



Legislative Newsletter



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*An up-to-date review of Colorado government and politics especially for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.
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**“The art of leadership is saying no, not saying yes.
It is very easy to say yes.”
-Tony Blair**

The First Regular Session of the Seventy-second General Assembly convened on Jan. 4, 2019. As of today, there have been 288 bills in the House and 219 bills in the Senate introduced. Expect weekly newsletters from Axiom during the legislative session, and your Capitol Watch bill tracker URL will be sent every Friday.

-Team Axiom-

Colorado House passes big oil & gas bill; negotiations ahead over amendments

Colorado Politics

The Colorado House voted along party lines, 36-20, in favor of a bill allowing local control on oil and gas operations Friday morning.

Environmentalists, however, will have to wait a bit longer to celebrate Senate Bill 181 becoming law. Because it was amended in the House — after passing the Senate, 19-15, on March 13 — negotiators from both chambers will have to consolidate the two bills into one that can be agreed upon before the session ends on May 3.

Gov. Jared Polis is expected to sign the measure when it makes it to his desk.

Lawmakers debated a raft of amendments for five hours Thursday night, including a Republican effort to build in the possibility of a statewide vote on repealing the law.

The bill is sponsored by House Speaker KC Becker and Senate Majority Leader Steve Fenberg, both Democrats from Boulder, along with Rep. Yadira Caraveo, D-Thorton, and Sen. Mike Foote, D-Lafayette.

The bill had no Republican support in either chamber.

"I really want to commend the speaker, the industry and the community groups for their hard work on this bill," Caraveo said Friday morning.

"It was long-fought. It's something we've been trying to make changes on for years, and I hope we were able to — with the changes last night — protect the health, safety and welfare of some of the communities that are most affected by oil and gas operations.

Besides allowing local governments to set rules on where oil-and-gas operations are located, the bill instructs state regulators to put public health and the environment ahead of bolstering the industry.

Senate Bill 181 also calls for more monitoring on emissions that wells might create.

Oil and gas proponents says the regulations will harm a major industry for the state. Last year voters statewide overwhelmingly rejected Proposition 112, which would have mandated a 2,500 buffer for wells from schools, neighborhoods and businesses.

Rep. Rod Bockenfeld, R-Watkins, said the "arrogant" proposal creates uncertainty that will prompt the industry to leave or steer clear of Colorado. Each local election would create the potential to upend their investment here, he said.

"What we've done here is create an oil and gas policy in the state of Colorado that has absolutely no consistency," Bockenfeld said.

He said CEOs, who evaluate risks, would see a location where one seat on a county commission could flip in an election "and the whole philosophy of that county could change — one seat and they could go in and revise their oil-and-gas policy."

Rep. Lori Saine, R-Dacono, said just before Friday's vote, "SB 181 has the potential to economically destroy Colorado."

Republicans are celebrating, but the extra \$106 million for transportation in Colorado's budget is far from a done deal

Colorado Sun

Republicans in the Colorado Senate celebrated this week as the \$30.5 billion state budget passed out of the chamber with \$106 million in cuts to government administration spending as part of a plan to divert the money toward transportation.

Since January, the GOP had been clamoring for more money — \$336 million to be exact — to upgrade the state's roads and bridges. In exchange for the funds, Republicans agreed to halt their delay tactics in the chamber, which have consumed hours of lawmaking work in the past month.

"We now have something in this budget that we can now go back to the constituents ... and say, 'We got something, we worked together,'" Senate Minority Leader Chris Holbert, a Parker Republican, said Thursday.

But those dollars are far from certain. The House customarily will strip any Senate changes to the budget and the Democratic leadership of the legislature's Joint Budget Committee aren't committing to retaining the transportation boost when the two chambers meet to negotiate a final deal in April.

Gov. Jared Polis isn't committing to the transportation spending either. He has line-item veto power to avoid making the required diversion, which itself is constitutionally questionable.

"There never are any promises in this building," said Sen. Dominick Moreno, a Commerce City Democrat who chairs the legislature's powerful Joint Budget Committee. "... It is a win, I'm not going to take that away from Senate Republicans. They were able to get an amendment onto the long bill. But that being said, we are now out of balance. We've got to figure it out."

Moreno added: "(That money) is a lot to absorb. I think it's too early to tell. But we are going to do our best to have a conversation about the proper support for transportation in this budget."

The \$106 million represents less than 1 percent of the \$12.2 billion in discretionary funding in this year's budget package, which already included \$230 million in transportation funding before the amendment. But the shift is extraordinary because each dollar in the budget is intensely fought over.

Now, lobbyists at the Capitol and interest groups are watching closely to see whether their programs will face cuts to pay for the transportation spending. For instance, state workers are slated to get a 3 percent pay raise included in the 2020 fiscal year budget.

"We're going to monitor to make sure that state employees and state services have the money they need," said Hilary Glasgow, who leads the union representing state employees.

The amendment specifically directs the governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting to find the \$106 million in cuts. Polis' spokeswoman declined to comment Thursday. But a question lingers about whether the governor can even make the cuts after a state court ruling decades ago rejected an attempt by former Gov. Dick Lamm to move dollars between agencies.

The budget negotiations will begin in the House next week, and the first move the Appropriations Committee will make is to remove all amendments made in the Senate, including the one for \$106 million in transportation.

The chamber will vote on its own version of the spending plan and the two versions will go back to the Joint Budget Committee to draft a final version within the limits of the state's revenue projections.

Democratic leadership in the House — House Speaker KC Becker and House Majority Leader Alec Garnett — did not commit to preserving the transportation money.

Like Moreno, Rep. Daneya Esgar, a Pueblo Democrat and the budget committee vice chairwoman, declined to say she supported the \$106 million for transportation.

"We balanced the budget before we brought it to the floor," Esgar said. "Adding more money into a budget doesn't magically make the money appear. We can't commit to supporting an amendment when we have no idea what other amendments are going to be coming forward yet."

Colorado's small business have reservations, but generally support paid family leave, poll finds

Denver Post

A poll of 300 small business owners across Colorado found a majority supported creating a paid family leave program, but they also were concerned about the state mandating participation.

When asked about their support for a bill to give all Coloradans 12 weeks of partially paid leave that's working its way through the General Assembly, 64 percent supported it, 21 percent weren't sure and 15 percent opposed it. An equal number of men and women supported the bill, according to the poll. And a majority of the smallest businesses (those with two to five employees) supported it.

The Democratic bill would give 12 weeks of paid leave to care for a newborn, receive treatment for a major illness, leave a relationship marred by domestic abuse or care for a sick family member. It would be portable from job to job, but it wouldn't replace 100 percent of someone's salary. The state would administer the program, and everyone would contribute toward the pool of money used to pay claims.

The survey, which was paid for by a Democratic group called the Small Business Majority, also found that many small business owners don't offer any kind of paid parental leave. Forty-three percent said they didn't offer maternity or paternity leave and about that same amount (44 percent) said they've never had an employee take an extended absence to care for a sick or dying relative.

The Small Business Majority points to those numbers as proof that Colorado needs paid family leave and that it's generally supported by business owners who employ less than 50 people. However, three out of the four respondents said both paid and unpaid leave creates financial strain for employers, and 45 percent of the business owners strongly agreed with a statement that read "paid family leave should not be mandated by the government, but rather decided by employers and employees reaching a mutually beneficial agreement that works." Just 24 percent strongly disagreed with that statement.

