



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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“I like the cold weather. It means you get work done.”

— Noam Chomsky

The First Regular Session of the Seventy-second General Assembly convened on Jan. 4, 2019. As of today, there have been 171 bills in the House and 133 bills in the Senate introduced. This is significantly under the amount we usually see at this time, so expect many more to be introduced. Expect weekly newsletters from Axiom during the legislative session, and your Capitol Watch bill tracker URL will be sent every Friday.

-Team Axiom-

Gov. Polis appoints top position at Human Services, Personnel and Administration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday,
Feb. 8, 2019

Does Colorado need a new way to pick presidents?

Colorado Politics

Future American presidents should earn their seats through a national popular vote, Colorado Democrats say.

And the state's Republican lawmakers can delay, but not prevent the movement, it seems.

The state legislature is on track to join 11 other states and the District of Columbia with the expected passage of Senate Bill 42, proposed by Sen. Mike Foote, D-Lafayette.

The bill would change how Colorado's electors -- the people who actually choose our presidents -- cast their votes each four years.

As things stand, Colorado electors cast their votes for whichever presidential candidate gets the most votes in the state. Under SB 42, the state's electoral votes instead would be cast for whichever presidential candidate wins the national popular vote, regardless of who wins Colorado's popular vote.

In 1996, for example, Colorado electors voted for Republican Bob Dole because he won the state's popular vote over Democrat Bill Clinton. But Clinton won the national vote that year. If SB 42 had been in effect back then, Colorado electors would have voted for Clinton instead.

The move to change how the nation elects presidents comes in the wake of the 2016 election, in which Democrat Hillary Clinton received nearly 2.9 million more votes nationwide than Republican Donald Trump. But the Electoral College -- the traditional name for the electors of all states -- made Trump because he won more state electoral votes.

While Clinton won large popular-vote majorities in big states like California, New York and Illinois, Trump won majorities in more states, giving him 306 electoral votes to Clinton's 232.

"If you change the system to a national popular vote election, candidates will campaign nationwide and not just focus on a few slivers of a few states," Foote said. "Each voter will be recognized as important and it will lead to the winner actually governing with the entire country in mind."

The Senate last week approved Foote's bill, voting along party lines, passing the measure to the House, where the measure is sponsored by Reps. Jeni Arndt, D-Fort Collins, and Emily Sirota, D-Denver.

Gov. Jared Polis supports the bill, a spokeswoman said.

An identical bill failed in a Republican-controlled Senate committee two years ago. And yet another similar attempt fell flat about a decade ago.

Capitol Business Preview: What businesses need to know this week at the Colorado Legislature

Denver Business Journal

Legislative Democrats have emphasized over the first month of the session that they have four major priorities: Health-care reform, increased education funding, energy legislation geared at environmental protection and reduction of the cost of living for average Coloradans.

But this week at the Legislature, those same Democrats — with the help of a Republican, in one case — will begin pushing a different and more-specific business-sector agenda that is starting to emerge: The increased regulation of what sorts of non-food items restaurants are allowed to give to their customers.

On Tuesday, the Senate Local Government Committee will hear Senate Bill 34, sponsored by Democratic Sen. Dominick Moreno of Commerce City, which would allow cities and counties to require that ready-to-eat food containers — think the boxes you get going through a drive-through or picking up food to take home — must be recyclable or compostable.

Then on Feb. 11, the House Energy and Environment Committee is scheduled to hear House Bill 1143, sponsored by Democratic Rep. Susan Lontine of Denver, which would prohibit restaurants or food vendors from providing customers with single-use plastic straws unless that customer requests the item. That bill has bipartisan sponsorship in the Senate — Democratic Sen. Rhonda Fields of Aurora and Republican Sen. Kevin Priola of Henderson.

Restaurants have been the focuses of a handful of bills in past years, but most of those dealt with the way that local governments conducted or made public the results of their inspections. Rarely have bills that dictated such specific business practices of eateries come forward.

However, there is a key difference between the two proposals. Restaurants actually asked for HB 1143 to be introduced. Meanwhile, they are looking for ways to amend SB 34.

HB 1143 is a way to get ahead of the national environmental push to ban plastic straws — but to do it in a reasonable, moderate way that still allows for the concerns of people who want or need straws, such as disabled individuals without the hand dexterity to lift glasses or drive-through patrons wanting to sip their beverage on the road, said Nick Hoover, Colorado Restaurant Association manager of government affairs. In cities that have banned plastic straws outright, many

restaurants have had a difficult time acquiring alternatives such as paper or bamboo straws because the supply chain is not in place yet to meet significant demands for those products.

