



Legislative Newsletter



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February 27, 2017

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

*"It's very easy to be different, but very difficult to be better."
-Jonathan Ive*

Democrats, GOP spar over Medicaid reform at gov's meeting

Colorado Statesman

Tensions emerged Saturday between Democratic and Republican U.S. governors over a GOP-led proposal for a major overhaul to Medicaid, with Democrats saying the changes would take away people's health coverage to finance tax cuts for the wealthy.

GOP governors intend to present Congress with a plan that they say would give states more flexibility to administer health coverage for poorer residents while protecting states from absorbing the costs of repealing the Affordable Care Act. Democratic governors said Saturday that their Republican counterparts were being dishonest about the effects of their plan.

Guest post: We're Republican lawmakers and we think it's time to fine tune TABOR

Colorado Independent

2017 will be the 25th anniversary of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR). Maybe it is time for a 25 year checkup. We should have a discussion on how it is working. Is it doing what we want as a state? If not, why not? And what can we do to fix it.

Article 10, section 20 of the Colorado Constitution (TABOR) provides that state fiscal year spending, which includes taxes and fees, cannot grow faster than the rate of inflation plus population growth. The original intent of TABOR was twofold. First, the citizens wanted a constraint on the growth of government. We did not want our government to outgrow our ability to pay for it with our sales taxes and income taxes. Secondly, we wanted to be able to vote on tax rate increases.

State looks into use of 'Blended Learning'

9 News

In small school districts across Colorado, teachers like Kelley Glover have to reach varying levels of students within the same class.

"I teach both math and science," Glover said.

She works at Grand Valley Middle School in Parachute where teachers use a method of Blended Learning. Glover says she can assign different levels of work to different students while receiving face-to-face support in the classroom.

"The kids are able to take that home, to read about the assignments, to understand what they are and then come back and ask me questions," Glover said.

Transportation plan grants local say on transit, asphalt or potholes

ColoradPolitics.com

Local leaders could get to call the shots with part of the money from a state transportation plan in the works at the state Capitol.

That was the revelation from a forum with House Speaker Crisanta Duran and Senate President Kevin Grantham Tuesday night in Denver. Business leaders came from across the state for the event put on by the coalition Fix Colorado Roads and the Colorado Business Roundtable.

Duran said she and Grantham had agreed on several things: the state needs about \$3 billion in bonds to pay for transportation, the state needs to ask voters for some new tax money in November and, thirdly, local governments should decide local needs.

"One solution in one part of the state is not necessarily the solution for another part of the state," she said.

Colorado lawmakers make some progress in road-funding talks

9 News

More than one-third of the way through the state Legislature's 2017 session, Colorado Senate and House leaders still don't agree on several key details in their effort to increase transportation funding.

But they are coming together on broader provision of what will and won't be in a ballot measure they are looking to send to voters in November.

State Senate President Kevin Grantham, R-Cañon City, and House Speaker Crisanta Duran, D-Denver, say they remain optimistic that they can come up with a tax-hike measure by the May 10 end of the session that increases funding for highways, local roads and transit.

The pair of legislative leaders spoke to activists and interested citizens at an event Tuesday that was hosted by the Colorado Business Roundtable and the advocacy group Fix Colorado Roads.

CDOT answers your questions about crumbling bridges and where all the FASTER money is going to

Denver 7 News

We told you about some of the worst structurally deficient bridges in the state on Tuesday and how Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) officials say the agency needs a voter-approved tax increase to help fix them all.

Since then, dozens of you reached out to Denver7 with more questions and other bridge locations to check out, so we took your questions directly to CDOT spokeswoman Amy Ford.

One Denver7 viewer sent us an email wanting to know more about the proposed tax hike and why it wasn't done sooner.

What Political Players Are Saying About Fixing Colorado's Transportation Woes

Colorado Public Radio

Colorado lawmakers began the 2017 legislative session calling for a bipartisan effort to address a big problem in the state: funding transportation and infrastructure needs. The Colorado Department of Transportation says it faces a \$9 billion shortfall over the next 10 years - and that current projected revenues will cover just 46 percent of the state's transportation needs over the next 25 years.

"Let's reach bipartisan consensus on a statewide transportation plan - a plan that overhauls our fast-decaying infrastructure and meets the needs of our rapidly growing state," Democratic House Speaker Crisanta Duran said during her opening day remarks.

Proposed bill would make electric vehicles more expensive in Colorado

Denver 7 News

A bill currently under consideration in the state Legislature would make it more expensive to own an electric vehicle in Colorado.

SB 188, introduced earlier this month in the Senate Finance Committee, would repeal current state tax credits offered to those who purchase alternative fuel vehicles, including EVs.

Currently in Colorado, buyers in the market for an alternative fuel light-duty vehicle are eligible for a \$5,000 tax break. Heavy-duty trucks are eligible for a \$20,000 tax credit

Colorado governor unveils cybersecurity center, urges change in strategy

Staescoop

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper warned on Monday that unless states take a proactive approach to cybersecurity education and investment, leaders will find themselves susceptible to crippling attacks from hackers and organized cybercrime.

