



# 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.*

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."  
-Henry Ford

## **Neil Gorsuch sworn into Supreme Court, vows to serve Constitution**

*Denver Post*

President Donald Trump praised new Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch during a White House swearing-in ceremony on Monday as a jurist who will rule "not on his personal preferences but based on a fair and objective reading of the law."

In the Rose Garden ceremony, Trump said Americans would see in Gorsuch "a man who is deeply faithful to the Constitution of the United States" and predicted greatness for the 49-year-old former appeals court judge from Colorado.

## **Congressman Ed Perlmutter officially declares he's running for governor of Colorado**

*Colorado Statesman*

Declaring that he'll stand up for Colorado in the face of threats from the Trump administration, U.S. Rep. Ed Perlmutter, an Arvada Democrat, made his campaign for governor official on Sunday afternoon at a grocery store in Golden.

"I love this state, and I want to continue to lead the fight for freedom, equality and opportunity - those things Coloradans cherish," Perlmutter told several hundred supporters packed in the parking lot at a Natural Grocers in the shadow of South Table Mountain.

## **Democrat Brittany Pettersen launches run for Ed Perlmutter's congressional seat**

*Colorado Statesman*

Just a half hour after U.S. Rep. Ed Perlmutter announced his campaign for governor on Sunday afternoon, state Rep. Brittany Pettersen, a Lakewood Democrat, launched her bid to represent the battleground 7th Congressional District seat Perlmutter has held for a decade.

"Too many families in Colorado are facing tough times and we need leaders who understand those challenges," said Pettersen, who was elected in November to her third term representing Jefferson County's House District 28. "When it comes to good schools for Colorado kids, access to healthcare for everyone and protecting seniors from cuts to Social Security, I'll stand up to Donald Trump and fight for regular people."

Pettersen could be facing a crowded primary. State Sen. Andy Kerr, D-Lakewood, plans to announce he's jumping in the race on Wednesday, and state Sen. Dominick Moreno, D-Commerce City, told The Colorado Statesman on Sunday that he's more than likely to run for the seat.

## **Colorado House gives preliminary nod to \$26.8 billion state budget**

*Denver Post*

Following an at-times testy debate that stretched over two days, the Colorado House of Representatives on Friday gave preliminary approval to a \$26.8 billion state budget proposal that covers a \$400 million shortfall through steep cuts to hospitals, schools and taxpayer refunds, but punts a long-term solution to the state's intractable financial challenges.

The measure passed second reading on a voice vote, largely along party lines, after the chamber's Democratic majority spent much of the debate swatting away Republican attempts to scale back Medicaid and a number of state agencies in order to boost funding to schools and roads.

If the measure receives final approval Monday, as expected, it would send to conference committee a revised budget that shifts millions of dollars in spending to a number of programs, but keeps the most significant pieces of the initial proposal largely intact.

## **\$1.5 billion deal rocks Colorado ski industry as Aspen Skiing Co. acquires Steamboat and operator of Winter Park resort**

*Denver Post*

Aspen Skiing Co. and Denver's KSL Partners on Monday acquired Intrawest Resorts in a \$1.5 billion deal that gives Aspen Skiing and KSL control of Steamboat and Winter Park ski areas.

The new investment group also gets Quebec's Tremblant, Ontario's Blue Mountain, West Virginia's Snowshoe and Vermont's Stratton ski areas as well as Canadian Mountain Holidays, the world's largest heliskiing outfit. Aspen Skiing will expand from its four hills in the Roaring Fork Valley and private equity firm KSL, which formed in 2005 and controls about \$7.5 billion in hotel and resort properties, adds to its Squaw Valley - Alpine Meadows ski resort in California.

And suddenly Colorado is ground-zero for what will become the most hawkish rivalry in the U.S. ski resort industry, with Aspen Skiing - KSL vying against the world's largest resort operator Vail Resorts in an escalating battle of consolidation. In the past year Vail Resorts has spent \$1.1 billion for three-quarters of Canada's Whistler Blackcomb ski area and \$50 million for Vermont's Stowe in an aggressive expansion plan anchored in a strategy to sell more of its wildly popular Epic Passes.

