

Utah State Visit

The Utah legislature commenced its 64th session on February 28 and will conclude on March 14. CSG West Director, Edgar Ruiz, and accompanying staff visited the Capitol in Salt Lake City on February 11 and 12 to meet with Senate and House leadership, members of all four caucuses, and newly elected members. During the visit, a breakfast was hosted for alumni of the Western Legislative Academy (WLA) that provided an opportunity to highlight CSG West programs in 2019.

All 75 House seats were up for election in 2018 which resulted in 19 new Representatives. In the Senate, 15 out of 29 seats were up for election resulting in the addition of 7 new senators. Additionally, three representatives moved to the Senate - Senators Dan McCay, Keith Grover, and Scott Sandall. In the House, women gained an increase in the number of seats, moving from 15 to 20 women legislators. In the Senate, there was no change to the number of women legislators, maintaining the total at six.

Utah has a short 45-day session with over 1,300 bills submitted for review, of which 105 have passed as of February 20. Some of the more prominent issues that carried over from last year's elections include Medicaid expansion and Medical Cannabis.

In 2018, a voter- approved ballot initiative, [Proposition 3](#) (Utah Decides Healthcare Act), to expand Medicaid coverage to low income individuals under the age of 65 was passed by 55 percent of voters. Proposition 3 would have allowed Utahns earning up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level to enroll in Medicaid starting April 1 of this year. The initiative also increased sales tax from 4.70 to 4.85 to finance the state's portion for expansion with the federal government paying 90 percent of the state's Medicaid costs. The voter approved Medicaid expansion was replaced with [SB96](#), which will commence a partial expansion beginning April 1st. The bill caps enrollment at 100 percent of the federal poverty level for those under the age of 65, which will require the remaining ineligible population to purchase health care plans through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) exchanges. Full expansion is contingent on federal administrators accepting requests for ACA waivers. Governor Herbert signed SB96 into law on February 11.

In a 2018 third Special Session, the Utah legislature replaced voter-approved ballot initiative [Proposition 2](#) (Utah Medical Cannabis Ballot Initiative), with [HB 3001, the Utah Medical Cannabis Act](#). The bill, which was signed by Governor Herbert, created a state-run cannabis program. The aim of the statute was to allow patients in Utah to receive quality-controlled cannabis products from a licensed pharmacist in medical dosage form and prevent diversion of product into the black market.

For the 2019 legislative session, Chief Sponsor, Senator Luz Escamilla, and House Sponsor, Representative Brad M. Daw, proposed [SB 161 Medical Cannabis Act Amendments](#). As of March 6, the bill is under review in the House after passing in the Senate. A few key highlights of the bill are:

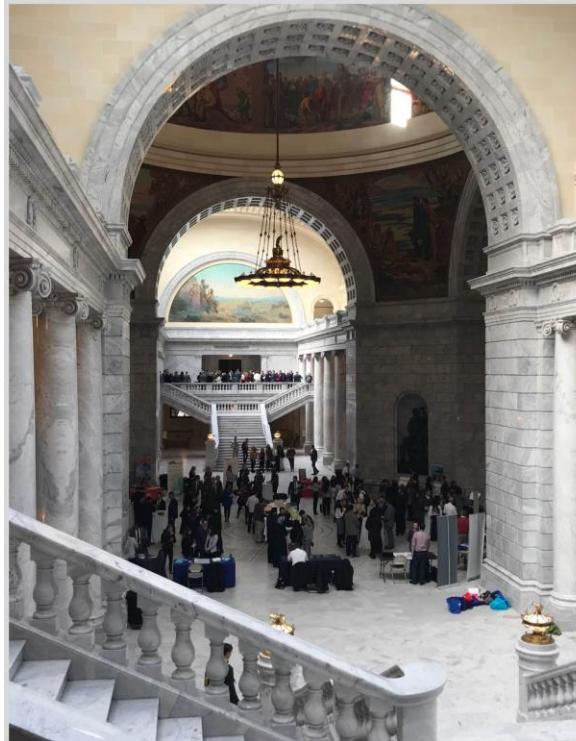
- amends a provision regarding the transportation of cannabis and cannabis products to certain facilities
- provides an exception allowing certain medical professionals to recommend medical cannabis before qualified medical provider registration is available
- provides certain employment protection for a state or political subdivision employee who declines to participate in a job duty required by the state's medical cannabis laws
- repeals a provision allowing a court in a custody proceeding in a certain circumstance to discriminate against a parent based on the parent's lawful use of medical cannabis
- allows a certain insurer to issue workers' compensation insurance coverage for an employer that is a cannabis production establishment or a medical cannabis pharmacy
- amends the decriminalization provision to include protections for parents and legal guardians of certain minor patients
- clarifies quantity limits for possession during the decriminalization period

The start of the session included leadership changes in both the House and the Senate. In the House, Representative Brad Wilson was elected as the new Speaker while Representative Brian King continues as the Minority Leader. In the Senate, CSG West Past Chair, Senator Stuart Adams, was elected as the Senate President and Senator Karen Mayne was elected as the new Minority Leader.



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