



## Legislative Newsletter



14305 E. Alameda Ave., Ste. 300  
Aurora CO 80012  
Tel: 303-344-1500  
Fax: 303-344-1564  
[www.aurorachamber.org](http://www.aurorachamber.org)

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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.*

**“Keeping an active mind has been vital to my survival, as has been maintaining a sense of humor.”  
Stephen Hawking**

The First Regular Session of the Seventy-second General Assembly convened on Jan. 4, 2019. As of today, there have been 206 bills in the House and 144 bills in the Senate introduced. This is significantly under the amount we usually see at this time, so expect many more to be introduced. Expect weekly newsletters from Axiom during the legislative session, and your Capitol Watch bill tracker URL will be sent every Friday.

**-Team Axiom-**

### **National popular vote bill headed to Colorado governor's desk**

*Denver Post*

The national popular vote bill passed the Colorado House 34-29 Thursday and is headed to Gov. Jared Polis' desk.

The Colorado House signaled in a vote late Wednesday that it will support joining a multistate effort to change how the country elects its president.

The effort is called the national popular vote interstate compact, and a bill that would pledge Colorado's nine Electoral College votes to whomever wins the national popular vote for president passed its second reading in the state House on Wednesday night. The bill, which already passed the Senate, will likely get a final House vote Thursday and could be on Gov. Jared Polis' desk by the end of the week.

The Democratic governor is expected to sign it.

House Republicans spent several hours objecting and offering amendments, including one by Rep. Lori Saine, R-Firestone, that implied Democrats were pushing this idea because of their disdain for President Donald Trump. All failed.

Hillary Clinton received nearly 3 million more votes nationwide in the 2016 election, but she lost the election in the Electoral College. Saine asked whether support for the compact would evaporate if Trump won the popular vote in 2020.

“I think we would see a lot of defections, and that's hardly fair,” Saine said.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Jeni Arndt, D-Fort Collins, told The Denver Post in an interview earlier this month that regardless of how an individual election turns out, she believes a system of “one person, one vote” is better.

Most Republicans who spoke in opposition of the bill talked about whether this bill is constitutional, calling it an “end run” around the U.S. Constitution. And they said the national popular vote would diminish Colorado’s importance in future elections.

Arndt said the change could encourage more people — especially those in traditionally safe states — to vote because they could band together with Republicans or Democrats across the country to win the national popular vote. And she said she thinks the “genius” of the founding fathers is seen in their creation of a flexible rather than a perfect system. “We as people need to care for our democracy as it breathes and grows and changes over time,” she said.

### **Colorado legislators face pressure for solution after rejecting sales-tax simplification bill for small businesses**

*Denver Business Journal*

Asked to solve an immediate problem facing small businesses unsure of how they will pay taxes owed to more than 700 taxing districts statewide, a Colorado Senate committee on Tuesday decided to pass, saying that a bigger-picture solution is needed and still can be conjured before the May 3 end of the 2019 legislative session.

Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee voted along party lines to kill Senate Bill 131, sponsored by Sen. Rob Woodward, R-Loveland, which would have exempted Colorado businesses that do less than \$100,000 in online sales annually to people outside of their home jurisdiction from remitting sales-tax revenues to each city, county and special district representing the home of a Colorado customer receiving their products. The defeat of that bill, despite it being backed by business groups and the Colorado Municipal League and was opposed only by the Colorado Department of Revenue, come one week after the same committee failed to pass a bigger-picture measure — SB 130, sponsored by Sen. Bob Gardner, R-Colorado Springs — that would have lessened the burden of destination-based tax reporting on both in-state and out-of-state retailers.

The push to simplify the state’s byzantine sales-tax system comes after revenue-department officials ruled in the wake of a U.S. Supreme Court decision last year that in-state retailers shipping their products through the mail must remit taxes to every district in which a customer receives their goods. Because of the overlap of city and county governments and special districts, that creates a network of more than 700 possible tax rates that must be navigated by businesses whose staffs are sometimes composed of one to two people making products out of their homes.

A bipartisan team of legislators is advancing a third measure, SB 6, that requires the state to put together an online system that determines what taxes a retailer owes based on the location of each shipment and then accept all of the taxes owed by companies and disperse them to the proper governments. But while that bill is extremely likely to become law, the system it envisions likely won’t be ready for public usage for a year.

