



West

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Oregon State Visit

On February 12 – 14, Edgar Ruiz, Director of CSG West, along with staff member Erica Miller, traveled to Salem, Oregon for a visit with state legislators and staff. The visit provided an opportunity for in-person meetings with many of the legislative leaders, as well as CSG West committee members and Western Legislative Academy (WLA) alumni. As an added bonus, the visit included the opportunity to celebrate the state's birthday on Wednesday, February 14.

Leading up to the start of the 2018 legislative session, a special election was held on January 23, which approved Oregon Measure 101 allowing a package of tax and fee increases on hospitals and health insurance carriers to remain intact from the 2017 legislative session. Approval of the measure provided funding for expanded Medicaid benefits at the state level.

Preparing for a 35-day legislative session, activity levels in the Capitol were elevated in anticipation of a packed agenda. While many substantive bills were discussed this session, those listed below were the topic of conversation during our brief visit.

Continuing the conversation on healthcare access, legislation ([HJR 203](#)) was introduced with the intent of amending the state constitution to establish access to healthcare as a state obligation. The bill passed in the House, but it was unable to make its way through the Senate.

Also, the Prescription Drug Price Transparency Act ([HB 4005](#)) fostered much conversation. The bill requires manufacturers to provide annual reporting on the prices of prescription drugs, as well as the costs related to their marketing and development. Health insurers will also be required to provide reporting on prescription drug prices and their impact on premiums. Manufacturers and insurers must report this information to the state's Department of Consumer and Business Services which will be authorized to impose civil penalties on companies failing to comply with the reporting requirements. Both the House and the Senate passed this measure and is now awaiting consideration by Governor Kate Brown.

Similar to several other states, the Oregon Legislature reviewed ways to align state tax requirements with the new federal tax regulations adopted last December to mitigate the financial impacts on taxpayers, as well as the state's revenue. After passing votes in both the Senate and the House, [Senate Bill 1528](#) now heads to the Governor. One key component of this bill prevents the state from copying the federal tax break into state law for "pass through" businesses. This portion of the bill was included to balance a state measure passed in 2013 designed to provide a similar tax break. Another element of the bill provides a tax credit option to assist residents working around the new \$10K limit on state tax deductions for federal returns. Because the federal tax provisions do



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not cap charitable deductions, this legislation will allow for the auctioning of tax credits to benefit the Opportunity Grant Fund which provides scholarships for in-state college attendance.

In addition to these measures, legislators tackled a range of topics including the opioid epidemic, Public Employee Retirement System (PERS), net neutrality, public school funding, greenhouse gas emissions, healthcare as a constitutional right, and gun violence. While not all were able to garner the necessary votes, measures addressing affordable housing, net neutrality and gun safety head to the Governor for her consideration. The legislative session ended early, only 28-days into a scheduled 35-day session.

