the chance to compete on an international level. Teachers are expected to integrate other cultures into their lessons and educators from around the world grade tests and projects. Van Dyke, for example, is required to teach three works in translation in her English class each year. In the past, she has taught books such as "The Metamorphosis," "Crime and Punishment" and "The Stranger."

"If there is any emphasis on this program in internationalism, it is saying we're all human beings," Van Dyke said. "We need to respect each other as human beings."

The PTA and Sen. Ross Romero, D-Salt Lake City, also spoke in support of the bill. But ultimately, Dayton, Sen. Howard Stephenson, R-Draper, and Sen. Darin Peterson, R-Nephi, voted against it. Stephenson said only, "I'm not yet comfortable with this based on some of the input I've received."

What is International Baccalaureate?

* IB, or International Baccalaureate, is a diploma program offered at seven Utah high schools. Launched in Switzerland in 1968, the International Baccalaureate was intended to create a curriculum and diploma recognized worldwide. A growing number of schools are working toward approval from the international organization to offer the program.



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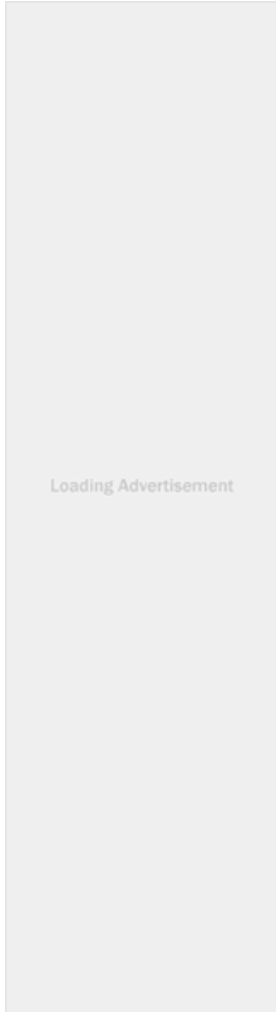
* Earning an IB diploma means a student completed two years of IB courses, which have a more international focus and are taught by IB-trained teachers. Courses offered include foreign language, theory of knowledge, social studies, science, math and other subjects.

* Students must demonstrate their mastery of subjects through essay-based exams and take greater responsibility, teachers say, through independent projects. A 4,000-word essay is one of the culminating assignments. Students must also complete community service.

HB266

Proposed giving \$300,000 to seven Utah high schools to help pay for International Baccalaureate programs.

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