Meanwhile, the Department of Revenue has said that retailers must begin complying with the new remittance laws by May 31 — a prospect that several business owners told the Senate Finance Committee Tuesday has them weighing the option of stopping online sales to in-state residents while continuing them to out-of-state locations where they don’t have to jump through so many hoops to figure out tax rates.

Denver business owner Paul Witter said he would lose money from his in-state sales because of the requirements to buy local sales-tax licenses everywhere he ships. Amy Hamrick, who owns Kind Coffee in Estes Park, said that she had planned to spur growth based on online sales but likely would retreat from that if the state requires every in-state sale to pay taxes to a different government.

“This is significant enough that businesses are contemplating no longer doing business in Colorado,” said Rachel Beck, vice president of government affairs for the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corp. “That may sound [like] Chicken Little ... But it’s something that we hear a lot.”

Dale Ross, co-owner of Rocky Mountain Soap Market in Colorado Springs, bought software that could help him identify the proper sales-tax rate and governments to remit taxes to — for \$300 an hour to download and \$2,000 for 60 days of

tech support to run the system. In January, he made \$3,200 in gross sales, but it cost him \$594 to use the system, not counting taxes.

Testimony such as this led Woodward to say that inaction on the subject sends the signal that the Legislature does not care about the many businesses that have said they are being forced into barring in-state sales or just not complying with state law.

“A ‘no’ vote from this committee tells 100,000 businesses across Colorado that you support the bureaucratic nightmare that is about to crush them,” Woodward told the committee in his closing remarks.

But Democrats fired back that Woodward’s offering was just a part of a bigger-picture solution that must be put together that does not disadvantage local governments that could lose money and also doesn’t make the sales-tax remittance system more confusing, as Department of Revenue leaders warned that it would.

And committee Democratic leaders said that talks are already underway to find that solution, which they are confident they can achieve in the next 2 1/2 months.

“I want to be clear to the business community that voting no on this bill does not mean we don’t support you, and I’m offended by my colleague saying it does,” said Chairwoman Sen. Lois Court, D-Denver. “Senator Woodward’s ideas are crucial to us finding that global solution that we must find.”

## **Colorado House panel puts brakes on bill to eliminate red-light cameras**

*Colorado Politics*

A Colorado House committee Wednesday rejected what has become an annual attempt to kill off or curb cameras that record drivers going through red lights at intersections or failing to stop completely before making right turns.

House Bill 1099, a bipartisan measure proposed by Reps. Jovan Melton, D-Aurora, and Steve Humphrey, R-Alt, would have repealed authorization for the state, a city or county to use automated vehicle identification systems, including red-light cameras, to identify violators of traffic laws and issue citations based on photographic evidence. Cameras or other automated systems would have required voter approval.

A similar proposal, which would have banned the cameras outright, was twice vetoed by then-Gov. John Hickenlooper.

This year’s bill didn’t make it out of the House Committee on Transportation and Local Government, where it was voted down 8-3. Rep Terri Carver, R-Colorado Springs, joined Democrats on the committee in defeating it.

“Now is not the time to restrict traffic safety measures. It’s a time to invest in them,” said Colorado Springs Police Cmdr. Adrian Vasquez, who testified against the bill. “The data show (red-light cameras) work.”

The Colorado Springs Police Department installed red-light cameras last fall at four intersections in hopes of reducing fatal crashes after a record 48 people died in wrecks or were struck while walking on city streets last year. Six more might be added this year.

Former Police Chief Pete Carey stressed that red-light cameras save lives, but the department still has received significant pushback, including that the cameras’ purpose is to raise revenue for the city and that they are either faulty or designed to trap drivers.

Aurora voters recently decided to eliminate their city’s red-light cameras, Melton noted.

“It really came down to an issue of, is this increasing public safety, or is this just increasing revenue?” he said.

Some cities pocket hundreds of thousands of dollars a year from the cameras, Melton said. Denver recently took in nearly \$3 million, and Aurora's revenue was about \$1 million before the program was eliminated, he said.

In addition, accidents don't necessarily decrease after cameras are installed, Melton said. Rear-end accidents often become more frequent.

"That can be just as dangerous when you're talking about whiplash and injuries to your spinal cord," he said.

Not so, said Denver Police Lt. Robert Rock. Rear-end crashes might increase, but those are far less dangerous than broadside collisions. Red-light cameras help reduce more serious crashes, he said.

"Vehicles are not designed to provide as much protection on the side," Rock said.

