



STATE OF UTAH

SPENCER J. COX
GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
84114-2220

DEIDRE M. HENDERSON
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Dear Leader Schumer,

A few short months ago, Utah's Chief Technology Officer [asked a popular chatbot](#) "Who are some of the key leaders in the state of Utah Legislature?"

The response was predictable: the bot regurgitated outdated information and in one case generated an entirely fictitious individual. It is a bot that today is used in marketing and campaign efforts across the country.

Utah is just beginning to understand the effects of what is generally defined as artificial intelligence (AI). While the State's view of AI is neither utopian nor dystopian, we as a State have always valued the other A&I – Adaptation and Innovation. We see AI no differently, and as a State, we are already thinking through how to adapt and innovate as a function of this new technological landscape.

In September for example, the Cox/Henderson administration implemented a new generative AI policy, acknowledging that it will change over time as new information and technologies emerge and new risks are identified. Working with state lawmakers, we are choosing a thoughtful and deliberate approach to the use of AI in state government. While not restricting state employees from using such tools, we are implementing responsible guidelines. For example, not allowing sensitive or non-public information to be used, implementing training by our Department of Technology Services, and requiring state employees and agencies to fully attribute AI-generated materials.

Election officials are also working to ensure we understand what new risks are present within the AI landscape. We continue to work with cybersecurity experts at both the state and federal level to ensure the security of our election systems, but we cannot ensure free and fair elections without one critical element that is in perilously short supply: public trust.

[Recent reports](#) show public trust near an all-time low. If we give air to false election fraud claims, we participate in the erosion of public confidence in our institutions of democracy. We cannot build trust in something by actively undermining it. As a state election official, there is nothing more frustrating than hearing other elected officials cast doubt on our election systems and processes without proper evidence of malfeasance. Elections, I might add, in which those same officials were voted into office.

Utah has already determined that [social media harms mental health](#) and undermines public confidence in institutions. But when it is supercharged with AI, the flood of generated mis-, dis-, and malinformation can confuse voters and fuel mistrust in elections. As officials in every state continually adapt to changing threats to our election systems, it is important to help state and federal lawmakers, as well as the public, understand the common procedures that are used to protect our vital assets of democracy, such as never connecting voting equipment to the internet and conducting public audits before and after elections to verify the integrity of voting equipment as well as the accuracy of the results.

A sustained campaign by the state of Utah in 2022 resulted in a nearly 10 percent increase in those who trust their elections process. The effort included a vigorous ad campaign as well as county clerks across the state opening their offices for anyone who wanted to come see how the process actually works.

Those continued efforts are being bolstered by a massive investment in AI research and education efforts across the state. The state has launched executive and legislative working groups to address concerns. And less than two weeks ago, University of Utah President Taylor Randall announced a \$100 million investment in the newly created [Responsible AI Initiative](#) that will advance AI and its applications in ways that achieve societal good while also protecting privacy, civil rights and liberties, and promoting principles of accountability, transparency and equity. This effort is being led by Dr. Mike Kirby and Dr. Manish Parashar, both professors at the university.

It should be noted that the University has a political science course that specifically addresses elections and AI. Educating young adults as they move into the public sphere feeds into the trust-building effort that will need to be continuously tended.

AI has rapidly developed into the transformational technology of our time, with the potential to impact every aspect of our lives, both positively (for example, developing new medicines and cures) and negatively (propagating bias and inequities). AI can impact elections in the same way – on the positive end, it can improve our understanding of issues and of the electorate and its needs and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the election process. Elections are but a particular case of a broader conversation about how AI will impact the principles of our democratic republic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deidre M. Henderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deidre M. Henderson
Lieutenant Governor
State of Utah