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Nevada Legislative Update: February 2019

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The 80th Regular Session of the Nevada State Legislature convened on February 4, 2019 and will continue through June 4, 2019. In this session, Nevada makes history as the first state in the country with a majority-female Legislature, including 23 assemblywomen and 9 female senators. Currently, Democrats hold a governing trifecta, leading the executive branch and both houses of the legislative branch, and hold a supermajority in the Nevada Assembly. Legislators have already passed one piece of major legislation. As the first bill of the 80th Legislative Session, a measure to implement private gun sale background checks approved by the voters in 2016 was signed into law. SB 143 requires the state of Nevada to conduct background checks on all private gun sales and takes effect on January 2, 2020.

During the first month, nearly 500 bills have been published and over 500 more are expected throughout the course of the legislative session. During the first few weeks of the legislative session the committee mostly heard presentations and agency bills making technical changes. The bills proposing more substantive policy changes will be considered by legislators in the coming weeks.

Here is a forecast of what is to come, although many bill details remain to be seen on these issues.

Taxes and Budget

Governor Steve Sisolak has promised no new taxes, but his budget relies on maintaining the current rate of the Modified Business Tax, also known as the payroll tax, which is set to sunset in June. The Governor promised to include in his budget ten million dollars in tax credits for affordable housing, three percent pay raises for all state employees including teachers, a new health and science building at College of Southern Nevada and a new education building at Nevada State College, and more funding for women's healthcare and meals on wheels.

Minimum Wage

Last session lawmakers passed a bill that would increase the minimum wage in Nevada to \$12/hour over time. The bill was vetoed by Governor Sandoval. It is likely to return this session and be approved by Governor Sisolak.

Renewable Energy

In his State of the State address, Governor Sisolak pledged to support a goal of fifty percent renewable energy by 2030, and to sign the renewable energy portfolio standards bill vetoed by his predecessor last session. In addition, lawmakers have promised to increase Nevada's renewable energy standards, amend the exit process from Nevada's energy market, and increase the standards and accountability requirements for the

Renewable Energy Tax Abatement Program. However, bill language on these issues remains to be offered.

Technology

A bipartisan and bicameral group of nine legislators has formed a technology caucus to make Nevada a leader in technology policy. The group has promised legislation addressing blockchain, crypto-currency, and economic development. Three of these measures have been published. SB 162 enacts the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act to address blockchain electronic transactions, SB 163 allows the utilization of blockchain for various purposes, and SB 195 enacts the Uniform Regulation of Virtual-Currency Businesses Act.

Healthcare

Lawmakers have promised reforms to emergency room surprise billing, measures to address prescription drug pricing and the opioid crisis, increases to Medicaid reimbursement, and even a possible Medicaid for all program. Again, legislation on the majority of these measures remains in the drafting process.

Elections

There are several election reform measures expected this session including a bill to eliminate the electoral college through an interstate compact (AB 186), a bill to require same-day voter registration (AB 137), and a bill requiring municipal elections to be held in even-numbered rather than odd-numbered years (AB 50).

Education

Lawmakers will tackle an update to Nevada's 51-year-old K-12 funding formula, but without any new funding, the change will likely face resistance throughout some of Nevada's smaller counties. In addition, legislators will plan to address school safety, the teacher pipeline, and scholarships for university students.