### **Younger Colorado students seek access to mental health care, without parental permission**

*Chalk Beat*

A bill before the Colorado legislature would allow younger children to access confidential therapy on their own to fight mental illness and youth suicide.

A stream of Colorado teens on Wednesday told stories of their mental health crises, suicide attempts, and the deaths of friends as the House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee discussed House Bill 1120.

This is the third attempt by state Rep. Dafna Michaelson Jenet to expand access to therapy for middle school-aged children. Previous efforts died in the Republican-controlled Senate. Now Democrats control both chambers, but that doesn't mean there is consensus on the best way to intervene in what has become a public health crisis in Colorado.

Some questioned the wisdom of allowing 12- to 14-year-olds to seek help from licensed mental health or social workers without parental approval. Current law allows people 15 and over to seek therapy without such consent.

Michaelson Jenet, a Commerce City Democrat, said she's considering adopting portions of a New York law that allows minors to get therapy without parental consent under certain circumstances. Already, she's agreed to amend the bill to allow health providers to consult with a child's parents if they think it's warranted and wouldn't harm the child.

She said she expects the committee to vote on the bill March 1, with additional amendments.

The bill also would have the Colorado Department of Education develop mental health and suicide prevention resources for schools around the state.

State Rep. Dylan Roberts, a Steamboat Springs Democrat who is a co-sponsor of the bill, noted that his district has been particularly hard hit by Colorado's youth suicide crisis.

"Eagle County had 18 completed suicides last year in a community of only about 50,000 people," Roberts said.

Suicide was the second leading cause of death in 2017 for those ages 10 to 21 in Colorado. Accidents ranked first, with 156 deaths; while 138 youths died by suicide, according to the Centers for Disease Control. That number is up from 72 suicides for the age group in 2008.

"We are in the top in the nation, No. 3, for youth suicide," Michaelson Jenet said. "What are we going to do about it?"

### **Federal government headed for close to half of nation's health tab**

*The Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Even without a history-making health care remake to deliver "Medicare-for-all," government at all levels will be paying nearly half the nation's health care tab in less than 10 years, according to a federal report released Wednesday.

The government growth is driven by traditional Medicare, which is experiencing a surge in enrollment as aging baby boomers shift out of private coverage, according to the analysis from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Federal, state and local governments will be paying 47 percent of the nation's health care costs in 2027, up from 45 percent currently, the report said.

The report did not consider the potential impact of "Medicare-for-all" national health insurance plans from Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and other liberals. Nor did it delve into a financial rescue of traditional Medicare that could become a pressing political priority for all sides in just a few years. Medicare's trustees have said the program will be insolvent in seven years, when its giant trust fund for inpatient care won't be able to fully cover expected medical bills.

Spelling out the economic consequences of current laws and policies, the report serves as a reality check on the political debate over health care. That debate ranges from President Donald Trump's warnings about lurking "socialism" to the suggestion from Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., a 2020 contender, that the U.S. can simply "move on" to a new taxpayer-financed system that would cover all Americans.

"To the extent that a Martian landed and saw how much of the American health care system is funded by the government, it's been about 50 percent for some time," said economist Paul Hughes-Cromwick of Altarum, a nonprofit research organization.

The report projected that U.S. health care spending will surpass \$5.9 trillion in 2027, growing to represent more than 19 percent of the economy. Health care spending is expected to increase somewhat more rapidly than overall economic growth from 2018 to 2027, underscoring an ingrained affordability problem for government, employers and U.S. households.

Rising prices for health care goods and services are expected to account for nearly half the spending growth, said the report, with the rest driven by a mix of factors, including an aging population and more intensive use of services. "The baby boom generation is expected to shift from private health insurance coverage to Medicare coverage during the projection period," said Andrea Sisko, an author of the report.

Some experts have called attention to higher U.S. prices as a chief reason for the disparity in medical costs with other economically advanced countries.

Spending on prescription drugs is expected to pick up again after a recent slowdown, averaging about 6 percent a year from 2020 to 2027, the report found.

The nation's uninsured rate was expected to remain relatively stable, hovering around 10 percent.

For politicians, the numbers are a double-edged reality check.

Trump's warnings about "socialism" are undercut by the fact that much of the health care system is already paid for by the government. For Democrats contemplating a system fully funded by government, the trillions of dollars in new government spending that would entail are detailed in the report's tables.

The report was published online by the journal Health Affairs.