Sixty-nine percent agreed with the idea that small businesses like theirs should be exempted from having to contribute to the pool of money used to pay family leave claims. Senate Bill 188 asks most employers to split the cost evenly with their employees.

Chesapeake Beach Consulting surveyed those 300 small business owners in Colorado between March 11 and 20. The split on political party lines was as follows: 27 percent said they were Republican, 9 percent said they leaned Republican but are unaffiliated, 18 percent called themselves simply unaffiliated, 12 percent of the unaffiliated leaned Democrat and 25 percent responded as Democrats.

The margin of error was plus or minus 5.8 percent.

With one vote, Colorado Legislature signals it may have solved the biggest sales-tax issues for small businesses

Denver Business Journal

Small businesses that are focused on online sales and that have been fretting about complying with new state rules for more than six months may finally be able to breathe a sigh of relief, as a Colorado legislative committee gave unanimous approval at the first hearing Tuesday for a bill that seeks to relieve the burden of complying with the state's labyrinthine tax rules until the state itself puts a better system into place.

The full-throated backing of House Bill 1240 by the House Business Affairs & Labor Committee signals that Democrats who control both chambers of the Legislature have finally found an acceptable solution to the vexing problems after rejecting two attempts by Republicans earlier this session to deal with the same issue. HB 1240 is co-sponsored by Democratic Rep. Tracy Kraft-Tharp of Arvada and Republican Rep. Kevin Van Winkle of Highlands Ranch.

The issue that it tries to fix came about by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling last summer, known as the Wayfair decision, that granted states the right to tax purchases of goods made by their residents from out-of-state companies that shipped their products into the state. In September, the Colorado Department of Revenue laid out rules requiring that all e-commerce companies that sell at least \$100,000 worth of products each year into this state collect and remit taxes on them to the state's roughly 700 taxing districts that represent the overlap of city, country and special-district boundaries — and that in-state retailers do the same no matter how much they sell into the state in a year.

Small-business owners in particular reacted with alarm, noting that determining and remitting sales taxes by the address of the receiver rather than the location from which they're shipped — the concept of destination sourcing rather than the current practice of origin sourcing — would not only be painfully time-consuming but would be very expensive, given the cost of the private software systems that now calculate destination sourcing. Seeing the concern, DOR officials in December decided to delay implementation of the rule until May 31, hoping to give legislators a chance to come up with a solution.

HB 1240 creates the same de minimis rule for in-state retailers as out-of-state companies, requiring that they sell at least \$100,000 worth of goods before they pay taxes via destination sourcing — until the state finishes development of a system, ordered in another bill now sitting on Gov. Jared Polis' desk for signature — that calculates taxes by address and allows companies to remit all of those taxes to the state for distribution. It also requires marketplace facilitators — large companies like Amazon that sell small companies' products through their sites — to collect and remit those taxes for the small companies and allows them to keep the state's 3.3 percent vendor fee for doing so.

The heads of several state business organizations told committee members Tuesday that the proposal checks all the boxes they needed to see, allowing small companies to not have to break the bank on figuring out destination tax rates while still requiring them to pay the taxes that brick-and-mortar companies must pay — and creating an equal playing field for local companies with out-of-state e-commerce giants.

“The destination sourcing rule put in play by the Department of Revenue last fall was a source of great concerns for Colorado small businesses,” said Nicholas Colglazier, director of the Colorado Competitive Council. “House Bill 1240 is a common-sense solution to our byzantine sales-tax system.”

Gov. Polis signs Colorado hospital health care cost transparency bill into law

Colorado Sun

Colorado hospitals will have to report annual spending under a transparency law signed Thursday by Gov. Jared Polis.

The bipartisan effort is part of Polis’ goal to reduce health care costs and raise both price transparency and hospital efficiency in a state where rural residents often pay some of the nation’s highest insurance rates.

It’s also part of an ambitious health care agenda for the first-term Democratic governor that includes creating a state reinsurance program to help private insurers lower premiums; studying a public health insurance option; and exploring the feasibility of importing cheaper prescription drugs from Canada.

Supporters described the law as one of the more ambitious hospital and health care cost transparency efforts adopted in recent years by states including Arizona, California, Florida, Indiana and Washington.

“We can’t work on reducing costs if we don’t see how these costs are determined in the first place, or what they are,” Polis said at a Capitol signing ceremony. “Otherwise, we’re just shooting in the dark with efforts to reduce costs (that are) unfair to both hospitals and to consumers.”

Beginning in 2020, the law directs the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing to issue an annual report on uncompensated costs and expenditures using data submitted by hospitals. That data includes payrolls, inpatient, outpatient and emergency visits and capital expenditures.

The initiative’s sponsors, Sen. Dominick Moreno and Rep. Chris Kennedy, both Democrats, and Republican Sen. Bob Rankin, hope the detailed information will show why those insured by private carriers are paying more at a time when public funds to help cover uncompensated hospital care have grown.

John Bartholomew, finance office director for the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, said during a recent hearing on the bill that more information is needed on hospital budget and pricing decisions.

Medicaid spending consumed \$2.7 billion of the state general fund in fiscal year 2017-18, Bartholomew testified. And he said Colorado hospital costs, 3 percent above the national average in 2009, were 14 percent above that average in 2017.

“We need better accountability for our tax dollars,” Bartholomew said.

Hospitals have argued that they’re forced to charge private insurers more to make up for shortfalls in treating a growing number of Medicaid and Medicare patients. Roughly 1.3 million Colorado residents are on Medicaid, according to the nonprofit Colorado Health Institute.

Katherine Mulready, senior vice president and chief strategy officer for the Colorado Hospital Association, testified in January that member hospitals were losing 30 cents on the dollar in Medicare and Medicaid cases.

The state administers a fund in which fees paid by hospitals are matched with federal dollars to support hospitals' uncompensated care, especially in rural areas. That total was \$867 million in fiscal year 2017-18, according to the health care policy and financing department.

Capitol stalling may cause non-controversial bills to suffer

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Stalling at the State Capitol won't necessarily stop the bills that are prompting the delays.

Colorado's House and Senate Republicans are using the rules to their advantage to slow down the debate and votes on controversial bills.

Sen. Owen Hill (R-Colorado Springs) has repeatedly called for the previous day's Senate journal to be read aloud to stall the debate on the red flag legislation.

That passed its second reading on Friday and has one more vote before it is through the Senate.

Now that the oil and gas reform bill in the House, House Republicans have started requesting bills to be read out loud, to stall the calendar enough to delay the debate on oil and gas.

On Wednesday morning, House Republicans tried to have the House journal read out loud, but the House rules are different and don't require that when asked. Instead, two lawmakers, Rep. Dave Williams (R-Colorado Springs) and Rep. Lori Saine (R-Firestone) used their 10 minutes at the microphone to read the journal themselves.

The day's calendar was delayed and pushed until tomorrow.

"When it comes to the calendar and which bills come up when, I'm in control of that," said House Majority Leader Rep. Alec Garnett (D-Denver).

