



2018 Legislative Session: Week 1

City Weekly
January 26, 2018

<https://www.cityweekly.net/BuzzBlog/archives/2018/01/26/2018-legislative-session-week-1>

Highlighting Utah's economic prosperity, Gov. Gary Herbert delivered an expectedly optimistic [State of the State address](#) on Wednesday, which signals that the Legislature is underway—and we've got your Week 1 wrap-up.

The opening week of the legislative session was a mix of table setting and activity. Bills are starting to fly around the committees and into the House and Senate chambers; amendments are being attached or batted down. But first, leaders also welcomed members with speeches.

Senate President Wayne Niederhauser commenced the session talking about the "Great Seal of the United States." Researching the topic led him down a rabbit hole on info related to the occult. Never mind that, Niederhauser said to the dismay of all the perked ears in the room, he wanted to talk about the normal stuff.

The prominently placed bald eagle, for example, holds 13 arrows in one talon—symbolizing war—and an olive branch in the other—symbolizing Mediterranean cuisine, or maybe peace. Come on, Niederhauser, get to the weird parts if you want people to pay attention!

Niederhauser went on to explain that, like the U.S., Utah's government brings together varying minds to find agreement on policy.

Congressman Chris Stewart [graced the state legislative chambers](#) and compared President Donald Trump to an obnoxious golf-obsessed character—but in the good way.

"We never brag," House Speaker Greg Hughes said Monday from his pulpit as he bragged about his and his colleagues' accomplishments over the last several sessions. Hughes illustrated his point with a geological metaphor: While past legislators had opted to plow around boulders in the field, Hughes said, lawmakers under his leadership blasted those boulders to smithereens—which is apparently the nobler way to deal with pesky boulders in fields.

"You've shown the political will and political courage to take on those hard issues even when the winds might have been against us, and even when the criticism might have been in many cases loud," he said.

Speaking of blowing things up: Rep. James Dunnigan's bill to shorten the window of time the state legalizes fireworks—two days before the Fourth of July, Pioneer Day, and one day before New Year's Day and the Chinese New Year—sailed through the House on Wednesday. In this

bill, local governments could further ban fireworks from hazardous spots, such as overgrown parking lots or areas near mountainsides.

Other noteworthy bills that saw some action:

In response to an episode at the University of Utah hospital, where a nurse was detained for refusing to give an officer a patient's blood sample without a warrant, Rep. Craig Hall sponsored a bill that would require consent from the patient, a warrant or a "judicially recognized exception." It passed the House unanimously on Thursday.

A bill to place a toll to drive up Little Cottonwood Canyon sailed through a transportation committee on Wednesday. State and local leaders have been trying to figure out ways to reduce traffic in the canyons.

Rep. Karianne Lisonbee wasted little time on opening day to [unveil a controversial bill](#) that would outlaw abortions if the parent sought to terminate a pregnancy because the child would be born with Down syndrome. The bill went before the House Judiciary Committee [on Thursday](#) where supporters and opponents offered public comment. The ACLU of Utah noted that similar bills have been passed in four other states but they've all been challenged, are expected to be challenged or were modified considerably. Yet, it passed through committee 8-3 with a favorable recommendation as it goes to the House floor.