## **Bill to reshape Colorado oil and gas regulations is coming soon, say Democrats**

*Colorado Politics*

Backers of tighter rules on Colorado oil and gas development struck out at the ballot box in November and at the state Supreme Court in January. Now, the Democrats who lead the state legislature are stepping up to the plate.

State House and Senate Democrats say they plan to introduce a sweeping bill in coming weeks to redefine the mission of the Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission, which regulates the industry, placing a higher priority on public health and safety.

In addition, the measure is likely to seek to give local governments more control over incoming oil and gas permits rather than maintaining that oversight at the state level.

“Local development and zoning are the bread and butter issues of local city councils and county commissions,” said Sen. Mike Foote, D-Lafayette. “Only oil and gas is exempt from that currently. They should have the same power [over that industry].”

Democrats have been talking about such legislation since the 2019 session opened, but their plans have been firming up lately.

The move most likely will be contained in just one bill rather than many, said House Speaker KC Becker, D-Boulder. A concerted effort is more likely to succeed, she said.

“That’s better than throwing spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks,” Becker said.

Working alongside Becker on the measure is Senate Majority Leader Sen. Steve Fenberg, D-Boulder, who said the state hasn’t passed any substantial legislation on oil and gas regulation in six years and spoke optimistically of the incoming bill.

“It’s actually probably the most meaningful reform that Colorado will have ever seen in oil and gas,” Fenberg said.

The legislation could be introduced into the House as early as March, Fenberg said. He and Becker anticipate opposition from the oil and gas industry.

The Colorado Petroleum Council trade group remains optimistic that incoming legislation will account for the diverse voices represented in the state’s energy field, said Tracee Bentley, the council’s executive director, who announced Tuesday she will depart next month to lead an industry group in Texas.

“As ever, we stand ready to work collaboratively with the legislature to ensure that every voice is represented in the formulation of new laws, while protecting the 232,900 Colorado women and men whose livelihoods depend on the natural gas and oil industry,” Bentley said through a spokesman. “We are excited about the future of our innovative line of work and its ability to provide unprecedented opportunity to Coloradans from every walk of life.”

## **Equal-pay measure advances at Colorado Capitol despite significant business concerns**

*Denver Business Journal*

Colorado business groups seeking major changes to the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act procured several significant concessions from its sponsors Wednesday, but the bill advanced through its first legislative committee with its most controversial provision — the creation of a new right of private action enabling lawsuits by aggrieved workers — remaining intact.

Senate Bill 85, sponsored by Democratic Sens. Jessie Danielson of Wheat Ridge and Brittany Pettersen of Lakewood, received universal praise for its aim during a hearing Wednesday before the Senate Judiciary Committee but also a litany of criticism from business and some legal groups for the proposed details of its implementation. The measure, seeking to end a wage gap that sees Colorado women paid just 86 cents for each dollar earned by men on average, advanced to the Senate Appropriations Committee on a 3-2, Democratic-led party-line vote.

SB 85 seeks to end that pay gap eventually with several actions aimed to make pay rates for men and women at each company more transparent and equal. Those include a prohibition against employers asking job applicants about prior salary history that could exacerbate existing pay discrepancies for women, a requirement that all jobs be posted in order to expand the potential applicant pool and a requirement that male and female pay for comparable jobs must be equal with only a few exemptions.

And they also include the creation of a private right of action for workers to file lawsuits against employers if they feel they have been a victim of pay discrimination in violation of the requirements of SB 85. The provisions of the bill allow judges to demand that employers pay attorney's fees if workers are victorious in their legal actions, but they do not require the same of unsuccessful plaintiffs, even if their cases are determined to be frivolous or non-meritorious.

For the dozen business groups that showed up to testify against SB 85, the legal right of action — or the “sue first and see what happens later aspect of it,” as Colorado Bankers Association COO Jenifer Waller described it — was the biggest stumbling block to reaching a neutral or possibly even supportive position on the bill. Several asked that complaints be directed instead to a state agency such as the Colorado Civil Rights Division — a change that last month made business leaders drop their long-held opposition to the “Ban the Box” bill limiting the questions they can ask on job applications — in order to avert what they fear could be a stream of lawsuits, some without merit, many of which could be directed at companies without the resources to handle them.

“Most Colorado small businesses do not have the luxury of a full-time legal department,” said Tony Gagliardi, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business. “The private right of action contained in this bill could easily bankrupt a small business.”

### **Aurora school board considers whether to close or renew large charter school**

*Chalk Beat*

The Aurora school board is considering whether to renew a charter school — if it meets a long list of conditions — even though it has ignored district concerns about its finances and governing board.

