

Vaccine passport ban appears to be contagious in Utah House

A bill to block private businesses from requiring proof of vaccination returns after dying on the final day of the legislative session last year.



(Chris Samuels | The Salt Lake Tribune) The Utah Capitol building Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2023.

By Bryan Schott | Jan. 25, 2023, 5:44 a.m. | Updated: 9:16 a.m.

🗨 Comment

Sequels are seldom as good as the original. That was evidenced Tuesday afternoon during a Utah House committee hearing on a bill to ban businesses

from requiring so-called vaccine passports.

Last year, Rep. Walt Brooks' [vaccine passport ban bill](#) drew hundreds of [sign-carrying supporters](#) to Capitol Hill, where they packed committee hearing rooms to express fury against any number of real or imagined restrictions from the pandemic. A member of the public was [hailed out of a Senate Committee room in handcuffs](#) during a rowdy hearing on the legislation.

What a difference a year makes.

On Tuesday, a subdued crowd of about 60 almost, but not entirely, filled the room during the House Business and Labor Committee hearing for [House Bill 131](#). Brooks is making another run at the bill [after last year's version, HB60](#), died in the Utah Senate without a vote on the final night of the session.

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Brooks' bill again seeks to bar private businesses from requiring proof of vaccination for customers and employees. Also like last year, the proposal also would block most government entities from requiring vaccinations. There are some exceptions for healthcare facilities and higher education in the state that could lose federal funding for dropping vaccine requirements.

The furor over the COVID vaccine has mostly burned itself out, but the St. George Republican insists his proposal will prevent any government overreach in the future.

“Should governments be telling businesses what to do? This is about the un-American idea of requiring people to show their papers to go to a public place.

That's something we have never done in this country, and we need to make it a point that we never cross that line," Brooks said.

The most high-profile example was the [Utah Jazz requiring proof of vaccination for fans](#) attending games at the beginning of the 2021-22 season. That requirement was short-lived, as the [team dropped it a few months later](#).

Brooks' bill highlights how Utah Republicans have morphed their political philosophy in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Rep. Calvin Musselman, R-West Haven, found himself troubled by Brooks' bill.

"When I went to California to watch the Rose Bowl, I had to use this stupid vaccination card to get in. I hate (vaccine) passports, but when we dictate to a business that they cannot refuse service to certain individuals, that makes me nervous," Musselman said.

Despite that hesitance, Musselman joined with nine other Republicans on the committee in voting to send the bill to the whole House, where it's likely to pass. Thirty-two co-sponsors have signed on to the legislation, including House Speaker Brad Wilson and every member of the majority leadership.



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