



Legislative Newsletter



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Mar 12, 2018

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

"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect."

- Mark Twain

PERA bill would cut benefits, boost contributions and give future public workers a 401(k)-style option

Denver Post

Colorado state lawmakers last Wednesday introduced a long-awaited bill to cut public employee retirement benefits and boost contributions into the state pension fund to shore up its troubled balance sheet. But in an unusually candid acknowledgement of political reality, the lawmakers who sponsored it say they're under no illusion that that proposal will become law without significant changes.

To put it bluntly, Senate Bill 200, sponsored by Sen. Jack Tate, R-Centennial, and House Majority Leader KC Becker, D-Boulder, has something for everyone to hate.

It would increase contributions from taxpayers and employees, while cutting benefits for current and future retirees. And it would phase in changes more rapidly, with a goal of paying off the unfunded debt sooner and reducing the financial risk of an economic downturn.

It would also extend to all future public employees the choice of opting out of the pension to enroll in a 401(k)-like plan - an allowance long sought by conservatives but bitterly opposed by Democrats and public sector unions.

And unlike a prior reform effort in 2010, it includes a fail-safe mechanism, recommended by the Public Employees Retirement Association board, that would automatically adjust benefits and contributions as needed to keep the system on track to meet its financial goals.

"There has been a broad commitment among all the legislators involved to make sure that we have a pension offering from the state that's stable and solvent," Tate told reporters in an afternoon briefing.

A Colorado school funding discrepancy has spawned a fight among state lawmakers

Denver Post

Fewer students showed up in Colorado this year than predicted, and they were a little better off economically too. That slight discrepancy between the forecast and the actual student count has created some wiggle room in the state's \$6.6

billion education budget. That wiggle room, in turn, has led to a partisan fight over the fate of a few million dollars, less than one-tenth of 1 percent of what the state spends on K-12 education.

Democrats want to hold total education spending steady and send an additional \$12.9 million to school districts, an average of \$8 more per student. Republicans want to keep average per-pupil spending steady at \$7,662 and put \$7 million in savings into the general fund.

That's the substance of the dispute, but it's also a symbolic fight that could herald a bigger budget battle to come.

"Going into the session, the precursor was how much we would fight over transportation versus education," said state Rep. Millie Hamner, a Dillon Democrat and chair of the Joint Budget Committee. "And that's what this would appear to be about."

Colorado has more money available for the state budget this year, thanks in part to a historic compromise at the end of the last session that freed up room under the revenue cap imposed by the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights. Republicans want to use that new fiscal freedom to dedicate \$300 million a year toward a transportation bond program. The governor's office has proposed an amount less than half that.

Legislature moving at the speed of fiber to get internet service to rural Colorado

Colorado Politics

After years of frustration over slow or non-existent broadband service in rural Colorado, the General Assembly is poised to move at the speed of fiber optic to finally connect rural communities, and economic opportunity, to the Internet.

Colorado GOP to select ex-Rep. Steve Lebsock's replacement following his last-minute party switch before being expelled

Denver Post

Colorado Republicans said Friday that they will choose a replacement for former state Rep. Steve Lebsock, who last week switched his party affiliation to the GOP just before he was expelled from the House of Representatives over sexual harassment accusations.

The former Democrat was ejected from the legislature on a bipartisan, 52-9 vote, but the political harmony didn't last long.

His expulsion gave the GOP the option of convening a vacancy committee to select the ex-Thornton lawmaker's replacement. They also could have punted the decision to Gov. John Hickenlooper, but opted against it. Instead, the episode may only serve to further fan partisan flames over the issue of sexual harassment.

"After careful consideration, we concluded it would be dereliction of duty to punt the appointment to ... Hickenlooper," Colorado Republican Party Chairman Jeff Hays said in a written statement. "We owe it to the people of House District 34 to give them the experience of ethical representation, which the Democrats, when they controlled the seat, signally failed to provide."

Hays says the GOP's decision to select Lebsock's successor was influenced by his contention that Democratic leadership in the House kept the allegations against Lebsock a secret when they first surfaced in the spring of 2016.

"Without the cover-up, it's highly unlikely the Democratic nominee, Lebsock, would have won re-election in November 2016. If voters had known what Democratic leadership knew, they would have roundly rejected Lebsock," Hays said in the statement. "We won't reward the Democrats' bad behavior by allowing them to choose the replacement for a representative who won his seat in November 2016 only thanks to their cover-up."