The board last renewed Vanguard Classical School's charter for just one year, because of concerns over conflicts of interest. Aurora Superintendent Rico Munn said he struggled with the renewal recommendation, due in December, because he first planned to recommend closure, but then decided to give Vanguard more time to provide information.

“The ultimate thing that I keep very heavily in mind around this kind of question is whether or not student needs are being met,” Munn said. “In this circumstance, we have not had any question about their student needs being met. In that context I felt very reluctant to recommend revocation.”

The Aurora school board will make its decision March 5.

Among conditions for Vanguard, the district suggests the school replace its board to include two parents and exclude employees of Ability Connection Colorado, a non-profit that founded the school and is now contracted to manage some services for Vanguard.

School leaders told the Aurora school board on Tuesday that they're willing to comply with the conditions, and said they are making changes already. Previously, school leaders denied problems with governance, blaming some district concerns on misunderstandings.

Vanguard's two campuses serve more than 1,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade. About 9 percent of its students qualify for special education.

### **New push to open Colorado police internal-investigation files to the public finds early success**

*Denver Post*

A bill that would make Colorado police departments' records of internal affairs investigations open to the public advanced out of the state House Judiciary Committee on a 7-4 vote Tuesday after hours of testimony and discussion.

Current state law allows police agencies in Colorado to release documents related to internal affairs investigations if they believe doing so is in the public interest.

But advocates of the bill, HB19-1119, pointed out that more often than not, those records are not released. In fact, most law enforcement agencies other than the Denver Police Department deny the requests, citing officer privacy and that releasing such information would be "contrary to the public interest."

But Rep. James Coleman, D-Denver, who introduced the bill for the second year, believes the release of those records accomplishes the opposite: more transparency and accountability in the public's interest. The bill would allow agencies to provide a public summary of an investigation, and people would be able to request more records.

This year, Coleman and advocates of the bill, including the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado and the Independence Institute, collected feedback from law enforcement and stakeholders in a bid to make the legislation more palatable. The Colorado District Attorneys' Council, the Colorado Municipal League and the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police this year did not oppose the bill, which has been touted as a bipartisan effort.

Coleman told the committee that he made concessions with this year's bill, including more privacy protections and not allowing the law to apply retroactively.

But they weren't enough for everyone: The Colorado Fraternal Order of Police opposes the bill, citing privacy concerns and claiming the current system works. If a person currently disputes an agency's decision to withhold records, he or she can take it up in court.

Don Sisson, legal counsel for the Fraternal Order of Police, said the bill would "undermine and undercut principles of fairness for officers" and eliminate discretion of records release.

Advocates argued that the public and media shouldn't have to — and often can't afford to — go to court to get records about on-duty officer conduct.

Representatives from media organizations — including Noelle Phillips, a Denver Post editor, who testified as a representative of the Colorado Press Association — stressed that the bill would help bring to light important public safety information.

"The public has a right to know how law enforcement officers conduct themselves while on duty and how misconduct complaints are investigated," said Jeff Roberts, executive director of the Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition.



## **Congressman Jason Crow, Secretary of State Jena Griswold team up for dark money town hall**

*Sentinel Colorado*

AURORA | Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold and Aurora Congressman Jason Crow serve at two different levels of government, but they share a mutual interest in shining a light on dark money in politics. The two teamed up for a town hall-style panel on the topic Tuesday in Aurora.

Crow's first bill submitted to Congress — part of HR 1, the first package of bills House Democrats released this session — is dubbed the "End Dark Money Act." It would allow the Internal Revenue Service to establish policies for tax-exempt, social welfare organizations that are funneling big sums of money into campaigning.

"This bill strikes at the root of the problem by giving the IRS the tools it needs to prevent mega-donors from using non-profits as vehicles for political contributions," Crow previously said of the bill. "By increasing transparency and accountability in our elections, we are returning power back to voters and restoring Americans' faith in our democracy."

At the forum, held at Aurora's Village Exchange Center, Crow and Griswold said it'll take a joint effort to achieve more transparency among political campaigns.

"It's about influence," said Griswold, who began the night with talking about how low and middle income voters feel like they don't have a voice in politics. Crow said he experienced that when campaigning the 6th Congressional District last year.

Like Crow, Griswold has been eyeing possible campaign finance reform mechanisms. Most notably, after being elected she said she'll have a working group to specifically advise on campaign finance issues. She also pegged Jenny Flanagan as a deputy secretary — she's the former vice president of Common Cause, which advocates for more transparency in government.

