



Legislative Newsletter



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*An up-to-date review of Colorado government and politics especially for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.
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**"Believe you can and you are halfway there."
Theodore Roosevelt**

Days Til Sine Die: 86

Bipartisan legal opinion surfaces regarding Colorado's hospital fee

Denver Business Journal

Former legal counsels for the past two Colorado governors opined Thursday that the Legislature can turn the hospital provider fee into an enterprise fund and create more room in the general fund for transportation and education spending - a development that business leaders hope will convince some Republicans who may be sitting on the fence to back the move for such a change.

The release of the opinion came just hours after Gov. John Hickenlooper told a meeting of the Colorado Municipal League that if he can convince legislators to back his idea about turning the fee into an enterprise fund, he would like to use some of the newly freed revenue stream to sell bonds and raise \$4 billion to \$5 billion for immediate transportation solutions.

Energy company sells most of its Colorado assets for \$910 million

Denver Business Journal

WPX Energy Inc., Colorado's biggest producer of natural gas, said Tuesday it will sell most of its Colorado assets to private equity firm Terra Energy Partners LLC for \$910 million in cash.

The deal for WPX's assets and operations in Colorado's Piceance Basin, in western Colorado, is intended to shore up the Tulsa, Oklahoma, company's balance sheet and help it survive the downturn. WPX has 215 employees in its Parachute office, plus an additional 16 in its Denver office.

WPX (NYSE: WPX) said the deal will sell off its wholly owned subsidiary, WPX Energy Rocky Mountain LLC. WPX announced its intentions to sell its Piceance Basin assets in mid-December. The deal is expected to close in the second quarter.

Colorado lawmakers consider \$100 million in mid-year budget cuts

Denver Post

Faced with a significant budget shortfall, state lawmakers are poised to cut roughly \$100 million from the current state budget and pull \$60 million from reserves as part of a package of spending bills introduced this week.

The spending cuts are driven by a slowdown in the state's economic growth - led in part by tanking oil prices - and represent a recent departure for the usual midyear budget adjustments.

"We are saving money this year," said Rep. Bob Rankin, a Republican budget writer. "That's highly unusual. We are usually bumping way up."

Initial nod given to off-road vehicle bill, while House considers related measure

The Daily Sentinel

The Colorado Senate gave preliminary approval to a bill Friday that would allow local governments to let off-highway vehicles cross state highways that run through their boundaries.

The measure, SB8, is part of a greater debate over the use of all-terrain vehicles on the state's highways when trying to get from one trail to another.

Sen. Larry Crowder, R-Alamosa, introduced a bill last year to allow the same thing in unincorporated areas of a county, but had to pull any reference to cities and towns because that required more work.

Fewer people charged in Colorado with driving while high in 2015

Denver Business Journal

The Colorado State Patrol arrested fewer people on allegations they were driving under the influence of marijuana last year, according a report released Thursday.

The report is the first glimpse at how the change in law is affecting highway safety, because the state patrol did not keep statistics on the number of people charged with driving under the influence of marijuana prior to 2014 when recreational pot became legal.

In 2015, the second year the patrol kept statistics, 4,546 citations were issued for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

House passes Mitsch Bush's tire tread bill

Vail Daily

A bill requiring adequate tires or chains in bad weather cleared Colorado's House of Representatives on Tuesday and is headed for the state Senate.

Diane Mitsch Bush's bill would require that motorists have adequate tires or chains, or other traction devices such as chains when the weather gets bad between Oct. 1 and May 15, between Dotsero and Morrison on Interstate 70.

Her bill is designed to reduce road closures and delays on the mountain corridor of Interstate 70. Mitsch Bush represents Eagle and Routt counties in Colorado's House of Representatives.

Senate Approves Bill Directing More Car Tax Revenue to Roads

Colorado Senate Republicans

Most Coloradans pay their hefty vehicle registration fees assuming they'll go to road improvements, even though millions are diverted annually to fund politically-favored transit projects that should be a lesser priority given our deteriorating road conditions.

In a bid to correct this case of misplaced priorities, Senate Republicans today won passage of SB-11, which redirects to road safety \$15 million in FASTER funds currently earmarked for transit.

GOP measure to boost road money threatens Bustang, transit projects

Denver Post

The Republican-led state Senate gave initial approval Tuesday to a bill that would send an additional \$15 million to road building projects but cut money for mass transit options, such as the new Bustang service. The measure is part of a long-running effort by Republicans to rewrite a 2009 law authored by Democrats and showcases the ideological divide this session about how to address the state's transportation needs.