Colorado Tech Association chief leaving for new job; here's where she's headed next

The trade group chief reveals where she's heading next and what opportunity drew her.

Colorado Senate Republicans brush aside new business-backed transportation plan

Denver Business Journal

Colorado Senate Republican leaders threw cold water last Monday on a new, business-backed transportation-funding plan, saying they now believe there's enough money in the budget for roads this year and next that lawmakers won't have to ask voters for more.

A trio of business organizations - Colorado Concern, the Colorado Motor Carriers Association and the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corp. - are pushing a proposal that could generate billions of dollars by increasing the specific ownership tax on new and existing vehicles and pair that new revenue with as much as \$300 million annually from the state budget.

While the groups ultimately would ask voters to back the idea on the November ballot, they had hoped that the Legislature could refer the measure to the ballot - an action that would convey a message of bipartisan support and would save the time of having to collect voter signatures.

However, leaders in the Republican-led Senate left no doubt during their weekly media briefing Monday: No such ballot referral from their body would be forthcoming. Senate President Kevin Grantham, R-Cañon City, said he's told groups seeking a new source of revenue for roads and transit that they should prepare to work through the petition process rather than the Legislature to get something on the ballot.

Colorado's escalating war over full-strength beer sales takes a new turn

Denver Business Journal

The escalating war over full-strength beer sales took a new turn at the Colorado Capitol after a rural Republican senator introduced a bill that would make it harder for grocers and convenience stores to add shelf space and more kinds of malt beverages.

The measure also would create a new license for those stores that want to continue to continue selling alcohol.

Senate Bill 198, from state Sen. Ray Scott of Grand Junction, arrived about three weeks after a bipartisan pair of Senate leaders floated the draft of a bill to add new regulations to stores moving up from low-strength to full-strength beer on Jan. 1. That move set off a maelstrom of complaints from grocers, alcohol distributors, brewers and others.

A 2016 bill that allowed grocers to purchase more than one license per chain to sell full-strength beer, wine and spirits also stated that the low-strength "3.2 beer" they've sold since Prohibition ended can be replaced by full-strength beer next year.

Republican Senate Majority Leader Chris Holbert of Parker and Democratic Minority Leader Lucia Guzman of Denver are seeking through their effort to limit sales by under-aged clerks, deliveries by grocers and other practices that would be legal without such a bill passing.

Fracking bills die predictable deaths in Colorado's House and Senate

Colorado Politics

The fracking war in the Colorado legislature continued to be one of attrition, as a Republican bill to force communities to pay up if they ban oil-and-gas operations was killed by Democratic majority in the House. The Republican majority in the Senate returned the gesture by killing a Democratic bill to give more regulatory control to local governments.

Democratic Sens. Kerry Donovan of Vail and Leroy Garcia of Pueblo voted with Republicans to kill House Bill 1071 by an 8-3 count. The bill sponsored by Rep. Joe Salazar of Thornton and Sen. Dominick Moreno of Commerce City, both Democrats, would have given more weight to environmental and public safety concerns.

"This is a good outcome for the Colorado business community, the state economy and working families, all of which rely on a strong local energy sector," Peter Moore, chairman and CEO of Vital for Colorado, said in a statement. "Colorado is a major energy producing state with the toughest environmental protections in the nation. For more than a decade, under Govs. (Bill) Ritter and (John) Hickenlooper, state oil and gas regulations have been revised and toughened over and over again with environmental groups and public health professionals closely involved every step of the way.

Vital for Colorado is a business coalition supportive of the industry, which includes the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry, Colorado Business Roundtable and Colorado Farm Bureau.

The Colorado Petroleum Council also was pleased to see the bill go down, predictably.

"Our state should not rewrite the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's mission at the request of out-of-state, out-of-touch activists, who hope to transform every permitting decision into protracted litigation, costing the state millions to defend administrative and judicial appeals, not to mention millions more in lost tax and royalty revenues due to permitting delays," Tracee Bentley, executive director of the Colorado Petroleum Council, stated.

Democrats were just as pleased about putting the kibosh on House Bill 1150, the bill by Republican Rep. Perry Buck of Windsor to pay owners of mineral rights if a local government takes them away. The bill died on a 6-3 party-line vote.

