March 31, 2015

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

***"All life is a powerful struggle, and your only choice is the choice of a goal."***

***-Ayn Rand***

**Days Til Sine Die: 37**

**Colorado's $25 billion budget bill to debut after months of negotiations**

*The Denver Post*

In the wake of partisan gridlock on routine spending measures this session, the divided legislature faces the tough task of finding common ground on a $25 billion state budget bill. More than any other legislation, the fiscal year 2015 spending plan reflects the new political reality at the Capitol, where Democrats control the House and Republicans run the Senate. The legislation debuting this week came together after months of negotiations - tense at points - in the evenly divided Joint Budget Committee, where unique rules require each item to win a bipartisan majority vote. Even though most votes were unanimous, the political dynamic deadlocked the committee on multiple issues.

**Colorado film-industry rival sweetens incentives**

*Denver Business Journal*

Two bills designed to boost the New Mexico film industry quietly passed the state legislature as the session closed Saturday. The passed legislation would extend a 30 percent tax credit to stand-alone TV series pilot episodes and makes it easier for feature film productions to qualify for the 30 percent labor credit by expanding the definition of "qualified facilities" to include outdoor movie ranches. Both bills need a final signature from Gov.Susana Martinez.

**Colorado's telehealth expansion signed into law**

*Denver Business Journal*

Gov. John Hickenlooper signed a bill expanding telehealth services in the state on Friday - prompting Children's Hospital Colorado to say it plans to put the new law to use immediately. House Bill 1029, sponsored by Reps. Perry Buck, R-Windsor, and Joann Ginal, D-Fort Collins, requires insurers to reimburse health-care providers for telehealth services in counties of all sizes. State law had required reimbursement only for counties with 150,000 residents or fewer, but health systems said that technology-enabled visitations can aid urban residentsas well with everything from oncology consultations to chronic-disease management. Dr. Fred Thomas, director of telemedicine at Children's Hospital, said he expects to expand the Aurora facility's use of the tool significantly, starting with its youth-diabetes program.

**Bi-partisan support in Colorado statehouse for full audit of state's health insurance exchange**

*The Gazette*

Rep. Dan Nordberg has tried for two years to get a full audit of the nonprofit Connect for Health that is spending millions in federal dollars to set up Colorado's health insurance exchange under the Affordable Care Act. Last year the bill died in the Senate. This year it's headed to the governor's desk. The difference, the Colorado Springs Republican said, is a limited scope audit released in December that found questionable contracts including one for $38,344 in promotional lip balm. "I think there was an acknowledgment by everybody on the audit committee that what was going on was unacceptable," Nordberg said. "And I think it was one of those instances where I do believe that the interest of transparency transcended politics."

**Hickenlooper creates office to integrate physical, behavioral health care**

*Denver Business Journal*

Gov. John Hickenlooper last Monday announced the creation of a state office that will lead the effort to coordinate primary care and behavioral health care throughout Colorado. The State Innovation Model (SIM) Office will, in conjunction with the State Innovation Model Advisory Board, use a $65 million federal grant that the state has received to achieve its aims. An executive order signed by Hickenlooper continues the office through January 2019. Leaders of the office and board will develop a state health care innovation plan that will integrate physical and behavioral health services in a way that most primary- and specialty-care physicians' offices do not do. Hickenlooper has made this part of his strategy to make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation.

**Could Colorado's hospital provider fee be the key to increased road funding?**

*Denver Business Journal*

Some Denver business leaders are pushing a state budget fix that would ensure a boost in transportation funding and could help to increase education spending simply by moving the six-year-old hospital provider fee out of the general fund into what is known as "enterprise fund" status. However, with the Colorado Legislature's Joint Budget Committee introducing its proposed budget for the 2015-16 fiscal year last Friday, the idea has not gained enough traction yet even to be discussed formally by the committee.

**House speaker wants construction-defects bill amended**

*Denver Business Journal*

House Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst last Tuesday laid out her clearest directive yet for passing a construction-defects reform bill: Amend it to include a right for condominium owners to file a lawsuit, or the bill is likely to die. Business, municipal and affordable-housing groups teamed up last week to help pass a bill out of committee that would make it more difficult for small numbers of condo owners to file class-action defect lawsuits, and would require mediation or arbitration if such a remedy is prescribed in their contracts with the builder when they purchase their homes.

