



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 your half-way there."
-Theodore Roosevelt

Colorado lawmakers face budget deficit even as state anticipates taxpayer refunds, new forecast shows

Denver Post

Colorado faces a deficit as high as \$260 million this year even as it prepares to return \$158 million or more to taxpayers in 2018, a riddle that intensifies pressure on lawmakers ahead of the deadline to introduce a new state budget bill.

The challenge is evident in new economic forecasts presented Friday to legislative budget writers showing that the economy continues to grow at a moderate pace even though the state's revenue caps and spending obligations will make it difficult to cover project expenses.

Grantham: Lawmakers must find existing revenue to add to funding plan

Denver Post

For years now, lawmakers have talked in broad generalizations about the need for a long-term solution to Colorado's transportation woes. But earlier this month, along with other leaders in the legislature, we ended years of wheel-spinning by putting a concrete proposal on the table aimed at fixing Colorado's crumbling road and bridge infrastructure.

The bipartisan bill is not perfect. There are things in it both sides will like and dislike. It may require a number of changes in order to meet the high hurdle of a two-thirds vote in both chambers. But at least now we can move from talking generalizations to debating specifics.

Tribune Opinion: When it comes to transportation funding, Colorado voters must put money where mouths are

Greeley Tribune

The road toward a political compromise that would see the state pump money into a fix for its ailing transportation system already appears full of potholes, cracks and bumps.

Still, if the state is to make progress, we all must keep the final destination in mind.

Legislative leaders last week heralded a bipartisan compromise that would ask voters to raise \$677 million each year over a 20-year period for state and local roads, bridges and other infrastructure; issue \$3.5 billion in bonds for construction; and allocate funds for rail, busing and other local transit needs.

It would raise the state sales tax from 2.9 percent to 3.5 percent - or to 3½ cents on every dollar of purchase. It also would lower vehicle registration fees anywhere from \$10 to \$70, or about \$75 million per year. And it would target top-priority projects throughout the state, not just in the Denver metropolitan area.

Alternative transportation proposal coming from Colorado Republican lawmaker

Denver Business Journal

One of the top Republicans in the Senate said Monday that he plans to introduce an alternative transportation-funding bill that would not seek a tax hike from voters, a move demonstrating how politically contentious the first bipartisan measure introduced last week is.

Senate President Pro Tem Jerry Sonnenberg - the Sterling Republican who acts as the leader of the chamber if President Kevin Grantham, R-Cañon City, is away - said he is in the early stages of drafting a proposal that would set aside about \$100 million a year in the current budget for transportation projects and seek voter approval for a \$1.3 billion or \$1.4 billion bonding measure.

That is a little more than a third of the size of the bonding measure proposed in House Bill 1242 and would take care of fewer of the top-tier projects that the Colorado Department of Transportation has identified, but Sonnenberg said that's the most the state can do without seeking a tax hike that could fail at the November ballot.

Hill: Let's embrace autonomous vehicles!

Colorado Statesman

State Sen. Owen Hill is not for letting the crisis of Colorado's inadequate transportation go to waste.

There may or may not be a transportation funding bill passed this legislative session or any legislative session. The population is booming and the roads are crumbling. There won't be any ski train coming any time soon. Coloradans are desperate. It's past time to be bold!

Hill told reporters Monday morning that he thinks Colorado could become an engine for the autonomous vehicle revolution. He said it's worth getting out front of other states by moving now to put the fast-evolving technology to use on our roads and invite entrepreneurs and companies working the sector to set up shop here.

Health bill aims to re-envision insurance subsidies for rural communities

Summit Daily News

As health-care policy remains in flux at the federal level with the proposed Obamacare replacement working its way through Congress, local lawmakers are plugging away in attempts to make coverage more affordable in the existing system.

This past Wednesday, Reps. Diane Mitsch Bush, D-Eagle/Routt, and Millie Hamner, D-Summit/Pitkin, introduced House Bill 17-1235 with an eye on the mountain communities that dot the Western Slope.