Initially, the oil and gas bill and the remainder of the calendar were going to be debated after 5:30 p.m., but that got delayed until Thursday morning.

Democrats and Republicans were still discussing possible oil and gas bill compromises on Wednesday afternoon.

Garnett and House Minority Leader Rep. Patrick Neville (R-Castle Rock) appear to have a friendlier relationship than the Senate majority and minority.

"I go into his office enough to know that he's out of watermelon Jolly Ranchers and he needs to stock up again," said Garnett.

Since he controls the calendar, Garnett has a say in which bills are heard first.

"If you look at the House calendar there isn't a ton of working that's sitting on the calendar," said Garnett, in defense of Wednesday's complete calendar delay.

Let's say there are multiple "tame" bills on the calendar prior to something controversial like the oil and gas bill. He could call them in order, and Republicans could stall by having them read at length and then create long debates on the bills. Garnett could also call the oil and gas bill out of order, starting debate immediately. Republicans could still have that bill read at length. Democrats could put a time limit on debate, but if they didn't, the debate could last up to two days before a vote is required.

After that debate is complete, Democrats will still pass the oil and gas bill onto third reading. That means the next day (or whenever Garnett calls for it), the bill is debated on last time. All 65 lawmakers would be allowed two different 10-

minute opportunities at the mic. Assuming only the 24 Republicans would utilize the full 20 minutes, that would be at least eight more hours of debate.

The controversial bills will be debated and voted on, it's just a matter of when.

The bills that might be impacted more are the ones that are not controversial and pushed off because of the calendar delays. Bills like increasing the fine for passing snow plows in a diagonal "echelon" formation or the creation of a Mesa Verde license plate.

Colorado governor eyeing options beyond revenue-retention proposal for transportation funding

Denver Business Journal

Even as Colorado business groups begin to coalesce around a legislative effort to keep excess tax revenues and put them toward transportation and education, Gov. Jared Polis on Tuesday signaled that he is slightly more removed in his support of the proposal, weighing it as one of a number of options to try to generate more money to address the state's critical needs.

At a media briefing in his office Tuesday, the first-year Democratic governor said that while he is "certainly appreciative" of House Speaker K.C. Becker's efforts to craft a pair of bills that would allow the state to keep all revenue over the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights cap on a permanent basis going forward, it's just one of the proposals he is considering to create a new stream of revenue. Polis did not specify what some of the other potential revenue-generating solutions might be, but he noted that several were discussed at a summit he held Monday at the governor's mansion with leaders from around the state.

"We are supportive of the concept. We are evaluating it versus other concepts in terms of which has bipartisan support to where it would be successful," Polis said.

House Bills 1257 and 1258 — introduced last week by Becker, D-Boulder, and Rep. Julie McCluskie, D-Dillon — would permanently "de-Bruce" the state and allow it to keep all money coming in over the cap established in TABOR (which was authored by Douglas Bruce) and divided it evenly three ways between transportation, K-12 and higher education. Becker said at an introductory news conference that she hopes to get it onto the November ballot, which would allow the state to begin keeping excess revenues before any future recession could turn down the revenue coming into it.

While Republican leaders in the Senate and House quickly decried the bill as an unnecessary grab of potential tax refunds at a time when the state is flush with money and should be re-prioritizing the budget in order to put more money toward highway expansion, several business groups immediately came out in favor of the proposal, noting that the state has an unfunded \$7.1 billion transportation-infrastructure backlog and needs to begin putting money toward it immediately, particularly in the wake of voter rejections in November of both a proposed sales-tax hike and a tax-less bond sale for roads and transit.

The Colorado Chamber of Commerce, for example, called the bills a "step in the right direction" after years of legislative inactivity toward serious transportation funding, while the Colorado Contractors Association said they represent some needed movement on the subject.

"We are already at a crisis point. Traffic and congestion are growing worse, safety is at risk, our way of life is at risk — when was the last time you thought about driving to the mountains for the day? — and our economy is at risk," said Tony Milo, CCA executive director, in an email to the Denver Business Journal. "Despite our best efforts, Colorado remains without a sustainable funding source for transportation infrastructure, and this bill is at the very least a step in the right direction to helping address that challenge."

On Tuesday, Loren Furman — the senior vice president of state and federal relations for the Colorado Chamber who has been involved in talks about financial solutions but did not attend Monday's meeting — said she believes Polis'

statement indicates that he would likely support the two proposed bills plus other solutions rather than just one option or the other.

“I think when he’s giving other options, it’s bigger-picture, more-infrastructure-focused solutions,” Furman said.

As free full-day kindergarten nears reality in Colorado, advocates press their case

Chalkbeat Colorado

Jeannie Nelson didn’t have to pay for full-day kindergarten for her two older children because her family was below the Denver school district’s income threshold. But her husband, an EMT, recently got a raise, and now the family is waiting to know if they’ll have to pay for their third child, a 5-year-old who will enroll this fall.

That prospect is forcing an agonizing conversation for the southwest Denver family. They’re also facing preschool costs for their fourth child, who has multiple disabilities.

“Right now we’re on the bubble,” Nelson said. “So we’re at a point that, if we have to pay, whose education is more important? The one that is slightly ahead but on track to just zoom through things? Or the one that has special needs that needs therapy that he gets through his school? That shouldn’t be even a factor.”

Colorado education advocates are marshalling these types of stories to bolster their argument that the state should cover the full cost of kindergarten for all students. Nelson was one of nearly a dozen parents from Highlands Ranch and Pueblo, Lakewood and Denver who gathered in a library community room Wednesday evening to tell Gov. Jared Polis why full-day kindergarten matters to them and why tuition represents a real hardship. The parents all work with Stand for Children, an education advocacy group.

The state budget, which got initial approval in the state Senate earlier Wednesday afternoon, includes \$185 million to pay for kindergarten students at the same rate as older students. That’s about 80 percent of what Polis originally asked for and assumes that not all school districts will immediately implement it and that not all eligible students will enroll.

The governor’s office is still working with lawmakers to secure funding for start-up costs, which range from training teachers to buying more pint-sized tables and chairs to adding classrooms.

This school year, nearly 50,000 students attend full-day programs and another 13,300 attend half-day programs.

Right now, the state reimburses school districts for kindergarten students at a rate a little more than half the amount it pays for older students. Half-day kindergarten is free to parents, but many school districts offer full-day programs and charge parents to make up the difference. In some of those districts, including Denver, the free half-day option can be hard to come by.

Denver offers a sliding tuition scale based on income, but many others charge a flat fee of \$300 or \$400 a month. Some districts offer half-day programs — including Boulder Valley and Cherry Creek with a combined 4,300 children in half-day kindergarten — while others use federal money for high-poverty schools or dedicated local taxes to pay for full-day programs.

Polis campaigned on providing full-day kindergarten at no cost to families, and he leaned on the lawmakers responsible for writing the budget to make room for it. The money to pay for it is coming from increased local property tax revenue that will free up state funds. Once on the Senate floor, the \$185 million set-aside for full-day kindergarten didn’t even come up for debate.

However, the final form of the budget remains to be seen. Separate from the kindergarten funding issue, Democratic and Republican leaders brokered a deal Wednesday afternoon to transfer \$106 million to transportation from other departments, with the governor’s office charged with making line-item cuts to free up the money. Polis said those changes shouldn’t touch the kindergarten initiative, but it’s not clear if other education programs could get hit.