Dignitaries unveil plaque depicting crest of USS Colorado nuclear attack submarine at state Capitol

Colorado Politics

Gov. John Hickenlooper unveiled a bronze rendition of the crest of the USS Colorado in a ceremony Friday afternoon at the state Capitol, where the plaque will hang permanently as a reminder that the advanced nuclear attack submarine bears the state's name.

"We have every expectation that the new USS Colorado will faithfully continue representing this state's pioneering spirit and be able to go places no one else can go - 'by land and sea untamed,' which I believe is the motto of the ship," said Hickenlooper, surrounded by lawmakers and civic leaders who have led the state's involvement with the submarine as it nears its scheduled commissioning.

"This is a landmark day and begins several festivities to honor the crew of the USS Colorado and its commissioning into the U.S. Navy fleet," state Sen. Bob Gardner, R-Colorado Springs, told Colorado Politics before the unveiling.

In recent years, Gardner has sponsored legislation to fund Colorado's participation in the vessel's launch, as well as allow the plaque to be placed at the Capitol - "You thought the Navy was bureaucratic," he joked, "you ought to try to get something hung at the Capitol" - and to create a special license plate honoring the submarine.

The \$2.7 billion, 370-foot Virginia-class submarine, the fourth Navy vessel to bear the state's name since the Civil War, was christened in December 2016 and will be commissioned next Saturday in Groton, Connecticut.

Terrance Carroll, Anna Alejo Join Denver Public Schools

Denver Public Schools

Denver Public Schools Superintendent Tom Boasberg announced that Terrance Carroll will join Team DPS as Chief Legal and External Affairs Officer, overseeing the district's legal, communications and public affairs efforts.

"We are thrilled to have someone of Terrance's experience, integrity and talent as part of the DPS team," Boasberg said. "We are also excited to welcome Anna Alejo in this key communications role."

Carroll is Colorado's first African-American Speaker of the House and a longtime advocate for improving Denver's schools. He represented northeast Denver's House District 7 from 2003 to 2011, when he left the General Assembly due to term limits. A graduate of Morehouse College and the University of Denver law school, he has been serving as an attorney with the law firm of Butler Snow.

Terrance has been listed by 5280 Magazine as one of the "50 Most Influential People in Denver," and he serves on the boards of the Metropolitan State University of Denver, the National Western Stock Show and the Downtown Denver Partnership. His work in education includes co-sponsoring the Innovation Schools Act in 2008, with Colorado State Senate President Peter Groff, and serving as co-chair of A+ Denver, now called A+ Colorado.

Anna Alejo has a long career in covering and supporting education. She covered public education as a reporter for 16 years at the NBC- and CBS-owned stations in Denver. In addition to award-winning local reporting, she reported stories for CBS News, CNN and Univision, and hosted three public affairs television shows including DPS Today. Anna began her journalism career as a researcher in the Miami-based Latin America Bureau of the Washington Post.

After leaving journalism, Anna served for seven years as director of corporate communications for Western Union, a Fortune 500 company with half a million locations in 200 countries and territories. At WU, Anna designed and led global communications initiatives to drive business strategy, build reputation and protect the brand.

Most recently, Anna has been working as a communications consultant serving technology companies in the financial services, ed-tech and real estate sectors. She also works in the nonprofit sector. Anna is the Spanish-language spokesperson for the Denver Preschool Program and co-chair of A+ Colorado.

Both Terrance and Anna join DPS on April 2.

Colorado Lobbyists Association Welcomes 6 Members In Past Week

CLA

Posted: Feb. 20, 2018

CLA's rolls continue to swell.

Christopher Votoupal of Range LLP joined as a professional lobbyist member on Feb. 12, followed by the Axiom Politics' team on Feb. 15: Micki Hackenberger, Erin Goff, Tyler Henson, Melissa Osse and Michael Steppat.

Welcome one and all!

CLA is more than halfway past its first-year goal of 100 Colorado lobbyist members -- approximately 20% of the lobbying corps. Those among the first 100 to join receive a significant 33% discount off of membership dues -- so don't miss out! Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments
Office of the Governor

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 - Lt. Gov. Lynne* today signed a Boards and Commissions appointment to the Stroke Advisory Board.

The Stroke Advisory Board evaluates potential strategies for stroke prevention and treatment, and develops statewide needs assessments identifying relevant resources to improve quality of care for stroke patients. Each January 1, the Board submits a report specifying its findings and recommendations to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the corresponding committees in the State House and State Senate.