“It has the opportunity to reduce plastic straws and the environmental impact of them at a local level, but at the same time it is a moderate approach,” Hoover said.

SB 34, however, causes concerns because it could create other supply-chain problems in acquiring currently lesser-used packaging options, particularly in smaller towns.

Colorado renters could see fees limited or even returned if new bill becomes law

Denver Post

Renters would have the right to know why a property rejected their application, receive an itemized receipt detailing any and all fees, and get any unused fees returned if a bill introduced in the Colorado House becomes law.

Right now, “there’s no requirement that a unit even be for rent,” said Jack Regenbogen, an attorney with the Colorado Center on Policy and Law.

“While this might violate your sense of fairness, there is nothing that would prevent a landlord, legally speaking, from collecting application fees on an ongoing basis even if every unit is filled.”

House Bill 1106 would change that by creating a set of rules landlords and rental companies would have to follow when it comes to charging and refunding application fees. The bill, as it’s currently written, would limit the fees property managers could charge to the costs of a credit check, criminal background check and administrative costs of a reference check. It would require landlords to refund any unused portion of those fees, and to explain to potential renters why they were rejected.

“We’ve heard that it is not uncommon for a prospective renter to exhaust their entire savings on rental application fees, leaving nothing left for first month’s rent,” Regenbogen said.

Several people testified about application fees and other nonrefundable fees that ranged from \$50 to \$450 per application, including Cesiah Guadarrama from the advocacy group 9to5 Colorado. She read the testimony of a woman who spent more than \$5,000 on application fees while living in a homeless shelter.

The bill is being pushed by three Democratic lawmakers, but Republicans and industry groups say they aren’t opposed to regulating rental application fees.

Nancy Burke, a vice president for the Colorado Apartment Association, said she’s working with the bill’s sponsors “so we can get to a support position.”

After Years Of Simmering Tug-Of-War, Colorado Dems Eye Action On Oil And Gas

Colorado Public Radio

Colorado’s new Democratic majority has vowed to make big changes to how companies drill for oil and gas. Tension between drillers and residents have bubbled for years and culminated in a failed statewide ballot fight last fall over the distance between oil and gas wells and homes and schools.

Critics also say the state oil and gas regulator ought to more closely scrutinize companies for health and safety.

Meantime, the industry says it abides by all regulations, some of which are the strictest in the country. In fact, they argue urban drilling goes through multiple review processes with local, county and state officials. Developers often adopt extra measures such as quieter drill rigs, additional air or water monitoring or pipelines to reduce truck traffic.

All parties in the debate were locked in a holding pattern under former Gov. John Hickenlooper, but Gov. Jared Polis is expected to take a different approach. Some Democrats want 2019 to be the year that significantly changes the regulation of oil and gas companies.

There's more than activists or oil and gas companies with their eyes on the state capitol. The Front Range cities of Lafayette, Superior and Erie have all enacted drilling moratoriums to wait and see what rules the legislature adopts in 2019.

Environmental Groups Cautiously Optimistic

There's an open field behind Lowell and Margie Lewis' modern ranch home in west Greeley. For years they enjoyed the view out their back porch of birds and other wildlife in the open terrain. Then, in 2017, an oil and gas company moved in.

"It's an industrial site back there. Just here plopped in the middle of our neighborhood," said Lowell Lewis.

Many residents of the Triple Creek neighborhood spoke out against the 22-well site and filed their protest with Greeley city council. When that didn't work, they went to the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

"It was obvious to me that they're here to politely listen to people tell them what they're doing wrong. And then go about their business," said Lowell Lewis. His wife Margie added that "their business seems to be to approve oil and gas sites. Pretty much no matter what."

Environmental advocates, like the Lewises, want state regulators' top priority to be health and safety. The idea has even had its day in court.

Rather than focus exclusively on health, the recent Colorado Supreme Court decision said that the COGCC must balance health and safety with efficient development of minerals.

It's a frustrating situation for many advocates because companies can follow all state and local rules and can still drill and as close as 500 feet near homes.

Colorado Rising was the advocacy group behind the failed statewide ballot issue that sought more distance between wells and homes. Spokeswoman Anne Lee Foster said concerns ranged from "water pollution to air pollution... [to] explosions."

"It's a massive issue to tackle," she said.

Ultimately Foster worries the state's new Democratic leaders will "make political calculations as opposed to really standing up for their constituents. And this might be one of those issues that falls to the political wayside [due to] lack of political will."

