



Legislative Newsletter



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*An up-to-date review of Colorado government and politics especially for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.
Compiled and edited by Axiom Strategies, Inc.*

"I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have."
-Thomas Jefferson

Smallwood says state health exchange repeal would save the state millions of dollars *ABC 7 Denver*

Republican State Senator Jim Smallwood says his plan to repeal the Colorado Health Benefit Exchange would save the state millions.

Smallwood talked about Senate Bill 3 on this week's Politics Unplugged with Anne Trujillo. The bill is seen as a mirror to the effort by Republicans in Congress to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

"Our state exchange is really funded through a number of different sources, but many of them are really tax payer dollars," State Sen. Smallwood said. "With my proposal, first of all we want people to know that by repealing the state exchange that in no way ends the ACA, it doesn't end ObamaCare in the state of Colorado. It allows our citizens to buy the same policies from the same insurance companies at the same rates, but on website healthcare.gov instead of connectforhealthco.com because healthcare.gov is being paid for with federal dollars because with connect for health we're paying for it, again, with our state dollars."

Lawmakers eye package of health-care bills to provide cost relief on Western Slope *Summit Daily*

In the ongoing struggle to reduce the cost of health insurance along Colorado's Western Slope, this year's legislative cycle down in Denver at the State Capitol could prove momentous.

With so much uncertainty at the federal level as a new executive branch and U.S. Congress take the reins in guiding the nation's health-care system, Colorado's lawmakers don't plan to wait around to see what happens. Instead, based on some of the recommendations produced from two state commissions looking at the cost of care in the High Country and throughout the state, a package of proposed statutes are in the works.

Trump for actions targeting Affordable Care Act

Bill Would Repeal State Healthcare Exchange

CBS 4

State lawmakers are taking up a bill to repeal Connect for Health Colorado - the state healthcare exchange.

The sponsor of the bill says insurance companies are bailing from the exchange, premiums are skyrocketing, and taxpayers, who don't even use the exchange, are subsidizing it.

Searching For Future Funding, CDOT Is Taking Pay-Per-Mile For A Test Drive

CPR

The Colorado Department of Transportation has a problem - it's running out of money to pay for roads.

Most of the money CDOT uses on projects and repairs comes from the gas tax, which doesn't generate revenue like it used to. So the department is exploring creative new ways to tap into drivers' pockets, including a recently-launched pilot that charges motorists by the mile.

CDOT began by recruiting about 100 volunteers to participate in its Road Usage Charge Pilot Program. The program theoretically charges volunteers 1.2 cents per mile. No money actually exchanges hands. Right now, CDOT is merely examining the feasibility of a mileage tax.

Lawmakers try a new strategy to help bring condos back to Colorado

Denver Post

A precision-strike approach at the state Capitol to reform Colorado's construction defects laws - rather than a comprehensive, catch-all bill - may be the best way to jump-start a condo market that has fallen way behind the recent population boom in the metro area.

So says the state's top Democratic lawmaker, House Speaker Crisanta Duran, who this month helped introduce a bill that aims to ease insurance premiums for developers hoping to build multifamily, owner-occupied projects in Colorado. It is a first step, she said, to modifying a system that has been blamed by some for scaring away condo builders by making it too easy for homeowners to sue over shoddy work.

Construction-defects reform: Colorado House speaker lays out changes she will back

Denver Business Journal

Colorado House Speaker Crisanta Duran would support legislation requiring more homeowners to approve a construction-defects lawsuit and providing more information to those condominium owners about the effect of legal actions, she said Thursday.

It's the legislative leader's first indication that she is willing to go beyond an already introduced measure affecting insurance costs to do something to jump-start the state's stalled condo-construction market, which developers blame in part on existing construction-defects laws.

Through tears of pride and sorrow, Legislature hosts annual Military Appreciation Day

Colorado Statesman

Men and women in uniform line the halls of the building. A soldier played taps to launch the proceedings. Senators and representatives are sitting together in the House chamber.

Lawmakers this year introduced eight resolutions, including Resolution 1006, honoring the U.S.S. Pueblo, a cargo ship named after the Colorado city. The ship was attacked by North Koreans in 1968.