At the forum, Griswold said she'd like to see independent expenditure committees — which she likened to the state's version of a Super PAC — reformed so that it's clear who and which entities are funneling money into politics.

In 2015, Colorado received a "D" grade from the Center for Public Integrity on how it regulates campaign finance. The report card highlights respected campaign contribution limits, independent audited reports and investigations as some of the trouble areas.

## **Polis sees 'historic opportunity' for health care reform**

*Pueblo Chieftain*

Gov. Jared Polis told a crowded auditorium here that state lawmakers have a "historic opportunity" this year to dramatically reduce the cost of health care to the public, especially those paying for their own insurance.

He joined Senate President Leroy Garcia and state Rep. Daneya Esgar at Pueblo Community College for a 90-minute question period on health care issues and the three Democrats discussed a list of bills in the Legislature aimed at lowering costs.

"This is the year it is realistic to get them done," Polis said, getting applause from the crowd of about 150 people in the Hoag Recital Hall.

One would create a reinsurance program to help cover the costs of high-price medical procedures and insurance premiums — a problem faced by Southern Colorado and Western Slope residents.

Polis said eight other states already have federal permission to have reinsurance programs and Colorado would be the ninth. He predicted that could save consumers in those high-priced regions between 15 and 30 percent on their insurance costs.

“Anytime you lower health-insurance costs, you’re also increasing access by making it more affordable,” he said.

Similarly, there is legislation to let the state import prescription drugs from Canada — it would also require permission from the federal government.

Garcia pointed out that prescription drugs in Canada often are four or five times cheaper than in the U.S. cheaper than in the U.S.

Polis added, “Don’t let special interests in the way, Obviously, there are those who profit in this.”

The governor warned it could take a year to get federal waivers in place but said there was bipartisan support for doing that.

“President Trump says he wants to see innovation,” Polis said in an obvious challenge to the administration. He noted that Vermont is leading the way in trying to get permission to import prescription drugs.

Esgar added that while Democrats now control the governor’s office, Senate and House, there is Republican support on many of the health care bills coming through the Legislature this year, such as one measure to make hospitals fully report their costs.

Polis put it this way — “People are tired of how much they pay for health care and of getting ripped off.”

Esgar pointed to a bill she is working on to address unexpected “out-of-network” medical costs which a consumer can get hit with, even if they have followed all the rules of their insurance policy. Those bills can be thousands of dollars, she said.

Vice chairman of the important Joint Budget Committee, Esgar said she has the support of the Colorado Consumer Health Initiative as well as cautious support from the Colorado Hospital Association, insurance companies and even doctors.

Garcia fielded a question about shoring up the chronic shortage of staff at the Colorado Mental Health Institute at Pueblo. Over the past two years, he has successfully pushed the Department of Human Services to accept paramedics for some staff positions at the state hospital but said more needed to be done.

“It’s not just about paramedics, but hiring other allied health professionals as well,” he said.

He praised Polis for nominating Michelle Barnes to be the new director of DHS, which oversees the 449-bed CMHIP. Barnes formerly ran an executive consulting company that provided interim chief executives to non-profits and other organizations.

“I know Michelle Barnes is interested in hearing our perspectives,” he said.

## **Many voters are in favor of taxing the wealthy**

*Denver Business Journal*

As leading Democrats roll out proposals to increase taxes on the rich, the American people are largely behind them.

A majority of people support Democratic proposals to raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans, according to a poll conducted this month for The New York Times by online research platform SurveyMonkey, though their opinions vary between specific plans. Voters overwhelmingly see income inequality as a problem the government should be trying to address.

Support for taxing the rich cuts across party lines: A majority of Republicans support a proposal from Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, a Democratic presidential candidate, to tax a group of the wealthiest Americans on their net worth. Views on raising the top income-tax rate are more sharply split.

The tax-the-rich sentiment is strongest by far among Democrats, who see it as a moral issue. Subscribing to a view expressed recently by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the first-term New York Democrat, nearly two-thirds of Democrats say it is immoral to have an economic system where some people have billions of dollars while others have very little.

“They’re not paying their fair share,” said one Democrat, Fred Wood, a retired teacher in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. “It’s just not right when folks cannot afford health care.”