For a term expiring Aug. 1, 2019:

- Lorence E. Leaming, DHA, FACHE of Estes Park, to serve as an administrator for a hospital located in a rural area, and occasioned by the resignation of Virginia "Ginny" Hallagin of Burlington, appointed.

Wednesday, March 7, 2018 - Gov. Hickenlooper today signed Boards and Commissions appointments to the 12th Judicial District Judicial Performance Commission and Board of Mortgage Loan Originators.

Commissions on Judicial Performance provide voters with fair, responsible and constructive evaluations of judges and justices seeking retention. The results also provide judges with information to help improve their professional skills as judicial officers.

The State Commission promulgates the Rules Governing Commissions on Judicial Performance and evaluates the Supreme Court justices and Court of Appeals judges. District Commissions evaluate the performance of county and district court judges in their judicial district during the judge's current term of office, which is the past two years for new (provisional) judges, the past four years for county court judges, and the past six years for district court judges.

12th Judicial District

For a term expiring Nov. 30, 2021:

- Crista Lee Newmyer-Olsen of Mosca, to serve as an attorney, reappointed.

The Board of Mortgage Loan Originators licenses mortgage loan originators and registers mortgage companies. The Board also has the authority to promulgate rules, enforce the license law, investigate complaints and impose discipline against its licensees.

For a term expiring Aug. 10, 2020:

- Dena Marie Falbo of Westminster, to serve as a member of the public at large, and occasioned by the removal of Miriam Pena Garcia of Denver, appointed.

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Friday, March 9, 2018 - Gov. Hickenlooper today signed Boards and Commissions appointments to the Automobile Theft Prevention Board, Economic Development Commission, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Council and Private Occupational School Board.

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

For terms expiring Feb. 1, 2024:

- Lovre Brajkovic of Centennial, to serve as a representative of insurance companies, appointed;
- Chief Duane Charles Oakes of Alamosa, to serve as a representative of law enforcement, appointed;
- Deborah Lopez Veal of Lakewood, to serve as a representative of an insurance company authorized to issue motor vehicle insurance policies, appointed.

The Economic Development Commission adopts an annual budget and develops guidelines for the expenditures of the fund for financial assistance such as loans, grants, and local match requirements to be provided for various types of projects. The Commission also reviews the economic needs of the various geographical regions of Colorado and identifies the types of businesses which need the most support in terms of economic development. The Commission makes information and assistance available for companies interested in relocating or expanding their operations in the state of Colorado. The Commission has the authority to work with the Department of Local Affairs on the consideration of recertification of enterprise zones.

For a term expiring Dec. 13, 2018:

- Karen S. Blumenstein of Golden, and occasioned by the resignation of Milletetsega "Millete" M. Birhanemaskel of Denver, appointed;

For a term expiring Dec. 13, 2022:

- Karen S. Blumenstein of Golden, reappointed;

For a term expiring Jan. 31, 2020:

- Robert Brooks Price of Denver, and occasioned by the resignation of Robert Jay Hurst of Aspen, appointed.

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Council advises the Division of Criminal Justice and the Governor on matters pertaining to juvenile justice in Colorado. They also assist, review and approve the annual Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Plan.

For a term expiring July 31, 2018:

- Malaysia Chantel Atwater of Centennial, to serve as a youth member and occasioned by the resignation of Antonio Carlos Huerta of Granada, appointed;

For a term expiring July 31, 2022:

- Malaysia Chantel Atwater of Centennial, to serve as a youth member, reappointed;

For a term expiring July 31, 2019:

- Ciara Catherine Benner of Bennett, to serve as a youth member and occasioned by the resignation of Ciera Springer of Denver, appointed;
- Rebecca Sparling Gleason of Centennial, to serve as a representative of district attorneys and occasioned by the resignation of Katherine "Jenny" Ellison of Loveland, appointed;

For a term expiring July 31, 2021:

- Paige Teague Brown of Strasburg, to serve as youth member, appointed.

The Private Occupational School Board advises on standards for educational services in private occupational schools. The Board also grants accreditation to schools that meet the standards established by the Board.

For a term expiring July 1, 2020:

- Timothy Guerrero of Erie, to serve as a representative of a private occupational school, and occasioned by the death of Robert Earl Martin of Wheat Ridge, appointed.

Calculator

Days Left to Sine Die: 58

House Bills Introduced: 289

Senate Bills Introduced: 200

Dead Bills: 79

Governor Signed: 40