



Legislative Newsletter



April 4, 2017

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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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*"Start by doing what is necessary, then do what's possible, and suddenly
you are doing the impossible."
-St. Francis of Assisi*

Republican Owen Hill set to announce he's running for congressional seat held by Doug Lamborn

Colorado Statesman

State Sen. Owen Hill, a Colorado Springs Republican, plans to announce on Monday that he's running for the 5th Congressional District seat held by six-term U.S. Rep. Doug Lamborn, The Colorado Statesman has learned.

Although he's long been rumored to be considering a run for state treasurer in next year's election, Hill confirmed Saturday that he intends to notify supporters he's jumping in the congressional race.

If Lamborn, 62, seeks a seventh term - he hasn't announced yet - it could be the sixth time he's been faced with a primary in the heavily Republican congressional district.

Adams County Democrat Steve Lebsock announces he's running for state treasurer

Colorado Statesman

State Rep. Steve Lebsock, a Thornton Democrat, announced Saturday that he's running for state treasurer in next year's election.

"It's so important that we have elected officials here in the state of Colorado that have your back and that care about freedom and liberty and opportunity to do what you need to do," Lebsock told Democrats gathered at the party's 7th Congressional District reorganization meeting at a union hall in north Denver. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is the reason why I'm going to take this opportunity for me to tell you today that I'm going to be running for Colorado state treasurer."

Lebsock, who acknowledged he also weighed a run for Congress, will be the first declared candidate for state treasurer. The incumbent, Republican Walker Stapleton, is term-limited and is considering a run for governor. Earlier this year, Lebsock was also the subject of a series of mysterious "Run, Steve, Run" online ads on The Colorado Statesman's website urging him to run for governor.

Colorado Republicans elect Jeff Hays as state party chairman

Colorado Statesman

Colorado Republicans elected former El Paso County chairman Jeff Hays as state party chair at the GOP's biennial reorganization meeting on Saturday in Englewood.

"You know how you spell fun? W-I-N!" Hays said as he accepted the nomination in a packed auditorium at Englewood High School, invoking a catch phrase Hays learned from former Air Force Academy football coach Fisher DeBerry. Republicans in the crowd shouted out the letters along with Hays.

"And together, we will build a party we believe in, a party to be proud of, and a party that's bigger, badder and better than it's ever been!" he said.

Colorado Senate gives final approval to state budget bill but hopes for major changes in the future

Denver Post

A reluctant state Senate approved the \$26.8 billion budget bill Thursday on a 30-5 vote, vowing to make changes to blunt the cuts to hospitals and transportation before the spending plan is finalized.

"I look at the budget this time as a living document. It's a living document because it's not finished," said Sen. Lucia Guzman, the chamber's Democratic leader and a supporter.

Colorado hospitals are poised to lose \$500 million in fee collections and federal dollars that cover the excess costs of providing care to low-income populations. But lawmakers hope to reverse the budget-balancing cuts in separate legislation introduced earlier this week.

Hill: The Future is not near, it's here

Denver Post

Mornings are rough. Stop-and-go-traffic on I-25 can feel more like a nauseating carnival ride than a highway. It's no easier in the city. A car just ahead with out-of-state plates slams on its brakes and that cup of morning coffee flies through the air, staining your shirt. The car ahead is now attempting to parallel park, and doing a pretty poor job of it. The minutes tick by until traffic opens up enough to swerve angrily around the parallel parking pariah, narrowly avoiding a pedestrian who decided to walk diagonally across a busy downtown intersection. Arrive at work late, stained, smelling like dark roast and at peak levels of frustration. Time to start the day.

Tolls on new tax-financed highway lanes? Colorado transportation chief raises that possibility as tax plan advances

Denver Business Journal

Coloradans, who could be asked in November to raise their own taxes to pay for extra interstate lanes and other road improvements, may have to pay again to use those lanes.