**Colorado lawmakers advance weaker felony DUI bill**

*The Denver Post*

Colorado lawmakers Tuesday advanced a bill to make repeated drunken driving offenses a felony after weakening the measure amid concerns about its ballooning cost. The move is designed to improve the bill's chances of passage after concerns about accommodating the hefty price tag delayed its progress for weeks. The legislation now makes a fourth drunken driving offense a felony, a charge that carries a presumptive two- to six-year prison sentence. But the new version no longer imposes the tougher punishment for three offenses in seven years when aggravated circumstances are triggered. State Rep. Beth McCann, a Denver Democrat and bill sponsor, said she reluctantly agreed to soften the measure to reduce the cost to the state's courts and prison system.

**Colorado expanded snow tire bill passes toughest test**

*The Greeley Tribune*

A bill to require all motorists to use snow tires or chains during snowy months on Colorado's major mountain highway has passed its toughest test in the state Legislature. The measure cleared the Senate Transportaiton Committee 5-0, but not before the committee chair and other Republicans on the committee expressed doubts about how effective the requirement would be in improving jammed Interstate 70.

**Colorado Senate Education Committee approves test opt-out bill**

*The Denver Post*

The Senate Education Committee approved a bill Thursday that would explicitly allow opting students out of required assessments, though its political prospects moving forward are questionable. The result of an alliance of conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats, Senate Bill 223 would shield teachers, principals, districts and schools from consequences if test participation drops below required levels because of parents opting their children out. The committee approved the bill 8-1, with Sen. Michael Johnston of Denver the lone dissenter. Regardless of what happens in the Senate or House, Gov. John Hickenlooper's office has signaled the governor will not support opt-out legislation that would put federal funding at risk.

**Legislature will let Colorado's parental-leave law expire**

*Denver Business Journal*

Beginning in September, larger businesses no longer will have to follow a uniform statewide policy granting leave time to workers to take part in their children's school activities. Republicans on the Senate State, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee voted 3-2 along party lines Wednesday to kill House Bill 1221, which would have extended a 2009 law permitting employees to take as much as six hours a month and 18 hours a year of unpaid leave to attend their children's parent-teacher meetings or disciplinary activities in schools. The law is set to expire on Sept. 1.

**Gardner aims to bolster private water rights**

*Durango Herald*

In a speech on the U.S. Senate floor Wednesday, Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Colo., proposed an amendment to the Senate budget aimed at protecting privately held water rights and permits. The amendment, which passed later in the day on a 59-41 vote, would recognize the authority to manage water according to state law and protect against federal takeover of water rights and permits. "Unfortunately, whether it is the Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, other agencies have continued to seek their ways to impose a water right at the federal level without going through the same channels and the same water-law system that other people in Colorado do," Gardner said in his speech. "People who are by right, by law and by our Constitution have the rightful ownership of Colorado water rights and water permits.

**Gov. Hickenlooper announces creation of State Innovation Model for Colorado**

*Office of the Governor*

On Monday, March 23, 2015Gov. John Hickenlooper announced today the creation of the State Innovation Model (SIM) Office and State Innovation Model Advisory Board for Colorado, tasked with creating a coordinated, accountable system of care that gives Coloradans access to integrated primary care and behavioral health. Colorado was recently awarded $65 million health care grant to develop the program. The funding over the next four years will allow the state to develop a State Health Care Innovation Plan with a focus on improved integration of physical and behavioral health services. Hickenlooper issued an Executive Order last week directing the creation of the Office of the State Innovation Model and the State Innovation Model Advisory Board. The Executive Order shall continue through January 31, 2019. The SIM initiatives, which consist of leveraging the power of public health system to achieve broader population health goals and support delivery of care, as well as utilization of outcomes-based payments to enable transformation, are just a few of the initiatives that the SIM Office is tasked with bringing to Colorado.

The creation of the SIM Advisory Board will allow for the state to provide advice, oversight, and guidance for the operation of the SIM Office. The Advisory Board will also provide recommendations on how to better integrate behavioral and primary health in Colorado. Policies and procedures will be established as the Board deems appropriate. The formation of the Advisory Board and the SIM Office will work with public stakeholders to advise and develop a successful implementation plan for SIM.

**The Calculator**

**House Bills Introduced: 317**

**Senate Bills Introduced: 255**

**Number of Bills PI'd: 136**

**Bills Signed by the Governor: 77**