Polling support is by no means a guarantee that Americans would elect a tax-the-rich challenger to President Donald Trump — who mused as a candidate about raising taxes on the rich but as president signed a \$1.5 trillion tax cut that reduced the top marginal income tax rate and primarily benefits high earners. Polls by Gallup and other organizations over the decades have regularly found that a majority of Americans believe that corporations and the wealthy pay too little in taxes, but voters have frequently elected presidents who cut those taxes, instead.

What appears different this time, analysts say, is the emphasis that leading Democratic candidates are placing on taxing the rich. “This is about politicians catching up to where Americans have been,” said Leslie McCall, a political scientist at the CUNY Graduate Center.

As a result, progressive policy hands say they are increasingly confident that if a Democrat wins the White House and the party gains full control of Congress, taxes on the rich will go up. That is partly because of the “finally dawning realization among Democrats that taxing the rich is good politics along with good policy,” said Michael Linden, a fellow at the liberal Roosevelt Institute.

“My bet is that it won’t be one big thing” that ends up raising taxes on the rich, Linden said. “I bet it will be a lot of medium-sized things. A higher top rate, for sure. Rooting out or limiting some of the tax expenditures that disproportionately benefit the rich. I think the corporate rate will start to creep back up. And I think new taxes like a wealth tax, or some other form of capital taxation, are very likely.”

More Democrats are taking up the theme.

Rising inequality and policies to fight it have emerged as a central theme in the Democratic primary campaign. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., who three years ago railed against “millionaires and billionaires” in an insurgent bid for the Democratic nomination, said Tuesday that he would again seek the nomination on a platform of free public college and “Medicare for all.” This time around, he will face competition for the left flank of his party, including from Warren, who has proposed taxing the assets — not just the annual income — of the richest Americans to pay for universal child care.

## **Gov. Polis signs bill into law**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, Feb. 21, 2019

DENVER— Gov. Jared Polis signed these bills into law yesterday.

HB19-1015

Recreation Of The Colorado Water Institute

Rep. Arndt; Sen. Ginal

The Colorado water institute was created in 1981 and automatically repealed in 2017. The bill recreates the institute.

SB19-018

Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver Age

Sen. Scott; Rep. Saine

The bill authorizes the department of revenue to adopt rules authorizing a person who is at least 18 years of age but under 21 years of age to be licensed to drive a commercial vehicle in interstate commerce if the person holds a commercial driver's license and operation of a commercial vehicle in interstate commerce by a person in that age range is permitted under federal law.

SB19-021

Board Of Health Approval For Legal Services

Sen. Moreno, Sen. Zenzinger; Rep. McKean

The bill removes the requirement that the state board of health (state board) approve the retention of counsel when the executive director of the department of public health and environment seeks to bring an action to enjoin, prosecute, or enforce public health laws or standards and the local district attorney fails to act. The bill also removes the requirement that an agency, through its county or district board of health or through its public health director, acquire the approval of the state board before retaining counsel to defend the agency and its officers and employees against actions brought against them.

SB19-028

Allow On And Off Premises Beer License Rural

Areas

Rep. McKean; Sen. Holbert

Recent legislation (Senate Bill 18-243) terminated the licensing of retailers to sell fermented malt beverages (formerly known as "3.2 beer" but now including all beer) for consumption on and off a licensed premises, requiring the holder of such a license to combine its renewal application with an application to convert the license into either a license to sell for consumption on the licensed premises or a license to sell for consumption off the licensed premises.

SB19-045

Clarify Radiation Advisory Committee Compensation

Rep. Hooton; Sen. McKean

The bill clarifies that members of the radiation advisory committee are reimbursed for necessary and actual expenses incurred in attendance at meetings or for authorized business of the committee.

SB19-058

Enactment of CRS 2018

Sen. Lee; Rep. Herod

This bill enacts the softbound volumes of the Colorado Revised Statutes 2018 and the Special Supplement 2018 as the positive and statutory law of the state of Colorado and establishes the effective date of said publications.

HJR19-1005

Water Projects Eligibility Lists

Rep. Roberts; Sen. Donovan

Concerning water projects eligibility lists.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, Feb. 18, 2019

**Lt. Gov. Primavera announces 2019 Girls Go CyberStart Program**

DENVER —The State of Colorado is again partnering with the SANS Institute for the Girls Go CyberStart program and encouraging high school students across the state to participate. In 2018, 250 students from 24 high schools in Colorado participated in the girls-only online cybersecurity competition. Students and schools can learn more and register at <http://girlsgocyberstart.org>.

