

March 17, 2015



<http://www.coloradocapitolwatch.com/bill-tracker-votes/0/391/2015/0/>

**"Most people never run far enough on their first wind to find out they've got a second."- William James**

**Days Til Sine Die: 51**

**Cheaper generic biotech drugs loom as 'biosimilars' law advances in Colorado Legislature**

***Denver Business Journal***

The U.S. Food & Drug Administration approved the first generic version of a biotech drug for domestic sale Friday, hours after Colorado state legislators wrestled with how to let pharmacists handle cheaper biotech drug knockoffs. Colorado is among several states considering proposals to let pharmacists substitute FDA-approved biotech generics - known as "biosimilars" - for name-brand drugs that are prescribed by a doctor. Such generic substitution is allowed for traditional chemical drugs under Colorado law. Extending that substitution power to pharmacists for biotech generics is expected to reduce drug costs for patients and insurers by billions of dollars.

**Little progress as lawmakers pass midpoint**

***Grand Junction Sentinel***

The Colorado Legislature reached the midpoint of the 2015 session just over a week ago, and lawmakers on both sides of the political divide who control the opposing chambers aren't yet done killing each other's bills. Still, those same lawmakers said they are expecting much of that to be done soon, leaving the second half of the session that starts today with some bipartisan efforts over such things as the state's annual spending plan and economic development. While lawmakers have managed to agree on a few bipartisan ideas, mostly the session has been marked with Democrats blocking Republican efforts to undo several things they have done in recent years on such issues as gun control, renewable energy and employee discrimination.

**Colorado Oil & Gas Association chief Tisha Schuller to step down**

***Denver Business Journal***

Tisha Schuller, president and CEO of the Colorado Oil & Gas Association (COGA), will step down as chief of the trade group at the end of May - 5-1/2 years after she took up the helm of one of the state's most influential energy groups.

**Colorado to review all tourism-act subsidies, not just Gaylord**

***Denver Business Journal***

Colorado's Office of the State Auditor will research all of the state subsidies authorized by the Regional Tourism Act rather than concentrating solely on those that went to Aurora's Gaylord Rockies project, the Legislative Audit Committee decided on Tuesday. Colorado Treasurer Walker Stapleton and Sen. Lucia Guzman, a Denver Democrat who chairs the committee, had requested the office examine whether the $81.4 million that the Colorado Economic Development Commission awarded to the 1,500-room hotel/conference center was proper, given that a new developer replaced the original one and stated it could shave as much as $89 million off the construction costs.

**Gaylord Rockies Hotel will move forward in Aurora**

***The Denver Post***

Construction will start on the Gaylord Rockies Hotel regardless of ongoing litigation and a planned audit of state incentives backing the project, Aurora Mayor Steve Hogan told the Colorado Economic Development Commission on Thursday morning. "The target for groundbreaking is this year," Hogan said. Once ground breaks on the 1,500-room conference hotel near Denver International Airport, the contract between the state and Aurora to provide an estimated $81.4 million of incentives under the Regional Tourism Act becomes irrevocable, Leeann Morrill, the state's first assistant attorney general, told the commission. The project has faced two lawsuits and more recently a challenge from state Treasurer Walker Stapleton. Last week, the Colorado Legislative Audit committee asked the state auditor to look into the validity of commission awards under the Regional Tourism Act.

**Apartment inventory heads toward 20-year high, boom lifts Denver economy**

***The Denver Post***

Apartments contributed $10.4 billion to the metro Denver economy and supported 97,400 jobs in 2013, according to a study released Tuesday by the National Multifamily Housing Council and the National Apartment Association. Statewide, apartments contributed $15.6 billion in economic benefits in Colorado in 2013 and supported 154,300 jobs. Nationally, the industry is credited with contributing $1.3 trillion to the U.S. economy and supporting 12.3 million jobs, according to the study, which was overseen by economist Stephen Fuller at George Mason University's Center for Regional Analysis. "Denver is a national leader for job creation, which is creating tremendous apartment demand," said Nancy Burke, vice president of government affairs at the Apartment Association of Metro Denver. "Apartment supply levels are approaching a 20-year high in Denver."

**Colorado notches best month yet for marijuana taxes**

***The Gazette***

Colorado is reporting its best month yet for recreational marijuana sales. Most striking in the January numbers reported this week is a spike in the tax stream designated specifically for schools. That excise tax brought in $2.3 million. That's more than 10 times the haul from January of 2014, when Colorado started collecting the tax. Colorado's marijuana industry was given a tax-free period when recreational sales began to transfer their pot plants from the medical industry to the recreational industry. As a result, excise taxes for the first few months were quite low.