The "Financial Relief Defray Individual Health Plan Cost" bill aims to expand who qualifies for a federal subsidy under the Affordable Care Act, up to 500 percent of the federal poverty level from the present 400 percent.

For 2016, 400 percent totaled roughly \$47,500 for an individual and \$97,000 for a family of four. At 500 percent, that would raise the threshold to about \$59,000 for an individual and \$121,500 for your average nuclear unit. If passed, the new law would create a financial relief account to draw from for those who meet those requirements and spend more than 15 percent of their annual income on insurance premiums for a bronze, silver or gold plan on the state exchange. An individual or family who has access to an employer- or government-sponsored health plan would be ineligible.

State senator says Congress must restore Medicare reimbursements to hospitals

Pueblo Chieftain

President Donald Trump and the Republican-controlled Congress have made repeal of the Affordable Care Act a top priority in 2017 and House Republicans have given us the first peek at what that repeal may ultimately look like.

While I support repealing the ACA, I urge Sen. (Cory) Gardner and the rest of the Colorado delegation to ensure that this legislation includes an immediate restoration of Medicare reimbursement payments to hospitals, which the ACA took away when it became law.

Backers outraged after Duran sends GOP-sponsored construction bill to kill committee

Colorado Statesman

Supporters of a Republican-sponsored bill to require condominium owners and builders to submit claims alleging construction problems to arbitration howled with outrage Wednesday after Democratic House Speaker Crisanta Duran assigned the legislation to the House "kill committee."

Meanwhile, compromise legislation authored by a bipartisan team of House lawmakers could be waiting in the wings, but the staunchest advocates on both sides of the construction litigation fight say they need to see a bill first before blessing it.

"The pretend hearing that this bill will receive is an insult to Coloradans looking for affordable homes," said Mike Kopp, president and CEO of the business advocacy group Colorado Concern and a former Senate minority leader. Kopp is also the spokesman for the Homeownership Opportunity Alliance Coalition, a group of business organizations, affordable housing advocates and civic organizations.

Construction-Litigation Bills Encounter Stormy Weather

CACI Newsletter

The likelihood that the legislature can pass bipartisan legislation to significantly reform the state's construction-litigation laws is starting to look doubtful now that the session has passed the half-way mark, and two of the five introduced bills have died while a third is headed to a likely demise.

Lawmakers introduce bipartisan compromise bill to tackle construction defects issues

Colorado Statesman

A bipartisan group of legislators introduced a compromise bill late Friday aimed at encouraging developers to build condominium projects while preserving the right of homeowners to have their day in court.

The legislation arrives at the end of a week that saw a Democratic-sponsored bill and a Republican-sponsored bill covering much of the same territory both run aground, stoking outrage and frustration that the Legislature might be unable to resolve a problem that has vexed lawmakers for years.

House Bill 1279 incorporates provisions in common between the two ill-fated bills, and its sponsors say they've removed offending elements that led Senate Republicans to sink Senate Bill 157 in committee and compelled House leadership to deliver Senate Bill 156 to the chamber's "kill committee."

Senate Bill 61 would rightly provide Colorado charter schools equity in funding

Chalkbeat Colorado

Last election, Colorado voters approved \$153 million in mill-levy overrides (property tax increases) to support education programming in their districts' public schools. Funds from these and previous mill-levy overrides raise roughly \$800 million in additional revenue for public schools. Unfortunately, not all public school children benefit from these funds. That's because state law does not require districts to share such revenue with the public charter schools within their boundaries. Just 11 of the state's 178 districts share mill-levy override revenue, according to the Colorado League of Charter Schools.

This is unfair to students, schools and taxpayers who assumed all schools in the district would benefit when they voted to increase their taxes.

It's halfway point at Colorado legislature. Here's what matters to Colorado classrooms.

