



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.*

"Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."
-Winston Churchill

Democrat Andy Kerr formally announces he's running for Congressional District 7 seat *Colorado Statesman*

"My name is Andy Kerr, and I am running for Congress," the Democratic state senator told a crowd of family, friends, colleagues and supporters filling the gymnasium as he began his speech at Dunstan Middle School in Lakewood on Wednesday afternoon.

It's the same way U.S. Rep. Ed Perlmutter - at that time a former state senator from a nearby district - introduced himself, approaching "every hand in the room that would shake his" a little over a decade ago when he was running in the Democratic primary for an open seat representing the 7th Congressional District, Kerr recalled.

Colorado's legislative session stuck in gridlock, awaiting budget deal *Denver Post*

The final weeks of the legislative session are grinding toward a halt as political brinksmanship is threatening the year's most significant bills.

Colorado lawmakers missed a deadline to approve the \$26.8 billion state budget and still have not introduced an all-important bill to pay for schools starting July 1.

The gridlock is jeopardizing two other bipartisan priorities: the much-touted ballot measure seeking a tax hike to expand highways and a bill to ease spending cuts that threaten to shutter rural hospitals.

Good Question: Which of the state's rural hospitals are most threatened by proposed \$500M budget cuts?

Colorado Statesman

This year's Colorado budget so far includes what amounts to a \$500 million cut to state hospital funding. It's a frightening sum that threatens to deeply slash rural health services and to shut down some rural hospitals altogether.

The proposed cuts will be a centerpiece of debate at the Capitol in the remaining three weeks of the legislative session.

Colorado Senate president trims proposed transportation tax hike as it advances

Denver Business Journal

Seeking the support of enough Republicans in the Colorado state Senate to push through a transportation tax-hike proposal, Senate President Kevin Grantham made several major changes to the bill during a committee hearing last Tuesday, including the reduction of the proposed tax increase from 0.62 cents to 0.5.

Grantham, R-Cañon City, also committed \$100 million per year from the state's general fund to a new 20-year stream of revenue that would be used to cover roughly \$3.5 billion a year in highway expansion projects, as well as generating additional funding for local roads and creating a new multi-billion-dollar multi-modal transportation grant fund.

And he ensured through yet another amendment that the Colorado Department of Transportation received a percentage of the annual revenues from the tax for construction and maintenance of state roads rather than a previously capped amount of \$375 million per year.

The changes were enough to get House Bill 1242 through the Senate Transportation Committee with a 3-2 vote that included the support of committee chairman Sen. Randy Baumgardner, R-Hot Sulphur Springs, and the committee's two Democratic members - not a surprising tally, given that Baumgardner is a co-sponsor of the bill with Grantham and that every Democrat in the House backed the measure.

Sweeping effort to prevent cuts in rural Colorado passes first test

Denver Post

For one rural school district, budget cuts last year meant eliminating its college-equivalent science class. The high school science teacher who taught it had to take on junior high science as well after a teaching position was cut.

Others find it difficult to keep teachers employed at the pay levels their districts can afford. One superintendent said Wal-Mart and Target have emerged as more attractive career opportunities than working at a district where it can take a teacher more than 20 years to qualify for a \$40,000 salary - roughly entry-level pay in Denver Public Schools.

Lawmakers heard hours of testimony Tuesday from schools, hospitals and business groups on the dire financial situation now facing much of rural Colorado - a situation that they fear will only get worse in coming years.

Lawmakers delay bipartisan construction defects bill for a third time, remain hopeful a fix is in sight

Colorado Statesman

Sponsors of a bipartisan bill to reform Colorado's construction defects law tapped the brakes again Wednesday, delaying for a third time the legislation's scheduled committee hearing in order to spend more time negotiating the fix, lawmakers said.

House Bill 1279 has been scheduled for its first hearing three Wednesdays in a row now, but each time the hearing approaches key House sponsors have asked that it be delayed a week, citing unresolved concerns over details in the bill.

Groups representing builders and homeowners are at odds over some aspects of the bill, which would require a majority of unit owners in a condominium project to approve filing a complaint over defective construction.

"We're still at the table negotiating," Assistant House Majority Leader Alec Garnett, D-Denver, one of the bill's sponsors, told The Colorado Statesman after announcing the delay. "There are no illusions about how difficult this issue is, and if there's time on the clock, we should use it."

Vote on Colorado education plan erupts into war of words over which kids benefit

Chalkbeat Colorado

The State Board of Education last Thursday unanimously approved Colorado's federally required education plan, but not before two of its most outspoken members questioned whether it would make any difference and clashed over which students would benefit.