The budget still needs to clear the House. And on April 9, House Bill 1262, which sets the per-pupil rate for kindergarten students and prohibits districts from charging tuition, gets its first hearing in the House Education Committee.

Bill would address youth mental health needs

Lakewood Sentinel

Kari Eckert lost her 15-year-old son, Robbie, to suicide five months ago. The Lakewood High School student was an athlete, a leader, everyone's friend, Eckert said. She saw no signs of struggle.

"Robbie struggled silently and he suffered alone," said Eckert, sitting in a small room at the state Capitol on March 21, an hour before a bill aimed at curbing youth suicide would go to a Senate committee for debate.

The Senate Health and Human Services Committee unanimously agreed to send the bill to the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

Eckert was joined by parent Leslie Kobi, who spent eight years fighting for her son's mental health, and Heidi Baskfield, vice president of Population Health and Advocacy at Children's Hospital Colorado. Also in attendance at the intimate press conference were Sen. Rhonda Fields, D-Aurora, and Rep. Lois Landgraf, R-Colorado Springs, sponsors of Senate Bill 19-195.

The bipartisan bill addresses what public officials and health experts call a youth mental health crisis. In Colorado, suicide is the leading cause of death for people ages 10-24, and one in six teens has a diagnosable mental health condition, Children's Hospital reports. Over the last decade, the hospital has seen a six-fold increase in admissions to its emergency departments and urgent care locations following a suicide attempt.

Fragmented services, a shortage of screenings and costly care are some of the barriers to adequate mental health care, experts and advocates in the field say.

"Our hospital continues to serve, in a way, as a warehouse for kids with complicated mental health needs because the system is not there to support them out in the community or in their own homes," Baskfield said.

SB 19-195 — which is also sponsored by Sen. Bob Gardner, R-Colorado Springs, and Rep. Tracy Kraft-Tharp, D-Arvada — aims to create that system.

The bill would create the Office of Children and Youth Behavioral Health Policy Coordination in the governor's office, along with a commission and advisory council.

The commission would serve as a "behavioral health backbone" for the state, with representation from counties, the Legislature, multiple state departments, the state attorney general's office and others. It would work to increase public awareness of youth behavioral needs and facilitate collaboration between communities, state departments and political subdivisions, the bill outlines.

The commission's immediate actions would be to implement cost-effective "wraparound" services — which provide a continuum of care for young people with complex needs — develop standardized assessment and screening tools, and design an integrated funding pilot project, according to the bill.

For the 2019-20 fiscal year, the bill would increase state spending by at least \$1.3 million, according to the bill's fiscal note. Over time, legislators say the bill would save \$25 million to \$30 million by reducing the need for extensive, costly mental health services, such as inpatient care and residential treatment services.

Although the bill has a long way to go before it reaches the governor's office, backers are confident it will go through.

"I think this is one of, if not the most, important bill we are going to see this session when it comes to health," Landgraf said. "You can't put a price tag on any one of these kids."

Eckert agreed, emphasizing the significance of screening and assessing children for mental health issues.

"If Robbie was asked those questions," she said of her son, "maybe he would be here."

Can Colorado fix high health insurance premiums by forcing hospitals to charge some people less?

Colorado Sun

Imagine for a moment that you are a 60-year-old making \$50,000 a year, living in Glenwood Springs and buying your own health insurance. (Or maybe you don't have to imagine because you are that person.)

Sorry to say it, but you, my friend, are in one of the worst jams in the American health care system — making too much to qualify for government insurance subsidies and too little to pay for insurance by yourself. The cheapest coverage you can find on the state exchange will still run you more than \$1,200 a month, and your other out-of-pocket spending could put you above \$23,000 in health spending per year, almost half of your annual income.

Lawmakers in Colorado are currently considering an audacious plan to eliminate this exact problem. The bill is based on a well-established idea of protecting insurers from the sting of their highest-cost claims, it has bi-partisan support and it is backed by a brand-new actuarial analysis.

But the specific plan has never been tried before anywhere else; it's unclear how, exactly, it will work or what the ripple effects will be; and it's uncertain whether the federal government will allow it to happen. Hospitals say it could be financially ruinous for them.

Welcome to the debate over reinsurance, the most tooth-and-nail health care fight at the state Capitol this session. No one knows how it's going to end.

What is reinsurance?

The first thing to know about the bill is that its underlying premise is not at all controversial.

It's actually a pretty simple principle: Most people are healthy most of the time and cost health insurers very little; it's the rare expensive claims that drive up insurance prices for everyone. So reinsurance helps insurers cover those highest-cost claims, allowing the companies to reduce what they charge everybody.

Seven states have adopted reinsurance programs and paid for them through some combination of state funds, fees assessed on insurance plans and federal money. The federal money will be key later because it comes from dollars that the federal government saves when insurance premiums go down and the feds don't have to spend as much providing subsidies to help people pay their premiums.

So what makes Colorado's plan so controversial? The bill at the Capitol would fund the reinsurance program in a completely new way: by taking money out of hospitals.

Colorado's model

Rather than gathering up a pool of money that can be used to reimburse insurers, Colorado's plan would help insurers by requiring that hospitals charge certain people less.

The plan would only apply to people who buy health insurance on their own — the "individual market," in the talk of the trade. That's about 8 percent of people in Colorado, and everything that comes next applies only to those 8 percent.

Under the plan, insurers would keep paying for medical expenses as normal until a person's total claims reach a certain dollar figure in a year — a threshold called the “attachment point.” After the attachment point, that person would enter the reinsurance program until their claims reach a cap.

Once in the reinsurance program, the state would dictate what hospitals can charge for services for that person, prices most likely greater than — but still linked to — what Medicare pays for the same services. The goal, as Colorado Insurance Commissioner Michael Conway said at the first hearing for the reinsurance bill, is to “take a little bit of the fat out of a system that is very fat.”

Colorado Republicans hope to claw back power with recalls — but it could backfire

Denver Post

Colorado Republicans are doing whatever they can to take back some power after the party's shellacking at the ballot box in November.

Residents are threatening to recall lawmakers. County commissioners are passing resolutions denouncing a would-be state gun control law. GOP lawmakers are demanding legislation be read in full to slow the process.

And in a few short days, the Grand Old Party will pick a new state leader who will help set the tone and direction of the party into the 2020 election.

The vote for a party chair could serve as a sort of reboot for a political party that has seen its dominance diminish during the last decade as the state's demographics and voter rolls have shifted. And while any effort to push back against Democrats will play well with the base, the party and its new leader must remember that Republicans cannot win statewide without the unaffiliated voters who make up the largest proportion of Colorado's electorate at 38 percent.

“The next chairman is going to have to watch how these things develop,” said Dick Wadhams, a former Republican Party chairman. “If those recalls get on the ballot and they fail, that can strengthen the hand of the Democrats and the party overall.”

Wadhams pointed to the unsuccessful recall of Wisconsin's Republican Gov. Scott Walker. Democrats failed there, and Walker, who was born in Colorado Springs, went on to win a second term.

Still, it's a gamble many in the party appear willing to take. Recall efforts have centered on what Republicans say are clear-cut examples of Democratic overreach: the oil and gas overhaul, the red-flag gun bill, the National Popular Vote and sex education legislation.