Chalkbeat Colorado

Colorado lawmakers are a little past the halfway point for this legislative session and have little to show for the state's public schools.

Most of the proposed legislation making its way through the Capitol so far involve pilot programs, minor fixes or slight changes on the margins.

Only a handful of the 51 education bills introduced so far have gotten significant attention. Those include bills equalizing funding for charter schools, banning corporal punishment and providing gun training for school employees.

Colorado House committee kills daylight saving time bill

ABC 7 Denver News

Coloradans will have to keep changing their clocks twice a year.

The House Agriculture, Livestock and Natural Resources Committee on Monday voted 8-5 against House Bill 1226, which would have made daylight saving time permanent in the state. The committee members voted to postpone the issue indefinitely.

Many committee members sided with the ski industry, which had opposed the bill over safety concerns due to certain checks that take place every day, and possible tourism confusion in voting down the bill.

Daylight saving time started at 2 a.m. Sunday.

Colorado public records bill heads to Senate for debate

Associated Press

A state Senate committee approved a bill Tuesday to modernize Colorado's Open Records Act and left intact a Republican amendment to have it apply to the judiciary, which courts have determined is not covered by the act.

That decision by the Appropriations Committee could jeopardize the bill's chances of passing. Both the judicial branch and majority House Democrats oppose expanding the act to cover the judicial branch, which has its own rules for public disclosure. They say the amendment complicates a bill designed to expedite records requests, not to change the rules for which types of records can be disclosed.

Democratic Sen. John Kefalas' bill would allow citizens to obtain and analyze public documents by requiring state agencies to provide them, with some exceptions, in their original, computer-friendly electronic formats, rather than forcing requesters to pore over paper or PDF documents.

Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments

Office of the Governor

The Colorado Dental Board makes rules and regulations, examines and licenses dentists and dental hygienists, and conducts hearings regarding the suspension or revocation of licenses.

For a term expiring January 1, 2021:

- Mark William Adams, DDS, MS of Castle Rock, a dentist, appointed.

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education sets policies for all state-supported institutions of higher education.

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

- Luis Alberto Colon of Lone Tree, to serve as a resident of the Fourth Congressional District and as a Republican, reappointed.
- Thomas Oliver McGimpsey of Louisville, to serve as a resident of the Second Congressional District and as a Republican, reappointed.

The Governor's Board of Ethics, when requested by the Governor, comments on gubernatorial appointments, reviews complaints of any violation of the provisions of title 24, article 18 of CRS by an elected officer, appointee or employee of the Executive Department, makes written recommendations to the Governor concerning his requests and reviews appeals brought before the Board pursuant to section 24-30-1003 of CRS.

For terms expiring Mar. 27, 2018:

- Nancy Cohen of Denver, appointed;
- Marcy Geoffrey Glenn of Denver, appointed;
- Arnulfo De Jesus Hernandez of Denver, appointed;
- Richard Kent Kornfeld of Denver, appointed;
- Jacqueline Cooper Melmed of Denver, to serve as Chairman, appointed.

The Colorado HIV Alliance for Prevention, Care and Treatment promotes effective HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment programs. The Alliance also advises, informs and closely consults with CDPHE in regard to issues, trends, needs, policy, and resources pertaining to HIV/AIDS throughout the State of Colorado.

For terms expiring Feb. 27, 2020:

- Jeffrey Alan Basinger of Grand Junction, reappointed;
- Barbara Cardell of Boulder, reappointed;
- Scott L. Griffin of Boulder, reappointed.

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, 2017:

- Judd M. Jensen, MD of Denver, to represent a statewide association of physicians, appointed;

For a term expiring Aug. 1, 2020:

- Judd M. Jensen, MD of Denver, to represent a statewide association of physicians, reappointed.

Calculator

Days Left to Sine Die: 51

House Bills Introduced: 278

Senate Bills Introduced: 252

Dead Bills: 101

Governor Signed: 64