“Women are underrepresented in the tech and cybersecurity industry,” said Lieutenant Governor Dianne Primavera. “We hope this fun challenge will encourage more young women to test their skills and explore opportunities in this field.”

The Girls Go CyberStart Game is an online series of challenges that allow students to act as cyber protection agents to solve realistic problems and puzzles and explore exciting, relevant topics, such as cryptography and digital forensics.

Participating students (and their teachers) do not need prior knowledge or experience in information technology or cybersecurity to participate. All that is required is a computer and an internet connection.

“Cybersecurity is a fascinating and ever-evolving field,” explained Dr. Theresa M. Szczurek, Chief Information Officer and Executive Director of the Governor’s Office of Information Technology. “I encourage young Colorado women to participate in Girls Go CyberStart and uncover a passion for information technology, because cyber experts are in great demand.”

The Girls Go CyberStart program is free for schools and students. As an added incentive for this year’s program, another \$200,000 in college scholarship money will be awarded to high school juniors and seniors who perform well in the game. At least ten high school girls in Colorado will win scholarships, and the top three high schools in Colorado with the most participants will win awards of \$1,000, \$750, and \$500, respectively.

All Colorado high school girls in grades 9 to 12 are invited to play. Registration opens February 18. Play begins on March 20.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, Feb. 18, 2019

**Gov. Polis and AG Weiser statement on lawsuit against Trump administration’s emergency declaration**

DENVER — Statement from Colorado Governor Jared Polis and Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser regarding the multistate lawsuit challenging President Trump’s emergency declaration:

“Colorado will join at least 10 other states in a multistate lawsuit challenging President Trump’s unconstitutional emergency declaration to build a border wall. After reviewing the specifics of this action over the weekend, we concluded that Colorado could lose tens of millions in military construction dollars that would be diverted to build the wall. Our military bases play a critical role in our nation’s readiness and are economic drivers in several communities.

In this action, we are fighting for Colorado’s interests and defending the rule of law.”

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, Feb. 15, 2019

**Gov. Polis announces boards and commissions appointments**

DENVER — Gov. Jared Polis today announced appointments to the following boards and commissions:

State Board of Stock Inspectors  
Underground Damage Prevention Safety Commission  
Wine Industry Development Board  
Uninsured Employer Board  
Special Funds Board for Workers' Compensation Self Insurers  
Workers' Compensation Cost Containment Board  
Rocky Mountain Low Level Radioactive Waste Compact  
Solid and Hazardous Waste Commission  
Water Quality Control Commission  
Colorado Banking Board  
State Electrical Board  
Board of Mortgage Loan Originators  
State Plumbing Board  
Board of Real Estate Appraisers  
Securities Board  
Hospital Provider Fee Oversight and Advisory Board  
Private Occupational School Board  
Board of Directors of the State Historical Society  
Colorado Student Leaders Institute Executive Board  
Colorado Commission on the Aging  
Colorado Traumatic Brain Injury Board  
Board of Assessment Appeals  
Energy Impact Assistance Advisory Committee  
Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs  
Board of Commissioners of Veterans Community Living Centers  
Coal Mine Board of Examiners  
Ground Water Commission  
Fire and Police Pension Association Board of Directors  
Public Employees Retirement Benefit Plans Pension Review Subcommittee  
Statewide Internet Portal Authority  
Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority  
State Board of Parole  
Colorado Aeronautical Board  
Colorado Tourism Office Board of Directors  
State Housing Board  
Colorado Educational and Cultural Facilities Authority Board of Directors  
CollegInvest Board of Directors  
Colorado Civil Rights Commission  
Air Quality Control Commission  
Sickle-Cell Anemia Advisory Board  
Urban Drainage and Flood Control District Board of Directors  
Minority Business Advisory Council  
eHealth Commission  
Public Trustees  
Colorado Coordinating Council for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children  
Stroke Advisory Board

Board of Trustees for the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind  
Colorado Water Conservation Board

**Gov. Polis statement on President's state of emergency declaration**

DENVER — Gov. Jared Polis today issued the following statement in regard to President Trump's decision to bypass lawmakers and build a wall:

“President Donald Trump's plan to circumvent Congress and declare a state of emergency for his personal vanity project is an astonishing abuse of power. This is not only a waste of taxpayer dollars but a distraction from the many real issues that affect hardworking Coloradans.

While the president tries to separate us— Coloradans, and my administration, will continue to unite by building a Colorado for all.”