## **Free speech zones abolished on Colorado public college campuses**

*Denver Post*

Colorado college students won't be restricted to a "free-speech zone," which allows them to speak their minds just about anywhere on campus.

Gov. John Hickenlooper Tuesday signed into law the abolition of free-speech zones on public college campuses. The areas have been used to confine public demonstrations to designated areas.

But critics say college and universities have used free-speech zones to actually restrict the free expression of ideas by insulating students from speech they may find offensive or threatening.

Supporters say that Senate Bill 62, which breezed through both the House and Senate, was needed to ensure higher education remains a place to openly discuss ideas and different viewpoints, even if those viewpoints offend them.

### **Transportation bill gets final OK in Colorado House; sales tax measure moves to Senate** *Denver Post*

In a surprise shift, four Republicans joined all 37 House Democrats in support of sending voters a referred ballot measure to raise sales taxes for transportation.

The Colorado House of Representatives on Friday gave final approval to House Bill 1242, the transportation bill sponsored by Democratic House Speaker Crisanta Duran and Republican Senate President Kevin Grantham that would finance \$3.5 billion in road bonds and boost funding to local governments for roads, mass transit and other transportation-related projects.

Now the bill heads to the Senate, where it appears to have the votes to pass the full chamber, but first must emerge from multiple committee hearings, where it is sure to face resistance from conservatives.

### **A PERA for the poor? It's now pending in the legislature** *Coloradopolitics.com*

Instead of alms for the needy, some state lawmakers want to give them a shot at a pension - through a new fund that would be administered by the state.

House Bill 1290, recently introduced in the House by state Reps. Brittany Pettersen, D- Lakewood, and Janet Buckner, D-Aurora, sets up the "Colorado Secure Savings Plan" and establishes a new state board to run it.

While it theoretically aims to provide another retirement option for Coloradans of every walk of life, its extensive legislative declaration stresses the lack of retirement savings and limited access to pensions among low-wage and minority employees.

### **Grantham on transportation bill: 'There's going to be some significant changes.'** *Coloradopolitics.com*

The transportation bill the House passed two weeks ago will look a lot different when the state Senate gets done with it.

That's the word from Senate President Grantham on "The Ross Kaminsky Show" on TalkRadio 630 KHOW the other day.

That sales tax hike we've been hearing so much, the one that's going to widen interstates and pay for more transit, is "about 50-50," Grantham said. "It's got an uphill climb in the Senate."

He vowed, "There's going to be some significant changes."

### **How much is in that marijuana cash fund, anyway? Read the memo.**

*Colorado Statesman*

In the House budget debate last Thursday, a cash fund brimming with an enticing \$117.7 million in marijuana sales tax money is sure to attract attention, as it did in Senate debate last week.

The fund has figured in talk at the Capitol ever since recreational weed sales began filling it steadily years ago - like a cookie jar on a high shelf stuffed with greenbacks, silently interrupting family conversations all day.

In a caucus meeting last Wednesday in which House Democrats received updates and explanations from joint budget committee members and staff, the weed cash fund was a subject of curiosity.

"How much is even in that fund?" asked Rep. Tracy Kraft Tharpe, a Democrat from Arvada.

In response to questions, Joint Budget Committee staffers distributed a memo with details.

### **Conservative group sounds alarm over health care's rapidly rising share of Colorado state budget**

*Colorado Statesman*

Colorado's state budget has jumped by more than 19 percent over the last decade, measured in constant dollars, a free-market think tank says in a report delivered at the Capitol this week as lawmakers weigh next year's budget. And nearly all of that increased spending has gone to health care, the study by the Common Sense Policy Roundtable found.

"As state lawmakers debate priorities for the \$26.8 billion budget, we believe it critical that they consider the biggest cost drivers," said Earl Wright, AMG National Trust Bank chairman and chairman of the Roundtable's board of directors.