The energy industry worries about the complete opposite — Democrats going too far. "Dan Haley, president and CEO of the Colorado Oil and Gas Association thinks that "elected leaders who are there now have that responsibility to govern responsibility and to not overreach."

He added that companies have and will continue to work with communities to ease drilling concerns. He points to 2018 when companies agreed to new restrictions on how close they can drill near schools. Collaboration has limits though, Haley said, and industry will fight any legislation that threatens production or jobs.

Colorado lawmakers bring back bill to help insurance companies cover high-cost health claims

The Denver Post

In an effort to drive down insurance premiums in the state, Colorado lawmakers will once again consider creating a program to help insurers cover their sickest — and therefore most expensive — patients.

Legislators introduced a bill Friday in the House to create a reinsurance program.

The legislation, if passed, would create a state fund to help insurance companies cover high-cost claims. By controlling costs for insurers, lawmakers hope to lower premiums for everyone buying health insurance on the individual market by as much as 35 percent.

“I know of families in my community who are priced out of the individual insurance market place,” said Rep. Julie McCluskie, a Democrat sponsoring the bill. “The premiums are so high that they are scrambling to try to find other alternatives to make sure they have the coverage they need for good health.”

The bill will be able to be repealed after five years — a provision added because lawmakers view reinsurance as a method to lower premiums while they tackle the “deeper needs in our health care system,” she said.

A similar bill was presented last session, but failed to get through the Republican-controlled Senate amid concerns that a reinsurance program does not tackle the direct causes driving high premiums, said spokesman Sage Naumann.

Still, the program — often called insurance for insurance companies — has stayed in the forefront of discussions about health care costs in the state. And now, the Democrats control both chambers in the statehouse.

It was among the initiatives Gov. Jared Polis called for during his campaign, including it in his 100-day plan.

How it would work

If the bill passes, it will create a state fund that will help insurers cover costs once a patient incurs a certain amount of health care claims. The threshold for when the program begins to pay out has not yet been determined.

Once it kicks in, the fund will contribute to a unknown percentage of the individual claims, with a cap on the amount of reimbursements it pays.

By the time the fund begins to help cover costs, a patient will have already reached their deductible and out-of-pocket maximum, meaning any expenses not covered by the program will fall on insurance companies.

If the bill passes, Coloradans could see monthly insurance premiums cut by 10 percent to 35 percent, depending on where they live, McCluskie said.

And they could see those reductions, she said, by the start of the next open enrollment period later this year.

How it would be funded

The state Division of Insurance is working on a study, which will be finished by the spring, that will provide better insight into how much the reinsurance program would cost.

But estimates place the cost between \$270 million and \$340 million, said Michael Conway, the state’s insurance commissioner.

The cost of the program will be shared by the state and federal government.

By lowering the cost consumers pay for premiums on the individual market, the federal government will not spend as much on subsidies. So if the bill passes, Colorado will request a waiver from the federal government to allow the state to shift those tax savings into the reinsurance program, Conway said.

The state's share of the program cost would be an estimated \$80 million to \$130 million, he said. The state would pay for its share via savings created by reducing the amount of reimbursements paid to hospitals and other health providers.

Colorado lawmakers consider regulating plastic straws

9 News

DENVER — A plastic straw may no longer come standard with your beverages in Colorado. A new bill would stop restaurants from automatically providing one. Instead, anyone wanting one would have to ask for it.

Rep. Susan Lontine (D-House District 1) introduced HB19-1145 to the State House on January 29. The legislation would prohibit a restaurant, food vendor, or other food services from providing a single-use plastic straw unless a customer specifically requests one. It's similar to regulations California signed into law in September 2018.

The debate over plastic straws has been a conversation since 2015 when biologists found one inside a sea turtle's nose. The video went viral.

Some Colorado restaurants are already following the 'by request' model.

"Restaurants leave a big carbon footprint. A lot of industries do," Big Red F owner Dave Query said. Big Red F Restaurant Group runs several restaurants in Boulder and Denver. None of them hand out plastic straws unless a customer asks for one.

"This planet is plastic producing people and it's our little tiny effort at helping reverse the flow," Query explained.

The Colorado Restaurant Association asked Rep. Lontine to bring the bill forward, with the intent to present a moderately reasoned approach to the straw issue. They recognized problems with the full ban advocates have vouched for and cities like Seattle and Vancouver have in place.