The head of the Colorado Department of Transportation says the agency is leaning toward operating many of the most high-profile highway expansions proposed for the state as so-called "managed lanes" - lanes where a toll might be charged, or that could be restricted to certain vehicles.

Colorado House sends mega-transportation bill to the Senate

ColoradoPolitics.com

It's your baby now, Colorado senators. The state House passed House Bill 1242, the mega-transportation bill, Friday on a 41-24 vote.

The bill would put a measure on the November ballot asking for a 0.62 statewide sales tax increase to raise billions to expand crowded highways, maintain long-neglected rural routes and give local communities flexibility on spending dollars on transit and other ways of moving people.

The House debated dozens of attempted Republican amendments Thursday and continued the political arm-wrestling Friday.

Charter schools in Colorado growing in number, influence

Denver Post

His show jumping days well behind him, 32-year-old Chicho soaks in the morning sun while students from Boulder Preparatory High School gently feed and pet him. Chicho's caretakers at the Medicine Horse Program say the old mare's age and health problems will soon end his life.

But for now, Chicho has a new role as a teacher of sorts. The eight students who surround him at an airy stable in rural Boulder County got to know him this month as part of a class on brain activity.

Most students at the charter school have struggled in mainstream schools while fighting problems such as substance abuse, autism, anxiety and depression.

They hope their work at Boulder Prep can restart their futures.

"This is my last shot at redemption," said 18-year-old Drake Johnson, who wants to move on to college and eventually the armed forces after graduation in May 2018.

Colorado schools will see slight increase in funding under budget approved by Senate

Chalkbeat Colorado

After months of anxiety over potentially deep cuts to classrooms, Colorado schools can expect a slight increase in funding after the state Senate approved a nearly \$27 billion budget that also restored funding for a controversial student health survey.

The Senate's overwhelming approval of the budget Thursday was a significant step toward securing a \$185 per student increase for schools.

The boost to classrooms is the latest in a series of increases since 2011, when per-pupil funding started to increase again after declines during The Great Recession. Funding advocates are concerned the money is not enough to cover rising costs. School districts across the state are facing cuts that could result in ending full-day kindergarten and shuttering schools.

Q&A: Why Republican Sen. Jerry Sonnenberg flipped on the hospital provider fee

Colorado Independent

Republican state Sen. Jerry Sonnenberg of Sterling set off shock waves at the state Capitol this week when he decided to sponsor a bill, along with Democratic Senate Minority Leader Lucia Guzman of Denver, on reclassifying the hospital provider fee.

The fee works like this: hospitals pay a per-bed fee on the number of overnight patient stays plus the number of outpatient visits. That fee is pooled among all hospitals in Colorado, about \$700 million per year, and matched with federal dollars. The money is then redistributed among hospitals to pay for Medicaid for low-income Coloradans and to cover the costs for people who use emergency rooms for non-emergency treatment.

But the fee, which was passed by the General Assembly in 2009, counts as revenue under the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR). In the past two years, that revenue has pushed the state over revenue limits (known as a cap) allowed under TABOR, and that triggered a TABOR refund. In 2017, that refund is expected to be around \$43 per person.

What a difference a year makes: Threat of rural hospital closings shape budget talks

Colorado Statesman

The state senate passed a budget last week that will slash \$500 million from hospitals across Colorado, a proposal that has set the halls of the Capitol buzzing and lawmakers considering a new version of a proposal that just a year ago was dismissed as an exhausted nonstarter.

The budget passed on a 30-5 vote in the Senate on Thursday threatens to effectively close down at least some of the overworked and underfunded rural facilities that serve residents stretched along miles of high plains farmland and mountain passes.

Rep. Millie Hamner, a Democrat from Dillon and vice chair of the Joint Budget Committee, said that, in the wake of the introduction of the draft budget, potential cuts to hospitals are a main topic at the Capitol.