Three individuals have announced their candidacy for party chair: state Rep. Susan Beckman, U.S. Rep. Ken Buck and current GOP state vice chair Sherrie Gibson. There's little light on policy between the three. However, their managerial approach would be different. Beckman has said she wants to focus on the party's infrastructure, while Buck said he will be a fundraising machine. Gibson has said a top priority would be to grow the party, which trails Democrats in total voters.

Among the new leader's first priorities will be how to best harness the anger in the base.

“We're ready to fight,” said Laureen Gutierrez, the former chair of the Mesa County Republican Party on the Western Slope. “This is grass roots. That's how upset the people are. It didn't come from a directive from the state party or the RNC.”

Conservative activists have inquired with the Secretary of State's Office about ousting four state Democratic legislators — Reps. Rochelle Galindo, Meg Froelich and Tony Exum and Sen. Jeff Bridges — according to the office, which helps craft the appropriate format for signature petitions.

The efforts to recall the four are in varying stages, but none is to the point of gathering signatures. Inquiries into recalling Galindo seem to be the furthest along, with committees to raise money for a recall election already formed. The Secretary of State's Office expects anti-Galindo forces to submit paperwork soon.

Legislative recalls are rare, but successes this decade may have created more GOP interest in the approach. Former Senate President John Morse and Sen. Angela Giron, both Democrats, were voted out of office midterm in 2013 for supporting gun control legislation. They were the first lawmakers in state history to be recalled.

Amazon's New York debacle spells trouble for Denver eco-devos

Colorado Politics

I'll let you in on a little secret. When Colorado economic development officials have nightmares, they go something like this:

People march in the streets screaming "down with corporate welfare." Signs say "No to Amazon. No to tax breaks and corporate incentives for big companies."

Vainly, the eco-devos try to tell the people that economic development is in their community's best interests, creating new jobs and opportunity for people.

But the crowd is hearing none of it. Instead, they chant, over and over, about unaffordable housing, paralyzing traffic and secret deals between government and private business.

Just as their nocturnal blood pressure moves into dangerous territory, however, the eco-devo men and women awake in a cold sweat, relieved that it was all "just a dream."

But is it?

The recent grassroots effort in New York City giving the heave-ho to retail giant Amazon's proposal for one of two "second headquarters" locations must've sent shivers down the spines of economic development officials across the nation.

For it was indicative of what's happening in Denver and towns across the metro area, and every mayor, city councilor and municipal official ought to pay attention.

Ordinary people are fed up with out-of-control housing prices, traffic congestion and rising prices and they're looking around for someone to blame. Go to any social gathering that doesn't involve people from the local chamber of commerce and you'll hear it.

"What's happening to my city?" is a common refrain.

The concerns aren't so much, "Will I have a job in the future?" but "Can I afford to live here? Will my kids be able to buy a home in the town they grew up in?"

Most people have not made the connection between economic development deals, corporate incentive packages and these mounting complaints about traffic and housing prices.

But they will. And when they do, they'll start expressing their displeasure at the ballot box. It's reaching a critical mass right now and when people connect the dots between economic development incentives and the overall deterioration of their quality of life, all the campaign money from deep-pocketed developers and others who benefit from rampant growth won't be able to overcome it.

And forget about voters approving big public works projects and giant bond issues that seem to benefit a narrow few.

Alarmist? Maybe. But I come at this from having observed economic development in Colorado since the mid-1970s.

Back then nearly everyone was behind the effort to grow business in Colorado. In the 1980s, the economy was on its knees because falling oil prices and wild overbuilding anticipating growth from oil projects that never materialized.

In many ways, economic conditions were worse than in the recent "Great Recession."

Colorado also was still coming off the devastating worldwide hit to its reputation a decade earlier for rejecting the 1976 Winter Olympics.

The movers and shakers in Denver and Colorado decided they had to do something to diversify the economy and create some new jobs. So, they embarked on a huge selling job to make Colorado a hot place to do business.

Helped along by a few big public investments in a new convention center, a new airport, a major league baseball stadium, the effort proved a huge success.

Over time, the Denver metro area became the envy of communities across the nation for its economic development work and we regularly were listed as among the best cities in the U.S. for business.

Eventually, it worked a little too well. Yes, job opportunities grew, the economy was diversified, and business boomed.

Bills that could significantly alter Colorado's cannabis industry stir up debate at Capitol

Denver Business Journal

One cannabis-related bill advanced and another was laid over after 5.5 hours of testimony from dozens of witnesses at a Colorado House Business Affairs and Labor Committee hearing on Wednesday.

The two bills could significantly alter Colorado's cannabis industry, according to speakers who testified both in support and against the bills.

House Bill 1230, which would allow for the creation of marijuana hospitality establishments, received a 7-4 vote in favor, sending the bill to the Colorado House Finance Committee.

The proposed law would also simplify policies for mobile cannabis consumption tour shuttles, enable people to sample cannabis products at authorized venues and gives cities and counties jurisdiction over whether to allow cannabis hospitality establishments within their limits.

Furthermore, the bill grants approved cannabis hospitality venues an exception to the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act, which bans smoking in public spaces such as restaurants and bars. Democratic Reps. Jonathan Singer of Longmont and Jovan Melton of Aurora sponsored the bill.

Singer said that the bill is similar to last year's HB 1258, which would have legalized public cannabis tasting rooms. Former Gov. John Hickenlooper vetoed the bill. Singer said this bill is much more expansive than the one introduced last year.

"We also wanted to include some of the folks that didn't get to the table last time and so it's bigger, better and more bipartisan than before," Singer told Denver Business Journal.

Current and aspiring cannabis business owners, veterans and cannabis enthusiasts testified in support of the bill as well as Kevin Gallagher, who is the executive director of the Colorado Cannabis Manufacturers Association.

The Colorado divisions of the American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association were among those opposed to the bill because of the exemption to the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act.

“Nobody should have to breathe secondhand smoke,” Ellen Penrod, executive director of the American Lung Association in Colorado, said.

The other bill, HB 1234, was laid over by the committee’s chair, Democratic Rep. Tracy Kraft-Tharp of Arvada, due to concerns that the committee did not have a chance to read several amendments that were added to the bill.

“As I’ve said three times today, it’s very important to me that when this committee votes, we know what we’re voting on, we all understand it and we’re all clear,” she said. “I’m not hearing that that is the case.”

HB 1234, sponsored by Singer and Democratic Rep. Alex Valdez of Denver, would grant licensed marijuana sellers permission through a permitting system to deliver cannabis products to customers via vehicle.

If passed into law, the bill would allow for the delivery of products for medicinal cannabis users until 2021. After that, delivery would be available for recreational purposes as well.

Supporters of the bill included the Epilepsy Foundation of Colorado, veterans, medicinal marijuana users and the California-based cannabis delivery service Eaze. Those in opposition included several medicinal marijuana business owners and the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police.

The oil and gas industry is again spending big to stop more regulation in Colorado. This time, it’s not working.

Colorado Sun

The oil and gas industry is spending big money as it scrambles to halt a fast-moving bill aimed at giving state and local governments more power to regulate drilling.