**Powdered alcohol gets federal agency's approval**

***The Denver Post***

A powdered alcohol intended to be mixed up into drinks has gained approval from a federal agency. The product, called Palcohol, had received the greenlight from the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau briefly last year before the bureau backtracked and said the label approvals had been given in error. On Wednesday, bureau spokesman Tom Hogue told The Associated Press the issues were resolved and that four varieties of Palcohol were approved. But Hogue noted that states can also regulate alcohol sales in their borders. The approval is a step forward for a small company whose product plans have already sparked controversy.

**Hickenlooper seeking compromise on construction-defects reform**

***Denver Business Journal***

Gov. John Hickenlooper said he remains hopeful that legislative Democrats and Republicans can reach a compromise that will allow them to pass a construction-defects reform bill this year. He also said legislators shouldn't try to overreach on oil and gas regulations beyond those recommended by a task force that he appointed.

**Denver's economic surge means coupling affordable-housing dilemma with innovation**

***Denver Business Journal***

Denver will focus on infrastructure to ensure that workers flocking to the city for jobs will be able to afford to live here, Mayor Michael Hancock said during an economic forum Wednesday. "We [will] switch our focus to infrastructure, to transportation, to things that might help alleviate some people's issues and help them to compete a little better," Hancock told the Denver Business Journal during The Renewal Series at Denver's Alliance Center. The Renewal Series is an event series put on by Washington, D.C.-based National Journal Group meant to bring together startups and incubators, as well as spotlight cities that are setting the standard for new approaches to local issues.

**State wants opt-out from education law**

***Grand Junction Sentinel***

Colorado State Board of Education members voted 6-1 Wednesday to approve the state's request for renewal of a waiver from federal No Child Left Behind requirements, including flexibility to allow more parents to opt their children out of testing. The state's current waiver from federal accountability measures for Title I schools expires at the end of the current school year. The waiver allows Colorado to ditch federal labels for schools and districts and place its own labels on schools and districts based on how close those entities come to targets for standardized test growth and achievement, among other factors. Districts and schools are asked to pen a plan for continuing to perform well or detail how they can improve. The waiver renewal asks for that system to continue and requests some additional flexibility on charter schools and accountability pilot programs. The waiver also requests that schools and districts not face any punishment, particularly when it comes to federal cash, if fewer than 95 percent of students in a school or district take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam.

**Bipartisan Help for Rural Colorado Schools**

***Colorado House Democrats***

The Education Committee approved a bipartisan bill this afternoon to help rural school districts and charter schools devote more time to education in their classrooms. Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) provide educational services like special education, technology support and gifted and talented support to school districts in a cooperative manner to reduce costs. Unfortunately many rural school districts and charter schools are not able to take full advantage of the services available through BOCES or expand those programs. HB15-1201, sponsored by Reps. John Buckner, D-Aurora, and Bob Rankin, R-Carbondale, creates a grant program for rural school districts and charter schools that will lower overhead costs and broaden the services available through the BOCES program. The grants will reduce the amount of time school staff must spend on administrative duties, increasing the time they have available to improve classroom instruction. "This will help our rural schools provide the best education possible," Rep. Buckner said after the 10-1 vote. "It will allow school staff to focus on what's most important-students in the classroom, and not administrative duties." The bill will now be heard in the Appropriations Committee.

**Biz Committee OKs Crowdfunding in Colorado**

***Colorado House Democrats***

The House Business Affairs & Labor Committee unanimously approved a bill last week by Reps. Pete Lee, D-Colorado Springs, and Dan Pabon, D-Denver, to help small businesses in Colorado raise capital and allow Coloradans to invest in exciting new companies through crowdfunding. Websites like Kickstarter and Indiegogo allow regular people to donate to the creation of a product, but not invest in a company. HB15-1246 creates the framework for Coloradans to go online and invest in small businesses that are seeking capital to expand their companies. The bill requires that 80 percent of the money raised online must be spent in Colorado.The bill has strong protections for investors, but by its very nature, investing always carries risk. Though there is no minimal investment requirement, only SEC-accredited investors may invest more than $5,000 and the Colorado Securities Commissioner has oversight over the program. The bill now goes to the House floor.

**Governor Hickenlooper Signs 25 Bills**

***Office of The Governor***

HB 15-1021 (Willett/Merrifield) Concerning Statutorily Established Time Periods that are Multiples of Seven Days.

HB 15-1023 (Lontine/Aguilar) Concerning the Age Limitation for Persons Served in a Day Treatment Center.

HB 15-1039 (Tyler/Neville T.) Concerning the Donation of Prescription Medications by Licensed Health Care Facilities.