Despite extensive legislative pledges, construction defect reform could again fall apart

ColoradoPolitics.com

House Democrats said construction defect litigation reform talks have become so troubled that conversations may stall.

Rep. Alec Garnett and House Speaker Crisanta Duran, both from Denver, placed blame at the feet of developers, business leaders and local government officials.

The Homeownership Opportunity Alliance's policy committee on Tuesday night voted to oppose a bipartisan bill that aimed at striking a compromise, which offers an ominous sign. The policy committee's vote is only a recommendation. The coalition's executive committee must still hold a formal vote.

Cole Wist says he's undaunted by wrenches thrown at construction defects bills by business coalition

Colorado Statesman

Assistant House Minority Leader Cole Wist, a Centennial Republican, says he's committed to both of the bipartisan construction-defects bills before the Legislature despite concerns expressed by a coalition of business leaders, adding that his decades of experience as a high-stakes litigator lead him to believe an agreement could be at hand.

"There's probably a reason why this issue hasn't gotten solved these last few years, and that's because people have strongly held beliefs," Wist told *The Colorado Statesman* after sponsors pushed back a committee hearing on House Bill 1279 on Wednesday.

Wist is at the center of negotiations on a package of bipartisan bills attempting to tackle long-simmering complaints by builders that it's too easy for condominium associations to file multi-million dollar class action lawsuits over defective construction, virtually grinding that market segment to a halt in Colorado in recent years.

Bill to allow medical marijuana to treat PTSD gains broad, bipartisan support

Colorado Statesman

A bill that enables doctors to prescribe medical marijuana to PTSD patients has gained momentum in the Legislature this year, passing the Senate with broad support on a 34-1 vote and now pressing forward with similar agreement in the House.

Sponsored by state Sen. Irene Aguilar, D-Denver, and state Rep. Jonathan Singer, D-Boulder, SB 17 would add PTSD to the list of conditions that qualify for medical marijuana in Colorado, permitting patients diagnosed with PTSD to treat their symptoms. Colorado would join more than 20 states - plus Washington, D.C., and two U.S. territories - which permit medical marijuana use to treat PTSD.

An increasing number of research studies have demonstrated that medical marijuana can effectively alleviate PTSD symptoms, including studies published by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists and the Canadian MedReleaf research group.

Bipartisan "Path to Marijuana Reform" bills introduced to decriminalize, protect, regulate cannabis industry

The Cannabist

U.S. lawmakers last Thursday introduced a package of marijuana reform bills aimed at protecting and preserving existing state-based programs while creating a framework for the federal regulation of cannabis.

Colo. lawmakers weigh bill to reclassify pot ahead of potential federal crackdown

The Hill

Colorado lawmakers are weighing a bill to allow the state's marijuana industry to reclassify pot ahead of a potential federal crackdown, *The Associated Press* reported March 26th.

If passed, the law would allow marijuana growers to reclassify their recreational pot as medical pot in the event that the Trump administration adopts a stricter drug enforcement policy.

The potential reclassification of marijuana would be a costly change for the state. The AP noted that Colorado could lose more than \$100 million a year due to a lower tax rate on medical pot.

Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments

Office of the Governor

The Colorado Civil Rights Commission investigates complaints and conducts hearings concerning alleged discrimination in employment, apprenticeship programs, on-the-job training, and vocational schools. The Commission also investigates the existence of discriminatory or unfair employment practices by a person, employment agency, labor organization, or vocational school. It is also charged with the promotion of good will and cooperation among various racial, religious, and ethnic groups in the state.

For a term expiring Mar. 13, 2021:

- Heidi Jeanne Hess of Clifton, a Democrat and member of the community at large, reappointed. 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; 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; provides information and assistance for companies interested in relocating or expanding their operations in the state of Colorado; and has the authority to work with the Department of Local Affairs on the consideration of recertification of enterprise zones.

