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Utah Legislative Update: October 2018

Insight — October 30, 2018

New Member of the Utah Government Affairs Team:

The Holland & Hart Government Affairs team is excited to welcome Billy Hesterman as our newest member. He joins the H&H Utah team after serving as the Vice President and lead lobbyist for the Utah Taxpayers Association. There, he led efforts to pass legislation to cut Utah taxes by more than \$100 million and spearheaded the Taxpayers Association's support of bills that increase government accountability and transparency. Before turning to politics, Billy worked in journalism, covering the Utah Legislature as a reporter for both the Salt Lake Tribune and the Daily Herald. An avid sports fan, Billy was a producer and reporter for KFNZ 1320 AM Locked on Sports Rewind daily sports talk show. He holds a BS in Mass Communications from the University of Utah.

Billy joins Kate Bradshaw as a second full-time lobbyist along with attorneys Amanda Smith, Steve Young, Mark Buchi, and others who provide subject matter legal experience; offering clients the best package of political savvy and legal expertise for their government affairs needs.

The Election After the Election:

While many are closely watching the mid-term elections looking for a “Blue Wave” or tracking the outcome of Utah's Medical Marijuana ballot initiative, I'm more interested in the election-after-the-election that will set the leadership teams for the Utah State Legislature. Three-term Senate President Wayne Niederhauser (R-Sandy) and two-term House Speaker Greg Hughes (R-Draper) are both retiring at the end of their terms. This opens the top position in each chamber and a cascade of shifts in the other leadership positions and chairperson roles that hasn't been seen in several election cycles. Leadership elections traditionally take place a week after the General Election by the newly elected members of each caucus.

The powers of the Utah Speaker and President are often not well understood by the casual observer. They select the two most powerful appointed positions, the Executive Appropriations Committee chair and Rules Committee chair for their chamber, which usually flow to key lieutenants. Between these two committees rests the control of the checkbook and the ability for a bill to advance to become law. All other chairmanships, committee memberships, and the order and pace of business on the chamber floor are controlled by the Speaker or President.

Rep. Brad Wilson (R- Kaysville) and Sen. Stuart Adams (R-Layton) both appear poised to advance without serious challengers to assume the posts of Speaker and President respectively. The Majority Leader positions in

both chambers also seem to be on track to install Rep. Francis Gibson (R-Mapleton) and Sen. Evan Vickers (R-Cedar City) by acclamation. It is at the Whip and Assistant Whip positions where multiple challengers will have to vie for votes from their colleagues. Committee chairmanships could see a shakeup based upon the wheeling and dealing that come with new leadership teams and can change the political strategy for advancing various policy agendas. Stay tuned for an update on how the election-after-the-election plays out and what it may mean for your policy concerns.

Year-End Surplus Bigger Than Expected:

The State of Utah had anticipated ending the June 30th fiscal year with about \$27 million in budget surplus. Not bad news at all to have greater than expected revenue growth rolling forward into a new budget year. However, the news was even better than expected as the year-end surplus amounted to \$265 million! If there was any question that Utah's economy is booming, revenue growth well beyond the anticipated target from the February 2018 estimates should put that to rest. After various required deposits of surplus funds to Rainy Day accounts and the Industrial Assistance Fund, \$158 million will roll forward as one-time revenue available for the next session to appropriate. Of that total, \$8 million will be available in the General Fund and \$150 million to the Education Fund.

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