

The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard

We are in the process of watching an important change to our state and the way the world sees us.

On January 30, the Utah State Senate passed Senate Bill 31 which changes the flag of the state, although the traditional one will still be used for ceremonial purposes. It is now on to the House of Representatives with Rep. Mike Schultz for their vote. Then it will appear's on Governor Cox's desk for his approving signature. All this before March 3.

My first question was "why"? For over a century the flag we are used to has represented our great state. Why change it now? I quite like the old one.

Looking back at the history of our flag, we find that it was created in 1903 by the Daughters of the American Revolution to be first flown at the St. Louis World Fair. It contains the Great Seal of Utah in the center of a blue background.

An early version was flown in 1911 with white thread on a blue background and was known as the governor's flag.

The flag gained more color a year later and was presented to the battleship, the U.S.S. Utah. That flag was probably sunk in 1942 at Pearl Harbor when the battleship went down.

In 1922 the flag was made with a blue background instead of a white one but it didn't include the year 1847 as was part of the original design.

For nearly 90 years, the flag included the year 1847 but it was placed in the wrong spot on the flag, according to the original designers. This was discovered by historians in the 1980's but was not voted on to be corrected until 2011.

For the last 11 years we have been flying the corrected version.

The proposed new flag has a completely different look to it – and is described as being more modern.

Looking at the flag, one sees the top in blue representing the state's lakes and wide-open skies. Blue also stands for knowledge, optimism, freedom and tradition.

Next are five tall white mountain peaks, representing the landscapes we enjoy and the rugged mountains that have been home to our ancestors.

The bottom third is red, representing the red rock canyons so many travel here to enjoy.

The star tells of the ideal of hope with its eight-points representing the state's eight sovereign Tribal Nations.

The beehive has long been a symbol of Utah's industry and hard work. The gold hexagon around it stands for strength and unity. The overall look of red, white and blue shows our loyalty to our great country.

Interest in the idea of a new flag spread quickly to all 29 counties with 5703 possible designs, 2500 of these being from students, and over 44,000 comments from Utah citizens.

The most prominent explanation for the new flag is that Utahns want a flag that is distinctive, easily visible and identifiable to our state. Examples are given of the lone star of the Texas flag and the Big Dipper constellation on Alaska's.

A large number of states use their state seal so it takes some close examining at a group of flags to see which one belongs to Utah.

By the time this is in print, the final decision will likely be made. It is a good thing I am not a legislator. I am still sitting on the fence on this one.

