Salt Lake City: A surprising push to abolish the death penalty in deep-red Utah ran out of steam, as the Republican lawmaker shepherding the measure said he didn’t have enough votes to pass it before a midnight deadline.

The proposal won enough support in the GOP-dominated Legislature to be one debate and vote away from final passage, a surprising turnaround from lawmakers’ vote a year ago to revive the use of firing squads in executions if lethal drugs are unavailable. “I think that people ruled us out at every step and we kept progressing,” said state Sen Steve Urquhart, the Republican shepherding to end capital punishment. Unable to secure enough votes, Urquhart abandoned the push Thursday night after briefly shopping the idea of a moratorium instead. The lawmaker told The Associated Press that he came very close to securing a majority of votes from the 75 members of the House of Representatives. But he said too many undecided legislators would have needed hours of convincing.

Victim of the clock
“I can’t say that the bill is totally a victim of the clock, but you know, if we had another week or so, it would be interesting to see what would have happened,” he said. Even if it had passed, the measure faced an uncertain future with Republican Gov Gary Herbert, who supports capital punishment in extreme cases but wouldn’t say if he would veto the measure.

Herbert told the AP on Thursday evening that he was concerned about the decades of delays that death-row inmates spend appealing their sentences and higher costs of capital cases. “I’m pro-death penalty, but with the parameters that it’s done on very rare occasions for the most heinous of crimes,” he said. “And that’s how Utah has utilized it over the last 40 years. We’ve only had seven executions in 40 years. This is not Texas.” The governor said he was a bit surprised how much media interest and took away attention from victims. Last firing squad in 2004, saying the method attracted intense drugs. Utah lawmakers stopped offering inmates the choice of firing squads as a backup method to ensure the state had a way about capital punishment. A shortage of lethal-injection drugs would otherwise negotiate a plea deal of a life sentence, leaving prosecutors shortchanged at the bargaining table, where Urquhart framed the issue in terms that appealed to law-

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