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Utah Legislative Update: April 2018

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Interim Study

When the Utah Legislature is not in session, you might think legislators are in hibernation until the next legislative session starts in January, 2019. Actually, there is a great deal of legislative action during the off season that forecasts, shapes, and sometimes gives a head start to the hot issues of the coming session. Here are a few issues the Legislature has listed for interim study this year that look to be impactful, entertaining, and worth watching.

Peer-to-Peer Rentals: As the sharing economy has expanded to include everything from cars to housing, and storage it has opened up a whole new public policy realm. Treatment of contract employees of car-sharing services, municipal regulations targeted at neighborhood nuisance rentals, and who bears liability when expectations of the various services fall short, are all fresh areas for regulation and laws. The legislature has asked the Business & Labor Interim Committee to look into this issue and make recommendations for policy consideration and future bills.

Pot for Your Pets?: Utah passed a very limited “right to try for terminally ill” medical marijuana bill this year and a more expansive medical marijuana initiative will be on the ballot this November for voters to consider. But what about your dog or cat? Might they benefit from the cannabis as well? The pet food and supplement business is booming, as the American Pet Products Association estimates Americans will spend \$69 billion on pet food, gear, and vet visits in 2017. Many new pet products and supplements include CBD-oil as a health remedy. This is as much a gray area of the law for pets as it is for humans. Not to mention this is a still-evolving area of veterinary research. The Utah legislature included Cannabis extracts in food and animal feed products as an interim study item and has asked the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee to come back with a recommendation on action.

Trampoline Parks: What better way to wear out 6-year olds at a birthday party than to take them to a trampoline park to jump away all the sugar! Trampoline parks have sprung up all over as a fun activity for kids and adults. Who doesn't want to practice their backflip into a foam pit, after all? The need for improved trampoline park safety and minimum standards has been suggested as a study item for the Political Subdivisions Interim Committee. Perhaps in the future there will be lifeguards to pull people out of the deep end of the foam pit or to remind people to walk- not run-around the trampolines.

Drone-to-Door Delivery is Closer Than we Think: When Amazon floated

the idea of a future where drones deliver packages right to our doors, many thought it sounded cool but far into the future. The Utah Legislature believes it might be something that could happen in the near future and has tasked the Transportation Interim Committee with exploring opportunities to create regulations to facilitate the utilization of airspace under 500 feet for deliveries.

Ballot Initiatives: Finally, for those who are wondering which of the six proposed ballot initiatives will make it on the November ballot, four initiatives turned in enough signatures by the April deadline. But not so fast! The county clerks have until May 15th to ensure the signature are valid. It turns out there are lots of reasons a signature can be disqualified; chief among them that the signer is not actually registered to vote. Other reasons include the signature not matching the voter registration signature on file, the signature not being legible, the address information was incomplete, or the signer signed multiple times.

As of the writing of this update, the Medical Marijuana initiative has met the signature test and will be on the ballot. The Count My Vote initiative is very close to being verified while the Independent Re-districting and Medicaid Expansion ballot initiatives still face considerable hurdles to meet the signature threshold in rural senate districts. If you are interested in tracking the verification process you can do so at: <https://elections.utah.gov/2018-initiative-numbers>

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