"A concern with a straw ban is those who might not have the hand dexterity to drink out of a glass without a straw would either have to constantly bring a straw with them or they wouldn't have access to one in event of a straw ban," Nick Hoover, the Manager of Government Affairs for the Colorado Restaurant Association said.

He also stressed forcing restaurants to switch to eco-friendly paper or bamboo straws wouldn't be feasible.

"We wanted to make sure restaurants still have the ability to utilize the straws they are currently using," Hoover explained. "There's just simply not a supply chain for those products [bamboo or paper straws] to be used broadly across the state of Colorado."

The Plastic Industry Association, the national trade association for the plastics industry's entire supply chain, recognized the reasons for plastic straw regulations are legitimate. The group's VP of Government Affairs agreed the 'by request' model is a rational one. They don't want a full ban either.

"When you maintain an element of consumer choice, we can support that," Scott Defife said. Defife argued that plastic straws aren't the only issue.

"Our waste management systems are not properly capturing the materials that are being used by consumers today," Defife explained. "There's so much more coming into the system than is being able to be taken back out of the system."

The Plastics Industry Association plans to ask Congress to include an investment in waste management in the next infrastructure package.

Colorado's new bill does have exceptions including self-serve straw dispensers or prepackaged food, drive-thru windows, and third-party delivery services.

The bill will go before the House Energy & Environment Committee on February 25.

Business leaders drop opposition to 'ban the box' bill as it advances in Colorado Legislature

Denver Business Journal

After three years of fighting state efforts to bar employers from asking about criminal histories on job applications, leaders of major Colorado business groups gave up their opposition to the latest proposal on Tuesday, smoothing the way for a legislative committee to give bipartisan approval to the newest version of the "ban the box" bill.

House Bill 1025, sponsored by Democratic Reps. Jovan Melton of Aurora and Leslie Herod of Denver, would prohibit employers from advertising that a position is not open to someone with a criminal history and would bar them from asking on an initial application if the job-seeker has a criminal history. It offers exemptions for jobs that are closed by law to people with particular criminal histories — working around kids for particular sexual criminals, for example — and to employers who are required by law to conduct criminal background checks for certain positions.

This year's version of the bill, which follows on unsuccessful efforts from 2016 and 2017, applies to all employers, rather than just those that have 14 or more employees, as past offerings have done. However, business leaders noted that several other changes were made — including some via amendments in the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday — that make HB 1025 acceptable enough for them to go neutral on the measure.

The biggest change for business leaders was the addition of a clause that sends alleged violations of the proposed new law to a state administrative panel and specifically does not create a private cause of action through the bill that would allow Coloradans to file lawsuits against employers that they believe are violating the statute.

"That was a concern for employers that could be sued right out of the gate," said Loren Furman, senior vice president of state and federal relations for the Colorado Chamber of Commerce.

Also, an amendment approved Tuesday delays implementation of the law by two years for businesses that have fewer than 10 employees. Tony Gagliardi, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business, said that is key for small companies who don't have human-resources departments following changes in laws and who move through the hiring process more quickly than large corporations that can conduct the criminal-background checks that still are allowed under HB 1025.

"It allows the small businesses to get up to speed," Gagliardi said. "We agree with the concept. We agree that the state should be able to impact recidivism. It's necessary to do everything we can to get offenders back in the workforce."

With that, HB 1025 passed the committee by a vote of 8-3, with Republicans Rep. Matt Soper of Delta joining with all of the Democrats to move it forward to the House floor. Though several Republicans still objected because they felt the prohibition was overly broad and could even affect people posting ads on community-center bulletin boards to help them care for their aging parents, it is expected to receive support in the Democratic-controlled House and Senate and become law in the coming months.

Colorado advances bill to import cheaper prescription drugs

The Denver Post

DENVER — Colorado on Thursday joined a growing number of states that want to cut certain prescription drug prices by importing licensed drugs from Canada.

The idea is central to Democratic Gov. Jared Polis' campaign to rein in health care costs for Coloradans, many of whom, especially in sparsely populated rural and mountain regions, pay some of the nation's highest insurance premiums.

The Senate Health & Human Services Committee advanced a bill that would direct the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing to design a program to import prescription drugs from licensed Canadian suppliers and distribute them to Colorado pharmacies and hospitals.

Advocates say U.S. consumers pay twice what Canadian consumers pay for patented prescription drugs.

The bill would determine which high-cost prescription drugs to include; how to test for quality and safety; and ensure providers and insurers charge consumers accordingly. If approved, imports could start in 2021.