For terms expiring Dec. 13, 2020:

- Thomas L. Clark of Westminster, to serve as a representative from the eastern slope, appointed;
- Robert Jay Hurst of Aspen, to serve as the designee of the Governor, appointed;
- John David Seaton of Grand Junction, to serve as a representative from west of the continental divide, reappointed.

The State Emergency Medical and Trauma Services Advisory Council advises the Department of Public Health and Environment on matters relating to emergency medical and trauma services programs. The Council's duties include developing curricula for the training of emergency medical personnel, establishing requirements for ambulance vehicles and services, and determining the eligibility of facilities to receive trauma center designation.

For a term expiring July 1, 2018:

- Krista Lea Turner, MD, FACS of Castle Pines, to serve as a board-certified surgeon providing trauma care at a Level II trauma center, and occasioned by the resignation of K. Barry Platnick, MD of Broomfield, appointed;

For a term expiring July 1, 2020:

- Honorable Sean C. Wood of Evergreen, to serve as a county commissioner from a rural county, appointed.

The Fire and Police Pension Association Board of Directors is a local, governmental unit that administers a statewide pension plan for full-time paid police officers and firefighters.

For a term expiring Sept. 1, 2019:

- Tammy Ann Hitchens of Westminster, to serve as a representative of Colorado municipal employers, and occasioned by the resignation of Manuel Albert Esquibel of Brighton, appointed. The Colorado Podiatry Board conducts examinations and institutes hearings to revoke, suspend, deny or reissue licenses.

For a term expiring Mar. 17, 2021:

- Brett D. Sachs, DPM, FACFAS of Wheat Ridge, to serve as a podiatrist, appointed.

The Workforce Development Council consists of representatives from the business community and state agencies. The Council, in consultation with the business community and state agencies, advises

the Governor on employment and training needs of the state and on workforce development plans and strategy.

For terms expiring Sept. 28, 2019:

- Honorable Nancy S. Jackson of Aurora, to serve as a local elected official, appointed;
- Ryan McLean Keiffer of Fort Collins, to serve as a representative of business, reappointed;

To serve at the pleasure of the Governor:

- Stephanie Copeland of Denver, to serve as a representative of the Governor's Office of Economic Development and International Trade, appointed;
- Kim Hunter Reed, PhD of Denver, to serve as a representative of the Colorado Department of Higher Education, appointed;
- Teina McConnell of Denver, to serve as a representative of area technical colleges, 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 a term expiring Aug. 1, 2017:

- Joshua R. Laipply of Lakewood, to serve as the designee of the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Transportation, and occasioned by the resignation of Rob Andresen of Parker, appointed.

For a term expiring Aug. 1, 2018:

- John Stephen Zabawa of Evergreen, 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 Linda Mary Mitchell of Denver, appointed.

For a term expiring Aug. 1, 2019:

- Jayla Sue Sanchez-Warren of Golden, to serve as a representative of an area agency on aging as described in CRS 26-11-204, and occasioned by the resignation of Jennifer L. Schaufele of Greenwood Village, appointed.

The Task Force on the Collection and Security of Digital Images of Child Abuse or Neglect studies current laws, rules and practices followed in the state and best practices in other states regarding the documentation of evidence, or the absence of evidence, of suspected child abuse through the collection and security of digital images by government employees. The Task Force also considers whether the statutes and practices concerning the collection of evidence of suspected abuse or neglect and the use of digital images are consistent with existing technologies and emerging technologies, and recommends the best practices to be used in the collection and security of digital imagery evidence of child abuse or neglect.

For a term expiring Sept. 1, 2019:

- Linda J. Nolte, Ph.D. of Steamboat Springs, to serve as a licensed psychiatrist or psychologist who works with children who have been abused or neglected, and occasioned by the resignation of William Betts, Ph.D. of Aurora, appointed.

Calculator

Days Left to Sine Die: 37

House Bills Introduced: 312

Senate Bills Introduced: 280

Dead Bills: 114

Governor Signed: 107