"For instance," he continued, "Colorado is now spending \$666 more per citizen than it did 10 years ago after adjusting for inflation, an increase of over 19 percent. Of the increase in spending per citizen, over 99 percent has gone to Health Care Policy & Financing. One has to wonder if the public expected this outcome from the past 10 years of budget increases."

### **Hancock urges lawmakers to stay at table, resolve impasse over construction defects legislation**

*Colorado Statesman*

Calling bipartisan legislation aimed at tackling construction defects issues "critically important," a spokeswoman for Denver Mayor Michael Hancock last Thursday said the mayor is urging negotiators to stay at the table and push through to find a solution.

"Addressing construction defects is critically important and Denver remains hopeful that meaningful action will move forward this session," Hancock's deputy communications director, Jenna Espinoza, told The Colorado Statesman. "We thank all parties involved for staying at the table and continuing to work toward a comprehensive solution."

"More attainable home ownership options for our residents may depend on successful resolution of this legislative impasse," she added.

### **Colorado lawmakers reach compromise on reading test controversy**

*Denver Post*

A years-long controversy over what language Colorado schools should use to test the reading skills of young English language learners appears to be over.

The Senate Education Committee voted 5-2 last Thursday to advance an amended bill that would require schools to test the state's youngest students in English if they're partly proficient in the language. If they're not, a district may choose to test their reading skills in either Spanish or English.

The legislation is a compromise, reflecting an agreement between the State Board of Education and school districts with large numbers of Spanish-speaking students, such as Denver Public Schools.

State Sens. Owen Hill and Tim Neville, both Republicans, opposed the bill.

### **Colorado's "Amazon tax" law will soon take effect. But it faces renewed opposition.**

*Denver Post*

Months before the state's "Amazon tax" law is due to take effect, Colorado's quest to compel online retailers to collect and pay sales taxes faces renewed opposition - this time from lawmakers on grounds that it would violate consumer privacy.

The controversial law, passed in 2010, stops short of requiring online retailers to collect sales taxes from customers. Instead, it offers them a choice: collect the taxes or be subjected to additional red tape, including a requirement that they file reports identifying their customers and how much they spend on purchases.

But a coalition of online retailers and conservative groups opposed to the law says that provision would violate consumer privacy, effectively allowing the state to collect information on the personal shopping habits of Coloradans without their permission.

Senate Bill 238, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Chris Holbert, R-Parker, would eliminate the consumer reporting provision before it takes effect July 1, while keeping the rest of the law largely intact. The measure passed the Senate Finance Committee last Tuesday along party lines, but would face an uphill battle if it makes it to the Democrat-controlled House.

## **Trump and taxes: Back to drawing board, seeks GOP consensus**

*Denver Post*

President Donald Trump has scrapped the tax plan he campaigned on and is going back to the drawing board in a search for Republican consensus behind legislation to overhaul the U.S. tax system.

The administration's first attempt to write legislation is in its early stages and the White House has kept much of it under wraps. But it has already sprouted the consideration of a series of unorthodox proposals including a drastic cut to the payroll tax, aimed at appealing to Democrats.

## **Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments**

*Office of the Governor*

The Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board advises the Governor on all aspects of historical records housed within the State of Colorado and develops guidelines for historical records projects in accordance with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

For a term expiring Sept. 1, 2017:

- Aaron Jeffrey Davis of Denver, and occasioned by the resignation of Janet Lynn Bishop of Fort Collins, appointed;

For a term expiring Sept. 1, 2021:

- Aaron Jeffrey Davis of Denver, reappointed.

The Colorado Lottery Commission governs the operation of the lottery and conducts hearings on granting or suspending licenses for lottery sales.

For a term expiring July 1, 2019:

- Kevin Scott Knierim of Englewood, to serve as a representative of law enforcement and as a Republican, and occasioned by the resignation of James Howard Davis of Westminster, appointed.

## **Calculator**

**Days Left to Sine Die: 30**

**House Bills Introduced: 328**

**Senate Bills Introduced: 288**

**Dead Bills: 120**

**Governor Signed: 138**