Hickenlooper addressed an audience in San Francisco at RSA's Public Sector Day where he outlined his administration's digital security efforts and appealed to the private and public sector to work together on defense. As a reference point, the Democratic governor summarized how his state is constructing a National Cybersecurity Center (NCC) in Colorado Springs, a nonprofit funded through the state that seeks to be a hub and first responder for state defense and outreach.

No, Gov. John Hickenlooper is not running for president in 2020, he tells The Denver Post

Denver Post

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper is not running for president in 2020 - despite what you may have heard.

The two-term Democrat's name is being mentioned as a potential contender after landing on the vice presidential short-list for Hillary Clinton in 2016.

And his choice of words in a recent CNN interview about a possible presidential bid against Donald Trump only fanned the flames.

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But Hickenlooper told The Denver Post in an interview Thursday that it's nonsense. "I thought that couldn't have been more clear that I wasn't going to run," he said.

Amateur winemakers may soon be allowed to compete under Colorado bill

The Durango Herald

Budding oenologists have some friends at the state Capitol who want to level the playing field with other practitioners of zymology.

Or in English, amateur winemakers might have restrictions lifted so they would fall under the same laws as other homebrewers.

House Bill 1145, which would allow amateur winemakers to participate in wine-making contests so long as only the judges taste their wine, was passed on a unanimous 13-0 vote by the House Business Affairs and Labor Committee

"I believe we have over 140 wineries in the state of Colorado, and it's great to open up the industry to amateur winemakers for exposure," said Rep. Leslie Herod, D-Denver and sponsor of the bill.

State Pot Officials: 'Impossible To Discern' White House Action On Retail Pot

CBS 4 Denver

State leaders say it's unclear if White House Spokesperson Sean Spicer's comments truly represent a new policy when it comes to legalized marijuana.

The Justice Department will step up enforcement of federal law against recreational marijuana, Spicer said Thursday, offering the Trump administration's strongest indication to date of a looming crackdown on the drug, even as a solid majority of Americans believe it should be legal.

House Dems React to Possible "Greater Enforcement" of federal Marijuana Law

Colorado House Democrats Communication

After White House spokesman Sean Spicer stated that states that have legalized recreational marijuana will see "greater enforcement" of federal marijuana laws, members of the House Democratic caucus issued the following statements:

"Voters approved recreational marijuana in 2012 and in the years since we have followed their direction to create a regulatory framework for this new and growing industry that promotes economic growth and protects public safety," said Speaker of the House Crisanta Duran, D-Denver. "Here in Colorado we've worked across party lines to create an industry framework that has led to a billion dollar boon for our economy and created thousands of jobs. Other states are looking to follow our

example. A federal incursion at this point - after Colorado has demonstrated its ability to regulate the industry - is completely unwarranted.

"The President should not back out of his promise to let states figure out ways to move away from the ineffective and damaging war on drugs," said Rep. Jonathan Singer, D-Longmont. "In Colorado, we have a billion dollar marijuana industry. That's \$1 billion dollars that is going through the legal market rather than to drug cartels, and is helping us to protect safety and invest in drug treatment and prevention."

"The 10th Amendment protects the rights of states to listen to and effectively represent the will of their constituents," said Rep. Dan Pabon, D-Denver. "From the beginning, we have complied with the Cole Memorandum-the gold standard of guidance from the Justice Department-and I don't understand why anyone would impugn what we've done here in Colorado because we've done it by the book."

Bill in Congress could protect Colorado's marijuana laws

Fox 31 Denver

A bill that's now in Congress could protect Colorado's marijuana laws.

It comes just as the White House hinted at a crackdown on recreational marijuana earlier this week. It's H.R. 975 and it was introduced by Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.).

The bill is referred to as the "Respect State Marijuana Laws" act. Its purpose is to protect people from being prosecuted under the controlled substance act as long as they are following their state's laws regarding marijuana.

Marijuana revenue numbers still up years later

Colorado Statesman

Colorado's perceived "cash cow" of tax revenue is still going strong three years after adult recreational use of marijuana began, but members of Denver City Council were told to expect that revenue to likely level off in the years ahead.

Adam Orens, a founding partner of the Marijuana Policy Group, was one of three officials to brief the council's Special Issues Committee on the latest information regarding medical and recreational marijuana use since state voters approved constitutional amendments in 2000 and 2012, respectively.

Orens cited figures from a National Survey of Drug Use and Health and a survey by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment that focused on 2014 and 2015.

Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments

Office of the Governor

The Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council advances recommendations that strengthen healthy food access for all Coloradans through local agriculture, food systems and economies. It is the state conduit for hearing, reviewing and advancing critical food systems issues in which state government does, or could, play a role.

For a term expiring October 7, 2019:

- Joel Jacques-Piche McClurg of Fort Collins, to serve as a representative of anti-hunger and food assistance programs, and occasioned by the resignation of Catherine Tiller Blackford of Denver, appointed.

The Mined Land Reclamation Board meets to carry on a continuing review of the problems of mining and land reclamation in Colorado.

Effective March 1, 2017 for terms expiring March 1, 2021:

- Jill Heeringa Van Noord of Boulder, an individual with substantial experience in conservation, reappointed;
- Forrest Von Luke of Craig, an individual with substantial experience in the mining industry, reappointed.

Calculator

Days Left to Sine Die: 72

House Bills Introduced: 209

Senate Bills Introduced: 198

Dead Bills: 75