

## KUER Week 7: Pass Bills, Not Germs

<https://www.kuer.org/podcast/45-days/2021-03-05/week-7-pass-bills-not-germs>

There's been one common thread throughout the 2021 legislative session — COVID-19. It's impacted everything from the bills passed to the way people interact at the Capitol. So this week, we're talking with lawmakers, lobbyists and journalists about what it's been like to legislate under these circumstances. Hosts Sonja Hutson and Emily Means will touch on what has been the hardest, like lawmakers falling ill or finding time and space to hold meetings safely. They'll also talk about what's been helpful, like the addition of virtual public comments. And stay tuned for next week when we recap the session, including what happened during the whirlwind that is the final hours before Sine Die.

### Guests:

Ben Winslow, Reporter, Fox 13

Sen. Todd Weiler, R-Woods Cross

Marina Lowe, Legislative and Policy Council, American Civil Liberties Union of Utah

### Interview Highlights — What's The Biggest Difference This Year?

"It just feels weird, it really does. Because you do worry about your health — I worry about getting it. I worry about giving it. And some people obviously are feeling a lot more comfortable with how things are working and then others are not. You even see that in how lawmakers behave on the floor. You know, some have got the plexiglas barrier up and they've got their mask on all the time. Others take it off to speak. It's kind of a microcosm of the rest of society at large and how everybody feels about COVID."

— Ben Winslow

"You want to be able to lean over to the guy next to you and say, 'will you support this?' I think people understand, just like you could do Christmas on Zoom, it's not the same as doing Christmas family dinner. There's similar aspects up here. It's easier to collaborate, you know? It's just fun. We actually like each other, even Republicans or Democrats. We're kind of like a big family. If you're used to working in an office and there's a rumor going around, if you're at home you might be in the meeting, but you're not hearing [that] rumor unless somebody talks to you. So, I think there's a little bit of the fear of missing out."

— Sen. Todd Weiler

"I'm just grateful that I've been around for a long time and have preexisting relationships and connections to fall back upon this year. It's not 100% ... there are new lawmakers who I don't know that well. There's just so much [that's] intangible. So much of lobbying is about relationships, and so trying to make relationships when your only method of doing so is across the computer screen is really, really tough. The big picture for me, I guess, is that I'm glad this is temporary."

— Marina Lowe