

Analyst: Funds Are Few for Handicapped

Parents Told to Lobby For Available Aid

By Carol Sisco
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The Great Salt Lake is "\$55 million high and rising."

Public education has said it needs \$60 million in new revenue for fiscal 1988.

Federal funds will be cut drastically whether Gramm-Rudman takes effect or not.

And Utah keeps losing industries that pay \$15 to \$20 per hour while gaining low-paying service jobs.

Because all those factors mean state dollars will be tight, parents of handicapped children must become expert lobbyists if they want more state dollars, a state fiscal analyst said Saturday.

Speaking at a conference for parents of handicapped children, J. Winslow offered two pieces of advice:

"When the governor gets so sick of hearing from you that he makes handicapped services a priority, you're halfway there," Mr. Winslow said. "When you convince legislators that the most important thing they can do is fund handicapped services, you will be there."

The environment will be extremely competitive, he warned, because every dollar that goes to the handicapped is lost to the University of Utah, to higher education in general, to public education, to natural resources and other state programs.

"Without a great deal of difficulty, I think you could get Chase Peterson to come down here and explain why the needs of higher education are infinitely more important than yours," Mr. Winslow said.

All budget appropriations depend on convincing legislators that "your

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need is more just and more essential than anyone else's," he added.

While the handicapped got \$1,755,000 in new state dollars for next year, Mr. Winslow said the competition will be even harder the following year.

If Congress fails to enact a budget that meets necessary deficit reductions, then the Gramm-Rudman Act will take effect instead, he said. A state law approved by legislators last session also specifies that if federal funds are reduced programs will be reduced proportionately unless the Legislature acts otherwise.

"There will be less federal funds when we deal with the 1988 budget," the analyst promised. "And we will be taking a look at fiscal '87 again in January.

If Gramm-Rudman takes effect, the Department of Social Services, which includes the Division of Services to the Handicapped, will lose \$7 million to \$9 million. "Loose" estimates indicate that public education will lose \$14 million and higher education will lose \$15 million.

As the state begins its fourth-quarter revenue projections, Mr. Winslow said, there is no reason to believe that they will be higher than initially anticipated.

The state is experiencing a reduction in large payroll industries that pay \$15 to \$20 an hour, he said. They're replaced by low-paying service jobs, which means fewer taxes paid per worker. With the price of oil down, Utah is losing some money there, too.

With the Great Salt Lake already above dangerous levels and the snow-pack still waiting to melt, Mr. Winslow said flood money that was used for other purposes must be replaced.

"Utah will have to decide in the next two years what it will choose not to do," Mr. Winslow noted. "The fiscal reality is we cannot continue to do business as we've done it in the past. The resources no longer exist."

Despite the budget shortcomings, Mr. Winslow said, advocates for the handicapped can still be successful if they lobby hard enough.

Paraphrasing "Julius Caesar" by Shakespeare, Mr. Winslow said: "When it comes to the political process, if we are not able to obtain what is necessary the fault dear Brutus lies not in our stars but in ourselves."