Legal marijuana in Colorado adversely affecting Mexican narcos, report says

Fox News Latino

The legalization and sale of marijuana in Colorado since 2014 has reduced the operations of Mexican drug cartels both along the southern U.S. border as well as inside this country, according to a report released Monday by a group specializing in legal matters.

The report, published by Lawyer Herald, uses recent statistics from several sources to conclude that the legal production, distribution and sale of recreational marijuana in Colorado is one of the factors that has caused the reduction in smuggling operations by Mexican drug cartels.

Who gave up what ground in the feud about ski areas and water rights?

Mountain Town News

In late December, the U.S. Forest Service announced a compromise with the ski industry in their feud over water rights. Both sides gave ground, but just as interesting was who didn't get deeply involved.

The environmental community mostly stayed on the sidelines, unwilling to hurl spears on behalf of the Forest Service. U.S. Rep. Scott Tipton, a Republican who represents much of Western Colorado, was triumphant if still warning of federal overreach. He called the Forest Service policy an "onerous attempt to hijack private water rights."

In this king-sized bed of political alliances, there was some unusual spooning going on. Tipton, elected with Tea Party support and a predictable critic of the Environmental Protection Agency, in this case shared covers with the Aspen Skiing Co., which had even dispatched a top official to testify in Congress against federal involvement in water administration.

Gov. Hickenlooper announces Boards and Commissions appointments

Office of the Governor

The Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging studies and produces a comprehensive strategic action plan on aging in Colorado through the year 2030. The Planning Group examines the impact, both positive and negative,

of the aging demographic shift on the economy, workforce, businesses, market based products and services; state and local revenue budgets and fiscal policies; Medicaid and other safety-net programs and the collateral impact on other nonrelated state programs; family caregiving and public and private options for long-term care, services and support; federal entitlement reforms; transportation services and infrastructure.

For a term expiring August 1, 2017:

- Kylie Ann Agnew of Denver, to serve as a representative of private, public and community-based health care and long-term care, service or support provider for older adults, and occasioned by the resignation of Eliza R. Lanman of Denver, appointed;

For a term expiring August 1, 2018:

- Sallie R. Thoreson of Grand Junction, to serve as the designee of the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and occasioned by the resignation of Anne-Marie Braga, LCSW, MSSW of Littleton, appointed;

For a term expiring August 1, 2019:

- Gregory Peter Coopman of Monument, to serve as a representative of private, public and community-based health care and long-term care, service or support provider for older adults, and occasioned by the resignation of Victoria "Vicki" Murray Rodgers of Westminster, appointed.

The Board of Trustees at Metropolitan State University of Denver is the governing body for the Metropolitan State University of Denver. The Board is responsible for all contracts, property, rules, and regulations governing the Metropolitan State University of Denver.

For terms expiring December 31, 2019:

- Jeff Shoemaker of Denver, to serve as a Republican, appointed;
- Wendy J. Dominguez of Littleton, to serve as a Republican, appointed;
- Elaine Gantz Berman of Denver, to serve as a Democrat, reappointed;
- Walter Louis Isenberg of Denver, to serve as a Democrat, reappointed.

The Automobile Theft Prevention Board solicits and reviews applications for grants that assist in improving and supporting automobile theft prevention programs, and programs for the enforcement and prosecution of automobile theft crimes.

For terms expiring February 1, 2022:

- Sheriff Steven Douglas Nowlin of Dolores, to serve as a member of law enforcement, reappointed;
- Jason Juarez of Parker, to serve as a representative of an insurance company, reappointed;
- Judy Bennett Burk of Denver, to serve as a representative of an insurance company authorized to issue motor vehicle insurance policies, reappointed;
- Josh Gates of Denver, to serve as a public member, appointed.

The Colorado Wildlife Stamp Committee annually reviews and makes recommendations on proposed projects for expenditure of Colorado wildlife habitat stamp funds.

For terms expiring December 31, 2019:

- John William Gale of Arvada, to serve as a representative of nationally or regionally recognized conservation organizations whose missions are focused on nongame wildlife, and whose membership is composed primarily of nongame wildlife users, appointed;
- Dan Christopher Prenzlów of Colorado Springs, to serve as an ex officio member representing the Division of Wildlife, reappointed;
- Kyle Miller of Denver, to serve as a sportsperson, appointed.

The Calculator

House Bills Introduced: 266

Senate Bills Introduced: 124

Number of Bills PI'd: 30

Bills Signed by the Governor: 0