The campaign to influence lawmakers includes a misleading TV commercial designed to generate public opposition to the bill and the hiring of new high-powered lobbyists at the Capitol.

Other organizations are pushing for and against the measure on social media and other online platforms, likely making it the most expensive lobbying effort in the 2019 legislative session.

All the attention is focused on Senate Bill 181. The legislation — which is nearing a vote in the House after passage in the Senate — is the most far-reaching overhaul of oil and gas regulations in more than a decade. Advocates say it’s long overdue, but the industry argues it goes too far and could hurt the state’s economy.

The talking points are evident in the efforts to drive opposition among Colorado residents. The American Petroleum Institute, a trade organization representing the oil and gas industry, has spent at least \$273,000 to air a TV ad opposing the legislation, according to a review of Federal Communications Commission records, which don’t include Denver station contracts.

The 30-second commercial still appearing on local television stations urges people to call their state lawmaker, and it falsely claims that the measure would shut down oil and gas production. The institute also is paying for advertising on Facebook through Energy Citizens and Energy Nation.

So far, the effort's impact is limited. The bill's sponsors made a few changes in the Senate to make the bill more amenable to the oil and gas industry. But the measure is still moving forward with Democratic support and not enough Republican opposition to stop it.

Ben Marter, a spokesman for the Colorado affiliate of the American Petroleum Institute, said the campaign is needed because the bill was written behind closed doors and moved quickly when first introduced.

The industry organized rallies at the Capitol to oppose the measure and even bought lunch for oil and gas workers who came to testify against the measure. Marter said "time will tell" whether it's effective, but "the groundswell of opposition — bipartisan opposition — to this bill from all around the state has been remarkable."

Should Colorado teens get a vote in school board elections? These legislators think so

Chalkbeat Colorado

A coalition of youth advocates is pushing Colorado to allow most high school juniors and seniors to vote in school board elections.

"Students are experts in their own education," said Tezcatli Diaz, director of youth civic engagement for Student Voice, Student Vote, one of the groups calling for the change. "A lot of people on boards of education have not been in school in decades or have not had children in school in decades."

A bill sponsored by state Sen. Dominick Moreno, who also serves on the Adams 14 school board, and state Rep. James Coleman, both Democrats, would make Colorado the first state in the nation to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school board elections. The officials who oversee Colorado's elections said they understand the desire to expand the franchise, but they also have some practical concerns.

The push comes amid a wave of youth activism on everything from climate change to immigration and amid national conversations about lowering the voting age for presidential and other elections. The city of Takoma Park, Maryland, in 2013 lowered the voting age for municipal elections, and several countries, including Austria and Brazil, have set the voting age at 16.

House Bill 1243, scheduled for its first hearing April 2 in the House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee, would also let 16- and 17-year-olds vote for officers on the State Board of Education and in elections to increase school district taxes or to issue debt for construction.

The goal of this legislation is not just to give students a say in local elections but to help them form the habit of voting, even in less prominent off-year elections.

While Colorado has some of the highest voter turnout in the country in congressional and presidential elections, it remains well below 50 percent in the municipal and school board elections that occur in off-years. In November 2017, when four seats on the Denver school board were up for grabs, only 32 percent of registered voters cast ballots in the biggest of the four races.

Celest Hutagalung, 15, a sophomore at DSST: Conservatory Green High School, called these kinds of turnout numbers "truly devastating" but said they could change.

"The 16- and 17-year-olds who are voting now will continue to vote for the rest of their lives," she said.

Hutagalung was one of roughly 100 students, many in turquoise T-shirts, who came to the Capitol earlier this month to lobby lawmakers on the idea. "Our Voice! Our Vote! Our Schools!" they chanted.

Danna Martinez, 17, a junior at Martin Luther King Jr. Early College in far northeast Denver, said the recent Denver teacher strike provided a vivid example of how students are affected by decisions made by elected officials. If she could vote, she would support candidates who would pay teachers more.

"These teachers, they make doctors," she said. "These teachers, they make lawyers. They shouldn't have to worry about being a Lyft driver at night."

Colorado Senate Democrats block Republican as prime co-sponsor of full-day kindergarten bill

Colorado Politics

A Republican Colorado state senator says Democrats won't let him be a prime co-sponsor of a full-day kindergarten bill, the top legislative priority for Gov. Jared Polis.

Sen. Jerry Sonnenberg, R-Sterling, told Colorado Politics Friday that despite a personal request from Polis that he be a prime co-sponsor of the legislation, that request has been denied by Senate Democrats.

Polis had hoped to have bipartisan prime sponsorship of the measure in both chambers, but the decision to keep Sonnenberg off the bill likely means that won't happen. Any lawmaker can be a co-sponsor; a prime sponsor is one of the chief advocates for a bill.

Senate Majority Leader Steve Fenberg of Boulder cited Sonnenberg's previous votes on full-day kindergarten as well as what he called the Republican's inflammatory rhetoric on other issues as reasons for the denial.

Sonnenberg has said he is concerned about what he believes is a growing rural-urban divide, both at the state Capitol and outside of it, which he attributes to the "progressive left" agenda of Democrats this session.

That agenda, he says, includes Senate Bill 181, revamping oil and gas regulations, which he vigorously opposes; the national popular vote bill that Polis signed into law last week; and House Bill 1177, the "red-flag" gun bill that would allow a court to order the surrender of firearms by a person deemed a danger, which was being debated in the Senate on Friday.

"The Senate Majority Leader informed me that I would not be listed as a sponsor of the Full Day Kindergarten bill that Governor Polis personally called me just last week and asked me to sponsor," Sonnenberg told Colorado Politics in a written statement.

"I had looked forward to working with Senator [Jeff] Bridges [D-Greenwood Village] on an important education bill that would help many of our rural school districts," Sonnenberg said, referring to the pending bill's Senate sponsor.

"I had hoped to be able to balance competing interests under the dome while being a co-prime sponsor but that can't be done from the outside looking in," he said. "It is hard to say that I will even be able to support the bill or persuade any of my Republican colleagues to support it if I am not able to make sure the competing interests are balanced." Those competing interests include transportation funding, he said.

Fenberg told Colorado Politics that the governor doesn't choose who sponsors bills; that's a decision made by each chamber.

He added that members of his caucus also opposed Sonnenberg's inclusion as a prime sponsor for several reasons: That he has consistently voted against bills that sought to fund full-day kindergarten, measures that were sent to the Senate's "kill committee," State, Veterans and Military Affairs, when Republicans led the chamber. Although Sonnenberg was not the committee's chair, he was viewed by many as the committee's leader.

Fenberg said his caucus "doesn't trust" Sonnenberg on the issue.

"He has not been a supporter of full-day kindergarten. He's been an opponent," Fenberg said. "This [policy] is incredibly important to our members and to the state. People feel uncomfortable with someone who opposed this policy and now supposedly [wants to be] the one who will carry the torch for it."

'Red flag' gun bill passes Colorado Senate by one vote

Colorado Politics

The controversial "red flag" measure allowing the court-ordered seizure of guns from people deemed a threat passed the Colorado Senate on Thursday by a single vote.

Senate President Leroy Garcia was the only Democrat to vote against House Bill 1177, which passed by an 18-17 margin in a chamber where Democrats hold a slim majority. Garcia, D-Pueblo, who signaled earlier in the week that he would vote no, joined every Senate Republican in opposing the bill.