The bill's Democratic sponsors, Sens. Joann Ginal and Robert Rodriguez and Rep. Sonya Jaquez Lewis, suggest the program could be paid for with state fees on imports.

"This is not a personal, unregulated import program where individuals use mail-order websites," Ginal said. "This is a program where the state takes on the responsibility to act as a wholesale importer."

Republican Sens. Jim Smallwood and Larry Crowder urged caution in proceeding with the \$1.3 million design study. Smallwood cast the lone "no" vote on the bill, which was sent to the Appropriations Committee.

Among other concerns, Smallwood asked whether Colorado could deliver substantial cost savings for Medicaid enrollees and the privately insured. He also sought to ensure lawmakers had a greater voice once the program analysis is completed. Majority Democrats rejected that motion.

Dems plan family leave proposal

Grand Junction Sentinel

DENVER — They haven't introduced it yet, but Democrats still are expected to bring a bill creating a family paid leave insurance program during this year's legislative session.

While the details of such a measure are not yet known, if it resembles one that was introduced during last year's session, it would create an insurance program under the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment.

Last year's measure, HB1001, cleared the Democratic-controlled House, but was killed by Republicans in its first committee in the then GOP-dominated Senate.

That bill, partly sponsored by Sen. Kerry Donovan, D-Vail, called for all employees in the state to pay up to 0.99 percent of their annual salaries into the program. That fee, which would be set by the department through rulemaking, would have raised about \$1.7 billion a year, money that employees then could claim if they were forced to take unpaid time off to care for themselves or a family member in a medical emergency.

Under that measure, a person whose annual salary is \$50,000 would pay \$495 a year into the program. Donovan said she has no plans to be on this year's measure.

Under federal law, employers who have more than 50 employees are required to allow their workers up to 12 weeks of time off for medical emergencies, but the law doesn't require that time off to be paid. A handful of states have created programs to pay workers who take that time off.

While Republicans have long opposed the idea, two GOP legislators tried to find a way around the Democrats' pending proposal.

Republican Reps. Lois Landgraf of Colorado Springs and Susan Beckman of Littleton introduced HB1058, a bill that would have created a special tax credit that employers who chose to provide paid family leave could claim against their income taxes.

The bill also would have allowed for tax deductions for employees and employers that create family leave savings accounts.

The House Finance Committee, however, killed the bill last week on a straight party-line vote.

"This bill presented a solution that was not a government mandate and allowed for flexibility that didn't punish business owners," Beckman said.

"This is another missed opportunity for Democrats to do the right thing for Colorado," Landgraf added.

"This bill was the solution for our family leave needs in Colorado, and Democrats rejected it out of hand," she said.

Gov. Jared Polis, a Democrat, said he supports paid leave for private employees.

In his State of the State address to the Colorado Legislature last month, Polis said he would create such a program for all state workers.

Colorado business leaders show interest in backing revenue-retention measure for roads, schools

Denver Business Journal

Business groups are slowly beginning to get on board with a proposal from Colorado House Speaker K.C. Becker to de-Bruce the state government — either temporarily or permanently — and split the revenue it gets to keep between transportation, K-12 schools and higher education.

Becker, D-Boulder, said this week that she is still formulating the details of her plan, which would involve asking voters to give up any rebates they otherwise would get in years when the state government exceeds its Taxpayer's Bill of Rights revenue cap and put that money instead to the three areas where business leaders and activists say the state has fallen the shortest in funding. But as part of her process, she met recently with a group of several dozen business leaders about their backing the plan in a statewide campaign — a level of support that she said is important toward her decision on how to proceed with the plan.

Discussions around the idea, which Becker first revealed at the Colorado Chamber of Commerce's Colorado Business Day luncheon in mid-January, are escalating in the absence of other ideas gaining traction on how to raise a substantial amount of money to address the \$8.5 billion transportation infrastructure backlog that is estimated by the Colorado Department of Transportation. Voters in November rejected both a sales-tax hike and tax-less bond sale to fund billions of dollars worth of projects, and both transportation leaders and majority Democrats at the Legislature say they would prefer not to move forward with a smaller \$2.3 billion bonding proposal that is set to go on the statewide ballot in November.

Becker's plan, which is similar to the Referendum C measure that passed in 2005, would ask if the state can keep money it otherwise would have to refund to voters and divide it evenly between transportation, K-12 and higher education. She said during a media briefing on Monday, however, that if supporters of any of those three sectors decide this is not a move they want to back, she just as easily could propose splitting the revenues between the other two areas.