HB 15-1047 (Lawrence, Becker K./Grantham, Neville T.) Concerning a Prohibition on the use of Simulated Gambling Devices.

HB 15-1121 (Becker J./Sonnenberg) Concerning Agreements Between Landowners and Wind Energy Developers, and, in Connection Therewith Clarifying the Rights and Duties of Parties to those Agreements and the Effects of Recording an Agreement in County and Land Records.

SB 15-010 (Mitsch Bush/ Hodge, Jones, Roberts) Concerning Augmentation Requirements for Wells Withdrawing Water from the Dawson Aquifer.

SB 15-021 (Vigil/Baumgardner) Concerning the Repeal of the Interstate Pest Control Compact.

SB 15-023 (Crowder) Concerning the Use of an Off-Highway Vehicle to Cross a Roadway.

SB 15-024 (Ryden, Nordberg, Primavera/ Sonnenberg, Jahn, Guzman ) Concerning Updates to the Local Government Audit Law to Maintain Consistency with Audit Standards.

SB 15-025 (Melton, Court, Ginal/ Jones, Balmer, Scott, Ulibarri) Concerning the Transfer of an Individual's Retirement Funds to the Statewide Defined Benefit Plan Administered by the Fire and Police Pension Association.

SB 15-026 (Ginal, Court, Melton/ Balmer, Ulibarri) Concerning the Contribution Rate for the Participants Beginning Membership in the Fire and Police Pension Association's Statewide Defined Benefit Plan.

SB 15-027 (Court, Ginal, Melton/ Ulibarri, Balmer, Jones) Concerning Additional Authority of the Board of Directors of the Fire and Police Pension Association to Assess Administrative Charges.

SB 15-028 (Ginal, Court, Melton/ Balmer) Concerning Requirements for Employee Participation in a Plan Administered by the Fire and Police Pension Association.

SB 15-041 (Van Winkle/ Holbert ) Concerning Requirement that Local Government Regulate Amateur radio Communications in Accordance with an Existing Federal Preemption Established by the Federal Communications Commission.

SB 15-082 (Moreno, Lawrence/ Marble, Hodge, Holbert, Lundberg, Woods) Concerning the Authority of Counties to Establish a County Workforce Development Program.

SB 15-108 (Hamner, Young, Rankin/ Steadman, Grantham, Lambert ) Concerning the Direct Appropriation of Moneys for Certain Programs in the Department of Education.

SB 15-112 (Rankin, Hamner, Young/ Steadman, Grantham, Lambert ) Concerning the Transfer of Moneys from the General Fund to the Building Regulation Fund.

SB 15-159 (Hamner, Young, Rankin, Duran, Esgar, Fields, Lontine, Mitsch Bush, Moreno, Pettersen, Rosenthal, Roupe, Salazar, Tyler, Williams, Winter, Ginal, Lee, Pabon, Tate/ Lambert, Grantham, Steadman ) Concerning a Supplemental Appropriation to to the Department of Public Safety.

SB 15-164 (Hamner, Young, Rankin/ Lambert, Grantham, Steadman) Concerning a Supplemental Appropriation to the Department of the Treasury.

SB 15-165 (Hamner, Young, Rankin/ Lambert, Grantham, Steadman) Concerning Funding for Capital Construction and Making Supplemental Appropriations in Connection Therewith.

SB 15-166 (Hamner, Young, Rankin/ Lambert, Grantham, Steadman ) Concerning Adjustments in the Amount of Total Program Funding for Public Schools for the 2014-2015 Budget Year, and, in Connection Therewith, Reducing and Appropriation.

SB 15-167 (Hamner, Young, Rankin/ Lambert, Grantham, Steadman) Concerning a Modification in the Moneys Available to Certain Departments for the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year for Programs that the General Assembly Funded in 2014 from State Moneys Collected in Connection with the Legal Marijuana Industry.

SB 15-168 (Hamner, Young, Rankin/ Lambert, Grantham, Steadman) Concerning a Transfer from the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Services Cash Fund to the General Fund for the 2014-2015 State Fiscal Year.

SB 15-169 (Hamner, Young, Rankin/ Lambert, Grantham, Steadman ) Concerning a Transfer from the Department of Public Safety's Account in the State Employee Reserve Fund to the General Fund for the 2014-2015 State Fiscal Year.

SB 15-170 (Hamner, Young, Rankin/ Lambert, Grantham, Steadman) Concerning a Transfer from the General Fund to the Capital Construction Fund for the 2014-2015 State Fiscal Year.

**The Calculator**

**House Bills Introduced: 284**

**Senate Bills Introduced: 216**

**Number of Bills PI'd: 127**

**Bills Signed by the Governor: 48**