The measure now moves back to the House of Representatives, where Democrats hold a larger majority.

The House previously approved an earlier version of the bill, but needs to vote again on Senate amendments before the bill can advance to Gov. Jared Polis for his signature.

Polis has said he will sign the measure.

The measure was given preliminary approval by the Senate on a voice vote late Friday after hours of debate, but final action was delayed until Thursday amid uncertainty over Garcia's vote.

Garcia, who in the past has taken conservative stands on some gun-control measures, revealed his opposition Tuesday to his hometown newspaper, the Pueblo Chieftain.

"I took a hard look at this bill and while I strongly believe in its intent of preventing gun violence, this is simply not the right legislation for the people of Pueblo and southern Colorado," he told the paper.

"Make no mistake -- as a Marine veteran, I firmly believe that we can work together while respecting the rights of responsible gun owners and addressing the issues at hand. I want to continue working with my colleagues to find a Colorado solution."

A similar measure last year did have a modest amount of GOP support, although it was defeated anyway, but critics called this year's version more extreme and say it poses a greater threat to Second Amendment gun rights because, in their view, it would make it too easy to seize guns and too difficult for someone to get them back.

But during Thursday's debate ahead of the final vote, Senate President Pro tem Lois Court of Denver, one of the bill's two prime sponsors, said HB 1177 will save lives and is "totally constitutional."

At one point during Thursday's debate, Democrat Sen. Brittany Pettersen of Lakewood, the bill's other prime sponsor, claimed the bill wasn't contentious, although about 30 of the state's 64 counties have vowed not to enforce the bill, which is also been opposed by several elected sheriffs. Recall petitions are being discussed for up to a dozen lawmakers.

"Thank you for fighting against fear mongering," Pettersen said. "This is widely supported by Coloradans, asking us if we will fight for them or cave to misinformation."

She added: "It's unfathomable that this is not already in law." She said the measure is for the woman whose sister died in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, or for the student who is now part of the "active shooter drill" generation.

Opponents on Thursday spent about four hours decrying what they claim is the lack of due process under the measure for gun owners. They also complained that the bill lacks a process for providing mental health treatment for those whose firearms are seized.

Sam Mamet, Colorado's man for all municipalities and a fixture in state politics, says "So long!"

Colorado Sun

VAIL — Sam Mamet has been to every hall of power in every corner of Colorado, advising local leaders on how best to support their communities. And they're always glad he came.

Since 1979, Mamet has championed local governance for the Colorado Municipal League. As the executive director of the 96-year-old nonpartisan group representing Colorado's local policymakers, Mamet has traversed every corner of the state, visiting all 272 cities and towns many times over.

After a prolonged swing across the state in recent months — a victory lap that has seen him feted and heralded at every turn, including in Congress and at the Colorado Capitol — Mamet is stepping down, making room for Kevin Bommer to take the league's reins.

Few share Mamet's intimate perspective of local governance. His counsel has guided thousands of Colorado leaders, many navigating their first steps as elected officials. He recently visited with the Vail Town Council, where he was toasted with champagne and a proclamation similar to those he has received in more than two dozen towns in recent months.

Friday is Mamet's last day in the office. The Colorado Sun caught up with Mamet during the Vail shindig, where he talked about his 40-year love affair with Colorado and what he has learned about the good intentions of municipal leaders throughout the state.

Here's where 8 major bills stand as the Colorado General Assembly barrels toward the end of its work

Denver Post

Colorado's 2019 legislative session has had more than the usual amount of drama, with hearings filling the building until the wee hours, Republicans suing Democrats and a breakneck pace that has seen almost 500 bills introduced.

Not even a bomb cyclone could slow the state Senate.

Legislation that's working its way through the General Assembly would overhaul Colorado's approach to health care, the death penalty, the oil and gas industry, and pay and benefits for workers. Oh, and there's more legislation — and political theater — to come on climate change, kindergarten, sexual harassment and marijuana.

At the heart of most of the drama is the transfer of power in the state Senate. Democrats retook control of the statehouse's upper chamber after four years in the minority. Lawmakers in both parties acknowledged last week that there have been growing pains as both caucuses relearn their roles.

"I hope there is less game playing and that we get back to where the Democrats and Republicans can work together," said state Sen. Nancy Todd, an Aurora Democrat, who called the recent breakdown between the two parties a mockery. "My hope is that we're able to have some of those quality conversations that we've had in the past."

Amplifying the dysfunction is an incensed GOP — lawmakers and base alike — with little power to enact its agenda or stop objectionable legislation. Inside the Capitol, Republican senators have attempted to draw out debate and bring Democrats to the table over two major pieces of legislation. The first would reform the state's oil and gas sector. The other would allow law enforcement officials to seize guns from individuals who are perceived risks.

“What seems to be missing is the willingness of the Senate majority to reach out and ask, ‘what do you want? What is it going to take?’ ” said Republican Minority Leader Chris Holbert of Parker.

Conservative and oil and gas leaders, lacking numbers in the General Assembly, have turned to the power of the people to be heard, regularly drawing hundreds from across the state to testify and protest against the legislation.

“When there’s one-party control in the legislature, the opposition outside the building grows no matter what happens,” said state Rep. Alec Garnett, a Denver Democrat and the House majority leader. “That’s the way this process works.”

If everything goes according to plan, Colorado lawmakers will get their first full look at the state’s budget Monday. It’s a milestone that marks the last third of the 120-day legislative session.

This moment provides lawmakers, lobbyists and other Capitol observers a chance to catch their breath before the final sprint to May 3, when legislators must adjourn the regular session.

“A lot of the big promises we made to voters, some have crossed the finish line and many are still to come,” said Senate Majority Leader Steve Fenberg, a Boulder Democrat.

So let’s take a look at where some of the most consequential and controversial legislation of the session stands.

Gov. Polis signs bills into law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 28, 2019

DENVER— Gov. Jared Polis signed the following bills into law.

HB19-1001

Hospital Transparency Measures To Analyze Efficacy

Rep. Kennedy/ Sens. Rankin & Moreno

Concerning hospital transparency measures required to analyze the efficacy of hospital delivery system reform incentive payments

HB19-1033

Local Governments May Regulate Nicotine Products

Reps. Tipper & Kennedy/Sens. Fields & Priola

Concerning a local government's authority to regulate products containing nicotine

SB19-049

Statute of Limitation Failure Report Child Abuse

Rep. Michaelson-Jenet/ Sen.Fields

Concerning increasing the statute of limitations for certain failure to report child sexual abuse crimes

HB19-1082

Water Rights Easements

Rep. Catlin/Sen. Coram

Concerning the rights of a water rights easement holder

HB19-1042

Extend Court Jurisdiction For Vulnerable Youth

Rep. Gonzales-Gutierrez/Sen. Gonzales

Concerning expanding the jurisdiction of the courts for certain vulnerable youth

HB19-1148

Change Maximum Criminal Penalty One Year To 364 Days

Rep. Herod/Sen. Gonzales

Concerning changing the maximum jail sentence for certain crimes from one year to three hundred sixty-four days

