

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment

On January First, Twenty Ten, Utah's Salt Lake County Sheriff Office was changed to the Unified Police Department of Greater Salt Lake and is now a concept that other communities in the nation are considering. What is the change you ask? The Salt Lake U.P.D., as I shall refer to it, covers an area of ten communities. It is run by a board of directors consisting of eight elected officials, plus the Sheriff, who is also the CEO. The Sheriff still has his elected duties of managing the Salt Lake County Jail and providing security for the county's district courts. He gave up control of all financial and policy decisions. If he does not like a board decision, he can veto which can be overturned by a two thirds vote of the board. Three members of this board of directors are county supervisors but the Salt Lake County Board of Supervisors has no direct control of the Salt Lake U.P.D. which also has been given TAXING AUTHORITY. The Executive management team consists of the Sheriff (also C.E.O.), a Chief Finance Officer, a Human Resource Director and a Chief Legal Counsel. The eight communities are divided into six precincts with each precinct headed by a precinct commander who is chosen by each respective community. Proponents say that a Unified Police Department can pool resources and provide services, something that a single small community cannot do. Upon transition, the same personnel were retained. I don't know how well the new concept has been working since its inception but it does leave me with an uncomfortable feeling. Without a doubt, the Salt Lake County Sheriff has been stripped of some of his powers. If a sheriff can be elected (hired) and removed (fired) by the voter, what happens if this Board of Directors is unhappy with the Sheriff's performance? I don't see where they have the power to remove him without the approval of the voter. The County Sheriff has been the backbone of our law enforcement since we became a nation and receives his power directly from the county voter. Another problem I see is the ^{U P D}~~C.E.O.~~ Board of Directors being given the ability of taxation. Do they also have the ability to levee fees, such as charging a citizen for a service call? I also read where the Salt Lake U.P.D. has a citizen's advisory board. At least it is not a review board. Another upsetting situation that I have been hearing about is that some federal politicians are in favor of privatizing police services. Can you imagine your police department as a private security organization loyal only to a signed contract? On a good note: In January, Salt Lake County Sheriff Winder, the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office and the Unified Police Department went on record that they support the Second Amendment and will defend the rights of its citizens.

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