It is still held by North Korea. One crew member was killed in the action. Eighty were captured along with two civilian oceanographers.

Sen. Bob Gardner, R-Colorado Springs, said it was so important that the American people "keep faith" with the military. "I'm one of the only ones here old enough to remember when the ship was taken," he joked. It's important that we continue to keep faith for the U.S. Pueblo, important to continue to insist on its return."

As states rush to legalize weed, Colorado still at it five years later

Colorado Statesman

It's two and half weeks into the Colorado legislative session and lawmakers have introduced at least six bills concerning the state's legal weed, which was legalized in the state five years ago.

It's a sign of how fast legalization tends to happen and how long it takes to work out the commercial and regulatory details - and that was before Alabama's anti-pot Sen. Jeff Sessions was nominated for U.S. attorney general.

Bills this year will draw public attention and make headlines, as in years past, but mostly they've become a routine part of life under the Gold Dome.

Bills introduced so far this year include HB 1034 on licensing issues; HB 1082 on marijuana taxes and school funding; SB 15 on marijuana advertising; SB 17 on Marijuana as stress disorder drug; SB 25 on marijuana education; and SB 63 on marijuana club licensing.

Republican Bill to Increase Youth Marijuana Education Passes First Hurdle

Colorado Senate GOP

Senate Majority Leader Chris Holbert (R-Douglas County) and Senator Randy Baumgardner's (R-Grand County) bill to provide age-appropriate educational materials about the risks of underage marijuana use to schools passed unanimously out of the Senate Business, Labor, and Technology Committee. Senate Bill 17-025 offers public schools a resource bank of educational materials on marijuana related issues to help create suitable curricula.

"Helping our schools and students navigate the changing landscape here in Colorado must be at the forefront of our discussions on new policy," said Holbert "Our bill ensures that schools have access to materials and curricula that will give our kids the tools they need to understand the risks related to marijuana use, similar to current alcohol education."

"It is important for us to reach out to public schools and offer them guidance on how to speak to a ten-year-old about marijuana use as opposed to a sixteen-year-old," said Baumgardner. "Our kids are growing up in a state where marijuana is increasingly present in the public sphere, we must provide them with the tools they need to make smart choices."

Senate Bill 17-025 now moves on to a vote of the committee of the whole.

Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments

Office of the Governor

For a term expiring July 1, 2017:

- Margaret G. Spaulding of Lakewood, to serve as a representative of a state agency that administers funds provided under the "Older Americans Act of 1965," and occasioned by the resignation of Audrey A. Krebs of Lakewood, appointed.

The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission works with state agencies, the U.S. Forest Services, Bureau of Land Management, local byways organizations, and public and private resources to assist in the development of byways management plans, including interpretation, promotion and protection of distinctive byways characteristics. They also help coordinate the budgeting process and allocation of federal, state and private funds for the purpose of byway improvement.

For a term expiring January 1, 2019:

- Honorable Barbara McLachlan of Durango, to serve as a member of the Colorado State Legislature, and occasioned by the resignation of Honorable KC Becker of Boulder, appointed;

for terms expiring January 1, 2020:

- Nathaniel David Boyless of Denver, to serve as a representative from the Colorado Historical Society, appointed;
- Kathryn H. Hall of Grand Junction, to serve as a representative from the Colorado Department of Transportation, reappointed;
- Jill Lammers of Denver, to serve as a representative from the Colorado Tourism Office, appointed.

The Air Quality Control Commission develops and maintains a comprehensive program for the prevention and control of air pollution in Colorado. The major goal of this program is to meet national ambient air quality standards.

For terms expiring January 31, 2020:

- Peter Butler of Durango, to serve as a person with appropriate technical and scientific experience, reappointed;
- Anthony Gerber of Denver, to serve as a person with appropriate scientific experience, reappointed;
- Charles George Grobe of Craig, to serve as a person with appropriate industrial experience, reappointed;
- Jeffrey Todd Mitchell of Aspen, to serve as a person with appropriate scientific and technical experience, reappointed.

Calculator

House Bills Introduced: 121

Senate Bills Introduced: 95

Dead Bills: 0