HB19-1152

State Student Advisory Council Eligibility

Reps. Herod & Galindo/Sen. Gonzales

Concerning eliminating the requirement that a student member of the state student advisory council for community colleges and occupational education must be an in-state student for tuition purposes prior to election to the state student advisory council for community colleges and occupational education

HB19-1044

Advance Behavioral Health Order Treatments

Reps. Kraft-Tharp & Landgraf/Sens. Todd & Coram

Concerning advance behavioral health orders determining the scope of treatment an adult wishes to receive under certain behavioral health circumstances

HB19-1083

Athletic Trainers License

Reps. Hooton & Van Winkle/ Sens. Williams & Cooke

Concerning a reclassification of the regulation of athletic trainers from registration to licensure

HB19-1041

Require Surgical Smoke Protection Policies

Rep. Buckner/Sen. Rodriguez

Concerning the prevention of human exposure to surgical smoke during surgery at certain licensed health care facilities

HB19-1137

Expand Teacher Cadet Program Include Early Childhood Education

Reps. Wilson & Valdez/ Sen. Priola

Concerning supporting high school students' interest in early childhood education through the teacher cadet program

HB19-1068

Repeal Colorado Department Of Public Health And Environment Preparation Operational Planning

Rep. Arndt/Sen. Moreno

Concerning the preparation of operational planning functions as if the state board were the executive director of the department of public health and environment

SB19-128

School Finance Mid-year Adjustments

Sens. Moreno & Todd/Reps. Esgar & McLachlan

Concerning adjustments to appropriations in the 2018-19 fiscal year for state share of total program funding for school finance, and, in connection therewith, making and reducing appropriations

SB19-105

Colorado Uniform Directed Trust Act

Sen. Rodriguez/ Rep. Tipper

Concerning the "Colorado Uniform Directed Trust Act"

HB19-1043

Life Care Institutions Post Surety Bond As Reserve

Rep. Galindo/ Sen. Danielson

Concerning the ability of life care institutions to post a surety bond as a form of required reserve

SB19-017

Requirements for CDOT Land Acquisition

Sen. Zenzinger/ Rep. Roberts

Concerning the exemption of the department of transportation from existing reporting and transportation commission approval requirements when it acquires land needed for specified highway-related purposes by means other than condemnation

SB19-035

DOR Department Of Revenue Enforcement Measures Of Tax Owed

Sen. Court/ Rep. Benavidez

Concerning enforcement measures available to the department of revenue for the collection of delinquent taxes, and, in connection therewith, making an appropriation

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Gov. Polis Signs Hospital Transparency Bill Aimed at Reducing Health Costs Bipartisan bill requires hospitals to disclose more financial information

For Immediate Release

Friday, March 29, 2019

Denver – Today Governor Jared Polis signed HB19-1001 into law, a landmark, bipartisan transparency bill that requires Colorado hospitals to make more of their financial information available to the public.

Coloradans -- especially in rural communities outside the Front Range -- pay some of the highest health care costs in the country, and hospitals account for 39 percent of all health care costs in the state.

"Coloradans are tired of overpaying for health care, and this landmark, bipartisan transparency bill is the first step in the process of getting a handle on these costs," said Governor Jared Polis. "This bill will enable clearer analysis of how each hospital is utilizing public dollars and will allow us to identify and address the cost drivers that leave Coloradans with exorbitant hospital bills. This is just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to reducing health care costs, but it's an important one, and I thank the legislators for their hard work on getting it passed."

The legislation requires hospitals to disclose audited financial statements as well as utilization and other financial data.

Access to this data will allow policymakers to differentiate between hospitals in different regions of the state, adopt policies that will lower costs, and track whether or not savings from reform efforts are passed on to consumers.

The bill passed with strong bipartisan support in the Colorado General Assembly led by Representative Kennedy and Senators Rankin and Moreno with 38 cosponsors in the House and 14 cosponsors joining in the Senate.

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Gov. Polis signs bills into law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, March 25, 2019

DENVER— Gov. Jared Polis signed the following bills into law today.

SB19-009

Financial Incentives For Rural Educators

Reps. McLachlan & Wilson / Sen. Todd

Concerning providing financial incentives for educators to work in rural areas.

SB19-025

Information To Students Regarding Safe Haven Laws

Rep. Hooton / Sen. Smallwood

Concerning providing information to public school students regarding laws that provide for the safe abandonment of newborn children.

SB19-046

Appraisal Management Company Definition

Rep. Arndt / Sen. Tate

Concerning an amendment to the definition of "appraisal management company" to align with the definition in federal law.

###

Gov. Polis Announces Boards and Commissions Appointments

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, March 25, 2019

State Board of Addiction Counselors Examiners

The Board adopts necessary rules and regulations and is responsible for regulating addiction counselors.

for a term expiring December 31, 2019:

- Genevieve Nuebel of Parker, Colorado, to serve as a public member, and occasioned by the resignation of Susan Stamm of Denver, Colorado, appointed;

for a term expiring December 31, 2021:

- Clay Cook, J.D. of Pueblo West, Colorado, to serve as a public member, and occasioned by the resignation of JoEllen McGugan of Denver, Colorado, appointed.

Colorado Civil Rights Commission

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 terms expiring March 13, 2023:

- Richard Lee Lewis Jr. of Aurora, Colorado, to serve as a majority business owner with employees numbering more than 50, and as a Democrat, appointed;
- Kendra Meredith Anderson of Denver, Colorado, to serve as a majority business owner with employees numbering more than 5 but less than 50 employees, and as an Unaffiliated member, appointed;
- Sergio Raudel Cordova of Littleton, Colorado, to serve as a representative of an employee association that represents workers in Colorado, and as a Democrat, appointed.

State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education

The Board is the governing body for the state community college system and the coordinating board for local district colleges. It also coordinates the activities of area vocational schools.

for a term expiring December 31, 2019:

- Hanna Skandera of Denver, Colorado, to serve as a Republican from the First Congressional District, and occasioned by the removal of Theresa Kathleen Pena of Denver, Colorado, appointed;

for terms expiring December 31, 2022:

- Landon Mascareñaz of Denver, Colorado, to serve as a Democrat from the First Congressional District, appointed;
- Terrance Douglas McWilliams of Colorado Springs, Colorado, to serve as a Republican from the Fifth Congressional District, appointed;
- Presley F. Askew of Wheat Ridge, Colorado, to serve as an Unaffiliated from the Seventh Congressional District, reappointed.

Colorado Podiatry Board

The Colorado Podiatry Board conducts examinations and institutes hearings to revoke, suspend, deny, or reissue licenses.

for a term expiring March 17, 2023:

- Kristine Marie Hoffman of Boulder, Colorado to serve as a podiatrist, appointed.

Pollution Prevention Advisory Board

The Board develops pollution prevention goals and objectives, reviews environmental regulatory programs, laws and policies to identify opportunities and incentives, provides direction for pollution prevention outreach, education, training and technical assistance programs, and supports non-regulatory public and private efforts that promote pollution prevention. In addition, the Board administers the Pollution Prevention Grants and the Recycling Resources Economic Opportunity Grants and Rebates.

for a term expiring July 1, 2019:

- Roger Freeman of Lakewood, Colorado, to serve as a representative of business, and occasioned by the resignation of Frederick Scott Myers of Castle Rock, Colorado, appointed.

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