

## Idaho State Visit

The Idaho legislative session began on January 7<sup>th</sup> and should wrap up late March. The state is divided into 35 legislative districts, each represented by two Representatives and one Senator. The House experienced a 30% turnover after the 2018 election with 21 of the 70 members starting their first legislative session last month. The 35 seat Senate has six new members, two of which served in the House last session.

The Executive branch also has a fresh look after the 2018 election with longtime Governor Butch Otter retiring and former Lt. Governor Brad Little now leading the state. Former state legislator Janice McGeachin took up the post of Lt. Governor. Congressman Russ Fulcher (former state legislator) is now serving his 1<sup>st</sup> term in Washington D.C. alongside seatmate Congressman Mike Simpson (former state legislator and House Speaker) who has been serving since 1998.

Several members of the Idaho legislature hold leadership positions in CSG West for the 2019-2020 biennium. Senator Lee Heider is the Vice Chair of the Agriculture Committee, Senator Michelle Stennett is the Co-Chair of the Canada Relations Committee and Representative Clark Kauffman is the State Liaison.

There are many issues facing state lawmakers this session; however, Medicaid expansion is certainly a large focus. Like Utah and Nebraska, voters in Idaho passed a ballot measure, Proposition 2, to expand Medicaid coverage to low-income adults. In January the Idaho Supreme Court heard a case requesting to strike down the initiative; however the case was unsuccessful. The legislative budget committee has passed several bills this past week to fund Medicaid and Medicaid Expansion, but it's not over yet according to Gary Moncrief, CSG West's Western Legislative Academy faculty and Boise State Political Science Professor. To learn more about political insights [listen to the "Legislative Breakdown" podcast here](#).

At the start of the year, Governor Little declared public education funding his "number one priority," which also ranks it high on the list of statehouse priorities. Idaho has had significant difficulties in keeping teachers due to an inadequate salary in comparison to other states. Idaho is in the fifth year of a five-year "career ladder" pay plan to address shortcomings in public school teacher pay. The legislature has been working on a proposal to change the complex public school funding formula. This formula would shift from attendance-based to enrollment-based designed to follow the student.

Governor Little signed two executive orders expected to reduce state regulatory burdens on business last month. The "[Licensing Freedom Act of 2019](#)" order enacts sunrise and sunset processes for future occupational licensing laws. This is an important issue facing

many states hoping to reduce barriers and improve portability and reciprocity across state lines. CSG will be hosting an Occupational Licensure Seminar at the [72<sup>nd</sup> CSG West Annual Meeting](#) in Big Sky, Montana.

Governor Little's second executive order, the "[Red Tape Reduction Act](#)," requires state agencies issuing administrative rules to identify at least two existing rules to be repealed or significantly simplified for every one rule proposed.

Additional information on bills being heard in the Idaho State Legislature on important issues such as local-option taxes; CBD oil & hemp, fireworks; campaign finance; redistricting; prison & justice reforms, including mandatory minimums; road funding and truck fees, can be found by visiting the [session info web page](#) of the Idaho Legislature.

CSG West Director, Edgar Ruiz and state lead, Jennifer Schanze, conducted the annual state visit mid-February. This visit provides an opportunity to meet with members, legislative leadership and staff to discuss relevant issues in the western region and how CSG West can continue to provide valuable member driven programs and services.

The staff of CSG West would also like to extend a special congratulations to former Idaho Representative Kelley Packer and 2014 Western Legislative Class President for her appointment as Bureau Chief of the Idaho Bureau of Occupational Licenses.