"Unless you're poor or a minority or from another identity politics group, there is nothing in this plan that will benefit you," said board member Steve Durham, a Colorado Springs Republican. "There's nothing in this plan to improve the education of your children."

Driverless-car bill goes to Hickenlooper's desk

Denver Post

A bill that would open Colorado's roadways for testing autonomous vehicles is on its way to Gov. John Hickenlooper's desk after lawmakers approved the measure last week.

Senate Bill 17-213 would be the state's first law regulating autonomous vehicles and one that sponsor Sen. Owen Hill has said would help the state attract innovative companies working on the future of transportation.

Colorado Springs town halls: Likely good pregame fodder for Lamborn vs Hill GOP congressional primary

Colorado Statesman

Town hall season in Colorado Springs is not only of interest for the way angry crowds are meeting Republican Congressman Doug Lamborn, it's also of interest for Colorado election politics watchers looking for pregame action by which to gauge a likely top primary race in the state.

Lamborn is gamely wrestling at town halls across his conservative 5th District with angry constituents alarmed mainly by Trump administration bumbling and the Republican health care reform plan.

He was jeered by an overflow crowd at a meeting in Colorado Springs last Wednesday, as the Gazette reported. The crowd mocked him when he said he supported renewable energy. They pushed him on climate change. They shouted out "Affordable Care Act" whenever he said "Obamacare."

The crowd included some 40 members of a group called the Colorado Springs-Colorado Action Network - an anti-Trump mostly progressive group, according to the Gazette.

As battle to replace Ed Perlmutter takes shape, Republicans eye elusive congressional district *Denver Post*

Politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum.

So it's not a surprise that it took less than a week for two Democrats to declare their intent to run for the U.S. House seat held by Ed Perlmutter once the Democratic congressman made official his own bid for governor on April 9.

Now that they're in the race, however, the question facing state Sen. Andy Kerr, state Rep. Brittany Pettersen and anyone else who wants to capture Colorado's 7th Congressional District is how Perlmutter has managed to dominate the seat for so long.

Is it because of Perlmutter's well-known brand of retail politics? Or is it because the seat skews Democratic in terms of its electoral history and voter registration?

The answer will say a lot about whether a Republican has a chance to win in November 2018 - and how far to the left Kerr and Pettersen will need to go to win the Democratic primary.

Colorado lawmakers wash hands of regulating pot clubs *The Cannabist*

Colorado lawmakers last Thursday backed off plans to become the first U.S. state to regulate marijuana clubs, saying approval of Amsterdam-style pot clubs could invite a federal crackdown.

It was perhaps the starkest display yet of legal pot states' uncertainty on how to regulate the drug under President Donald Trump. Alaska marijuana regulators recently delayed planned rules for on-site pot consumption at dispensaries.

Colorado's measure, which would have allowed users to bring their own pot to clubs, initially had substantial bipartisan support. But lawmakers ultimately sided with Gov. John Hickenlooper, who has warned that bold changes may anger federal drug enforcers.

Bill to allow Colorado brewery taprooms to expand barely clears first Senate vote *Denver Business Journal*

Colorado craft breweries took the first step to being able to add more taprooms last Wednesday, advancing a bill in the state Legislature that would allow them to do just that despite complaints from restaurant and bar owners that grew so loud that one of the co-sponsors of the bill actually voted against it.

In Colorado, if your boss rips you off, it's no longer a secret

ColoradoPolitics.com

Bad bosses, listen up: If you rip off employees - pinch their tips, pay less than minimum wage, deny overtime or jilt them on expenses - that's no longer a "trade secret" but now a matter of public record in Colorado.

This week Gov. John Hickenlooper put another notch in the legislative pistol of Rep. Jessie Danielson, D-Wheat Ridge, when he signed her House Bill 1021, a new law to reclassify wage-theft violations as open records.

Partisan divide over Colorado public retirement savings plans offers little chance again this year

ColoradoPolitics.com

A bill that would create a retirement savings account with payroll deductions for Coloradans who don't have them got off to a partisan start last Thursday.

House Bill 1290 would create the Colorado Secure Savings Plan. It passed the House Business Affairs on a 7-6 party-line vote.

Hard-edged questions from Republicans exposed ideological rifts over the government's role in the workplace. Similar legislation has been killed the last two sessions by Senate Republicans, and it seems probable that this year will make it three.

Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments

Office of the Governor

Gov. John Hickenlooper today announced Boards and Commissions appointments to the Colorado Health Service Corps Advisory Council, State Housing Board, Peace Officers Standards and Training Board, Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging, Stroke Advisory Board, Substance Abuse Trend and Response Task Force and Transportation Commission.

The Colorado Health Service Corps Advisory Council acts as the state advisory body of the Colorado Health Service Corps and reviews applications received from health care professionals to participate in the program, subject to available appropriations. The Colorado Health Service Corps is a state, federal, and private partnership that seeks to improve access to health care professionals by repaying the educational loans of providers who agree to practice in areas with a health professional shortage. The program emphasizes long-term retention of health professionals in underserved communities and seeks to increase health equity for all Coloradans.

For a term expiring Nov. 20, 2018:

- Maribel Cifuentes of Thornton, to serve as a representative of a foundation that funds health care professional loan forgiveness program in Colorado, and occasioned by the resignation of Tanya G. Weinberg of Denver, appointed.

The State Housing Board establishes uniform construction and maintenance standards for hotels, motels, multiple dwellings and factory-built housing. The Board also makes recommendations for uniform housing standards and building codes to the general assembly and units of local government.

For terms expiring Jan. 31, 2021:

- Erik Estrada of Louisville, a Democrat and resident of the Second Congressional District, appointed;
- Jacalyn Reynolds of Sterling, a Democrat and resident of the Fourth Congressional District, reappointed;
- Chad E. Wright of Colorado Springs, a Democrat and resident of the Fifth Congressional District, reappointed.

The Peace Officers Standards and Training Board oversees the certification of training programs, training academies and instructors of police officer candidates. The Board also certifies qualified peace officers.

For a term expiring June 30, 2018:

- Chief of Police Cory Christensen of Steamboat Springs, to serve as a police chief, and occasioned by the resignation of John D. Dyer of Rifle, appointed.

The Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging produces a comprehensive strategic action plan on aging in Colorado through the year 2030. The Planning Group examines the impact of the aging demographic shift on the economy, workforce, businesses, market-based products and services; State and local revenue budgets and fiscal policies; Medicaid and other safety-net programs and the collateral impact on other non-related State programs; family caregiving and public and private options for long-term care, services and support; federal entitlement reforms; transportation services and infrastructure.

For terms expiring Aug. 1, 2017:

- Bonnie Louise Silva of Aurora, to serve as the designee of the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance, and occasioned by the resignation of John Robert Barry, MBA, MSW of Littleton, appointed;
- Karin R. Stewart of Lone Tree, to serve as a representative of private, public and community-based health care and long-term care, service or support provider for older adults, and occasioned by the resignation of Edwin Douglas Farmer of Highlands Ranch, appointed;

For terms expiring Aug. 1, 2021:

- Bonnie Louise Silva of Aurora, to serve as the designee of the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance, reappointed;
- Karin R. Stewart of Lone Tree, to serve as a representative of private, public and community-based health care and long-term care, service or support provider for older adults, 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:

- Elizabeth Adle, BSN of Westminster, to serve as a representative of a statewide hospital association, and occasioned by the resignation of Nancy Griffith, RN, MSN, CPHQ of Centennial, appointed;

For a term expiring Aug. 1, 2020:

- Elizabeth Adle, BSN of Westminster, to serve as a representative of a statewide hospital association, reappointed.

The Substance Abuse Trend and Response Task Force examines the prevention, intervention, and treatment of the abuse of methamphetamine; examines the production and distribution of methamphetamine; strengthens the laws concerning methamphetamine; and makes an appropriation.

For a term expiring July 1, 2018:

- Chief Ricky Derrall Brandt of Severance, to serve as a representative of the criminal justice system and a Vice Chair, and occasioned by the resignation of Jerry Daniel Peters of Broomfield, appointed.

The Transportation Commission formulates general policy for the Colorado Department of Transportation with respect to the management, construction and maintenance of public highways and other transportation systems in the state. The Commission also works to ensure that the preservation and enhancement of Colorado's environment, safety, mobility and economics is considered in the planning of all transportation projects.

For a term expiring July 1, 2017:

- Karen Dona Stuart of Broomfield, to serve as a commissioner from the Fourth Transportation District, and occasioned by the resignation of Heather M. Barry of Westminster, appointed;

For a term expiring July 1, 2021:

- Karen Dona Stuart of Broomfield, to serve as a commissioner from the Fourth Transportation District, reappointed.

Calculator

Days Left to Sine Die: 23

House Bills Introduced: 340

Senate Bills Introduced: 289

Dead Bills: 131

Governor Signed: 141