



## Utah Legislature 2016. How it all turned out.



What we got done.

[Partial Medicaid expansion \(HB 437\)](#) -- This is the bill that was run instead of a complete Medicaid expansion that we worked on (unsuccessfully) last year. This bill will provide Medicaid coverage to about 15,000 individuals at the very bottom of the poverty level. It will be targeted toward the homeless and those coming out of prison with substance abuse and mental health issues. Part of the hope is that by getting treatment for these conditions, we can lower the re-incarceration rate. I regard this as a good step forward, and remain hopeful that in future years we can finish the job of getting coverage to all of those below the poverty level.

[Changed State School Board Elections \(SB 78\)](#) This changes our state school board elections. It eliminates the process of the school board and Governor getting to nominate the positions and changes it to a normal election. In 2016, it will be a non-partisan election, but from 2018 on, it will be a partisan election. I voted against this bill, as my preference would have been to keep it permanently as a non-partisan election.

[Equalized funding mechanisms between District Schools and Charter Schools \(SB 38\)](#) This was a very complicated bill that was fought over and changed over the course of the entire session. The final compromise had widespread support among all education groups. It made several changes to the way that funding is given to Charter and District schools to try to equalize the funding between the two groups. For a long time now, there has been acrimony between the two groups, each claiming that the

other one was getting a funding advantage. Hopefully this can lay those disagreements to rest. It would be very nice to see the lobbyists for both groups just working to get better funding overall for our school kids rather than working against each other.

[Substance Abuse Treatment Fraud revisions \(HB 259\)](#) As substance abuse (particularly narcotics and heroin) has become a bigger problem recently, there has been an increasing market for substance abuse treatment centers. These centers are an important part of our medical system, but some of them were fraudulently billing insurances and not providing services. This law made several very important changes so that insurers (including our state Medicaid program) can know what they are paying for and not get cheated.

[Body Cameras for Police Officers \(HB 300\)](#) This put into place the rules for police departments regarding how and when to use body cameras, and how the information on the cameras is to be stored and treated. This was also a very contentious issue that was battled over for several months but in the end a compromise was reached that was satisfactory to all the parties involved in the negotiations. It will be a good step forward for our state.

What we didn't get done.

[The two medical marijuana bills came close, but neither one was passed.](#) The more expansive of the two bills ([SB 73](#) championed by Mark Madsen) passed the Senate, but did not pass the House committee. The more restrictive of the bills ([SB 89](#)) did pass the Senate and the House committee, but was not brought up for a vote on the House floor. There were lots of last minute changes that were made to the bill (which I thought made it a better bill balancing the needs of patients with controls to make sure it could not be smoked recreationally). There was back room negotiating right down to the wire (some of which I got to be in on), but in the end there was too much controversy remaining to get it passed. I feel certain that this issue will come before the legislature in future years, so hopefully the things that were learned during all the debate this year can help guide to a good policy next time around.

[The bill to repeal the death penalty \(SB 189\)](#) also passed the Senate, but there was too much opposition in the House, so it did not get a chance to come up for a vote.

# Caucus night is coming up next week!!

Caucus night is coming up in next week, on Tuesday March 22nd.

For the first time ever this year, you will actually have the chance to vote for your preference for the Presidential Race at caucus night instead of waiting until the primary election in June.



## Come vote for your preferred nominee for President!!

As usual, we will also be electing state and county delegates at caucus night which help choose our nominees for all our local Utah political offices. The process for electing delegates will be similar to how it has always been, that is, you will need to be physically present at the neighborhood caucus to run to be a delegate (which I hope you will do, as it is a great experience) or to vote on which of your neighbors will be the delegates.

But the voting for the presidential nominees will be both in-person and online. If you are coming to the caucus, you can just come the same as always and be checked in that night. But if you are unable to come that night and are still wanting to vote in the Presidential race online, you will need to go online to register ahead of time. Here are the links to [register for online voting in the Republican primary](#), or if you prefer, to [register for online voting in the Democratic primary](#).

**These same links can help you find your caucus location.**

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Contact: **Ray Ward Representative House District 19**  
email: [rayward@le.utah.gov](mailto:rayward@le.utah.gov)  
cell phone: 801-440-8765