January 27, 2014

***http://www.coloradocapitolwatch.com/bill-tracker-votes/0/391/2014/0/***

“Just because you do not take an interest in politics

doesn’t mean politics won’t take an interest in you.''

**-       Pericles**

***Days Until Sine Die:  100***

***Days Until Super Bowl:  6***

Axiom thanks the many news sources from which we gather relevant stories for our weekly newsletter.  In most cases you will be able to read the full text article for each headline below by clicking on the link provided. The purpose of this format is to share newsworthy items while ensuring we adhere to copyright law.

**Governor Hickenlooper Praises U.S. Attorney General Holder’s Marijuana Banking Announcement**

*Denver Post*

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper is responding with relief to word from federal officials that marijuana businesses will be allowed to access banking services.  Attorney General Eric Holder said last week that the Obama administration is planning to roll out regulations soon that would allow banks to do business with legal marijuana sellers.

Currently, processing money from marijuana sales puts federally insured banks at risk of drug racketeering charges.  Because of the threat of criminal prosecution, financial institutions often refuse to let marijuana-related businesses open accounts.

[Click here to read more.](http://www.denverpost.com/marijuana/ci_24984933/colo-governor-praises-pot-banking-announcement)

**Ballot Initiative Filed, Would Allow Cities to Bar Unwanted For-profit Businesses**

*Denver Business Journal*

A ballot initiative to give local governments more control over oil and gas drilling has been filed with the state of Colorado - but in a way so broad that it would affect not only that industry but would allow cities to ban any for-profit business.  Clifton Willmeng of the Colorado Community Rights Network said he doesn't want the proposed constitutional amendment to be just an environmental measure but "an issue of civil rights versus corporate interests."

[Click here to read more.](http://www.bizjournals.com/denver/news/2014/01/22/ballot-initiative-would-allow-cities.html)

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**Report: Natural Gas Prices to Stay Low for 20 Years**

Dallas Business Journal

Natural gas will stay in the $4 to $5 range for the next 20 years, according to a study by IHS.  Natural gas producers waiting for the price to go back up might be waiting a long, long time.  But the research released earlier this month suggests that drillers can still go after shale gas economically at that price.

Converting fleets of trucks to run on natural gas will be one of the biggest areas of potential growth for natural gas, despite the higher upfront cost and not having enough fueling stations.  The report also advocates in favor of using natural gas to heat homes rather than electric, saying it could save homeowners more than $5,700 over 15 years.

[Click here to read more.](http://www.bizjournals.com/dallas/news/2014/01/17/report-natural-gas-prices-stay-low.html?page=all)

**House Republicans Introduce Education Reform Bills**

*House Republicans Press Release*

So far this session the House Republicans have introduced three of the education reform bills they announced back in November. Immediately following the defeat of Amendment 66, House Republicans announced their education reform agenda that would use existing state resources rather than requiring the $1 billion dollar tax increase championed by Governor Hickenlooper and Democratic leadership.

Assistant House Minority Leader Libby Szabo introduced the Charter School Capital Construction Funding Bill, HB 1147, which will provide equity for charter schools in the allocation of capital construction monies.  “Charter schools are public schools and this will eliminate their financial disadvantage when they are forced to use their per-student funding for capital purposes,” said Szabo (R-Arvada).  “House Bill 1147 will make more capital constructions funds available to charter schools and give parents with children in charters schools more equitable funding for their students.”

Representative Jim Wilson, a member of the House Education Committee, introduced the Summary Financial Expenditures Info for K-12 bill. HB 1145 will establish greater transparency in how schools in Colorado spend tax dollars and require schools to provide a public breakdown of their financial expenditures.  “In order to assess our school funding needs, we need to understand how schools are spending their tax dollars,” said Wilson (R-Salida). “Continuing to improve spending transparency will enable school districts to better demonstrate how they allocate tax dollars and allow parents and taxpayers in communities across Colorado to better understand how their tax dollars are being used.”

Representative Kevin Priola, a member of the House Education Committee, introduced the Average Daily Membership Student Count bill. HB 1139 will change the method with which the state counts students in funding our public schools. Currently, the state has one count date each year, October 1st. HB 1139 would base school funding on average daily membership throughout the school year.  “Moving to an average daily membership will ensure schools are funded accurately according to their student enrollment and establish a more fair allocation of taxpayer dollars,” said Priola (R-Henderson). “The October 1st count date is outdated and unfair to schools and students for funding purposes. If this bill is implemented, every day, every child will be treated as if it’s October 1st.”

All three bills have been assigned to the House Education Committee.  In addition to these education reform bills, Representative Carole Murray’s (R-Castle Rock) charter school transportation equity bill and Representative Clarice Navarro’s (R-Pueblo) bill to direct more funding to English Language Learners will be introduced later this session.

**Lawmakers Highlight Benefits of Expanding Access to Affordable Housing**

*House Democrats Press Release*

A bill intended to expand the availability of affordable housing, especially in flood-impacted areas, by Rep. Crisanta Duran (D-Denver) and Sen. Jessie Ulibarri (D-Commerce City) passed the House Local Government last week.

HB14-1017 is predicted to provide funding for the construction of up to 800 units of low-income housing this year. Additionally, the bill allows up to 20 percent of the Housing Development Grant Fund to be used for non-construction activities such as temporary housing, foreclosure prevention and homeownership assistance. It will also eliminate a requirement for borrowers to get a replacement loan within 180 days, which will allow greater flexibility to fund the most-needed projects across the state.

Colorado Wage-theft Bill Passes as Major Business Groups Drop Opposition

*Denver Business Journal*

Last year, business groups played a major part in killing a bill that would have criminalized wage theft in Colorado.  This year those same groups played an important role in passing a new version of the legislation out of its first legislative committee on Wednesday.  Much of the business community indicated that employers can work within the confines of the proposed administrative process contained in SB 14-005.

[Click here to read more.](http://www.bizjournals.com/denver/blog/capitol_business/2014/01/colorado-wage-theft-bill-passes-with.html)

**CDHS Names New Budget Director**

*Department of Human Services Press Release*

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) has named Sarah Sills as the new Director of Budget and Policy.  Sills is currently the CDHS Legislative Liaison and has served in that position since joining the department in August 2013. She will remain in her role as Legislative Liaison through the end of the current legislative session and will begin the new duties on May 8.

Sills received her Bachelor of Science from Colorado State University and a double Master’s in Public Administration and Technical Communications from the University of Colorado at Denver.  Until Sills assumes her new position, Clint Woodruff, director for the Division of Financial Services, will continue to serve as acting budget director.  CDHS will begin recruitment for a new legislative liaison after the General Assembly adjourns.

**Denver Competes with Las Vegas, Phoenix for 2016 GOP convention**

*Denver Post*

 At the Republican National Committee's winter meeting held in Denver last week, a handful of cities were throwing schwag, amenities, appetizers and more to party bigwigs in hopes of winning the ultimate prize: The chance to host 50,000 Republicans, VIPs and guests for five days ahead of the next presidential race.

[Click here to read more.](http://www.denverpost.com/politics/ci_24979766/denver-competes-kc-las-vegas-phoenix-2016-rnc)

**The Calculator**

House Bills Introduced:  171

Senate Bills Introduced:  103

Number of Bills PI’d:  8