Because of the strong economy, the state could exceed the TABOR cap by a combined \$1 billion between this fiscal year and next fiscal year. Becker and business leaders acknowledged that is just a drop in the bucket compared to the overall

needs of transportation and education, but they've also said it would represent a substantial start to the work that must be done.

Sex ed and filibusters: Partisan fault lines showing at Colorado Capitol

The Denver Post

Flashes of partisan politics have lit up the Capitol in the early days of Colorado's General Assembly as Republicans pull what levers they can as the minority party in both chambers.

They're rallying social conservatives by the hundreds over a sex education bill. They're using amendments and even filibusters to delay votes they can't stop on legislation they see as an attack on their priorities.

"I think you're going to see a lot more of what happened Wednesday night if Democrats continue to try to drive an agenda that doesn't take into consideration how conservatives feel about these issues," said Jeff Hunt, director of the Centennial Institute, a conservative think tank at Colorado Christian University. "Our message to Democrats is that there is a way to do this, and there's a way to get social conservatives to stand with you."

Wednesday was the day that hundreds of Coloradans — called to action by the state's Republican Party and conservative religious organizations — flooded into the Capitol to testify against House Bill 1032, a sex education bill. Among other things, the bill would prohibit an abstinence-only curriculum and send \$1 million to a grant program to help schools pay for comprehensive sexual education lesson plans.

Spats and marathon debates are not unusual at the Capitol. After all, policymaking exists in a partisan context. However, the shift in power at the Capitol following a bruising election for Republicans has created a new dynamic.

"There's pent-up energy to get a lot of things done," House Speaker KC Becker, a Boulder Democrat, said in an interview with *The Denver Post* on Thursday. At the same time, she renewed her promise of seeking bipartisan support for legislation when possible.

Still, these early disputes could foreshadow more partisan rancor to come as more progressive bills that Democrats promised during the fall campaign are introduced.

"There's some need on the other side of the aisle to protect their turf," said state Rep. Susan Lontine, a Denver Democrat and sponsor of the sex education bill. "I'm sure they're feeling pretty sensitive about that. Of course they're going to be extra tenacious about their agenda."

The risk for Democrats, Republicans say, is that they will win the votes but lose goodwill with the general public.

Gov. Polis and Sen. Bennet sign joint letter opposing the proposed freeze of fuel efficiency standards

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 4, 2019

DENVER — Ahead of tomorrow's Senate confirmation vote on Environmental Protection Agency Acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler, Gov. Jared Polis and U.S. Senator Michael Bennet sent a letter to Wheeler opposing the proposed freeze of fuel efficiency standards that require ongoing improvements to light-duty vehicles.

"The Federal proposal to freeze efficiency standards is out of step with a long history of bipartisan collaboration on this issue," said Governor Jared Polis. "We should be focusing our collective time and energy on making our transportation system cleaner, safer, more affordable and more efficient. That's what we plan to do in Colorado and we'd urge the Trump Administration to do the same."

“The Trump administration is making a mistake in rolling back the clean car standards,” Senator Michael Bennet said. “America is on track to make cars and trucks at a competitive advantage—creating more innovative, safe, and clean vehicles. The Trump administration will look back in history and find itself responsible for giving our global competitors the upper hand. No matter political affiliation, everyone can agree rolling back fuel economy standards is bad policy.”

In the letter, Polis and Bennet outlined how the proposed rule would undo an effective program that convenes federal agencies, states, automakers, and stakeholders for the benefit of consumers and the environment and would jeopardize states’ abilities to retain strong efficiency standards. Because the federal rulemaking has yet to be finalized, Polis and Bennet submitted this letter to acting Administrator Wheeler as part of his ongoing Senate confirmation process, urging him to abandon the proposal and instead finalize a rule that continues to improve the efficiency of vehicles across the nation.

“We urge you to abandon the Administration’s current proposal and instead finalize a rule that continues to improve the efficiency of our cars, with the buy-in of states and other partners across the country,” Polis and Bennet wrote.

Earlier this month, Polis signed his first Executive Order, aiming to reduce emissions from the transportation sector for the benefit of Colorado’s economy, consumers, public health and environment. In October 2018, Bennet sent two letters to the Trump administration, opposing the proposed rule and calling for an end to its challenge of states’ authority—like Colorado’s—to set their own standards. Bennet has also introduced legislation to block the Trump administration from rolling back the historic 54.5 fuel economy emission standards.