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Utah corrects 88-year-old mistake on state flag

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Utah almost has a new state flag. Actually, it is the old state flag approved back in 1913 — but a mistake by a flagmaker in 1922 altered it into the design that most people have seen and known for decades.

“We’re fixing an 88-year-old mistake,” said Rep. Julie Fisher, R-Fruit Heights, who speeded HCR2 through both houses of the Legislature Wednesday. Then, because the bill is not in the official form required for signing, Gov. Gary Herbert did a ceremonial signing as scores of elementary school children watched the process as a civics lesson.

Fisher said that back in 1922, Dolly McMonegal made a finely embroidered copy of the flag for the state at a time when most flags were handmade. But McMonegal either made the shield on it too small or the word “Utah” within it too big — leaving no room in the shield for “1847” — the year when the Mormon pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley.

So she put the “1847” beneath the shield, even though the law required it to be in the shield, Fisher said. Facsimiles became popular, and no one ever corrected the mistake.

The resolution passed on Thursday corrects that mistake, and also calls for returning to the original 1913 color scheme, which has a white background for the flag’s shield instead of blue.

Fisher brought children from Burton Elementary in Kaysville to watch her resolution pass. They each held and waved miniatures of the new/old flag as they surrounded Herbert as he held a ceremonial signing of the resolution.

“We’ll have the flag that was originally designed to be our state flag,” Herbert told the children.

The resolution allows continued use of any old-design flags still in use but calls for only the new/old design to be sold from this point.



The “1847” is placed beneath the shield on the Utah state flag even though by law it is required to be inside the shield. Rep. Julie Fisher wants to rectify the mistake.

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