



The seemingly late start of the 2016 legislative session didn't quell the excitement and buzz around the capitol on Wednesday morning. After seven quiet months, legislators and their families, legislative staff, citizens, and lobbyist descended on the capitol to listen to Senate and House majority and minority leadership outlined their agendas for the second sitting of the 70<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. With a looming budget deficit in this fiscal year, large member turn over due to term limits in the senate, and a 2016 election that could result in new majorities in both chambers, all were eager to hear what leadership was going to bring to the table this session.

President Bill Cadman kicked off his 16<sup>th</sup> and last legislative session with a focus on the sacredness of the constitution, his duty as a legislator to uphold its tenants, and the pride he holds in the bipartisan accomplishments from the 2015 legislative session. He welcomed everyone to the chamber and viewed in awe, with other members the beauty of the restored Senate Chambers, even showing two short films on all the work completed in the last two years to return the Senate Chambers to its former ornate glory. Each year President Cadman honors an individual, a family or a group of people and this year was no different. He invited first responders, police officers, sheriffs, current and past military servicemen and spoke their accolades. He commended their willingness to rush into life threatening situations, forgoing their own safety to ensure ours. President Cadman also acknowledged that current safety demands are greater than ever and spoke out against those who speak to vilify these individuals who serve and protect citizens often at the cost of their own lives. President Cadman quoted President Kennedy before launching into the many accomplishments of the 2015 legislative session – “Let's not seek the Republican answer or the Democrat answer but the right answer.” He beamed while walking through the work done to increase workforce development opportunities, reduce testing in the state of Colorado, and increase the safety of children in Colorado schools with the passage of The Claire Davis Act. President Cadman ended his final opening day address with a line he repeated many times during his 30 minute address, “I do solemnly swear to support the constitution and perform our duty to the best of our ability.”

While President Cadman finished his last speech in front of his colleagues, Senate Minority Leader Guzman took the podium to give her first speech as the leader of the Senate Democrats since being elected this summer when former Minority Leader Carroll stepped down. Minority Leader Guzman's speech stressed that Democrats were not the party of handouts but the party of fair opportunity “to build a foundation for their dreams to come true.” She clearly outlined the priorities of her caucus including a commitment to fast and efficient broadband service in rural, mountain, and the eastern plains of Colorado; support of local control; equal pay for women; and support for the State Water Plan. Minority Leader Guzman asked the Senate to consider and pass a budget that reflects our values such as maintenance of current infrastructure, affordable housing, support of the Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives program, financial assistance to the economically struggling rural communities, reducing the cost of higher education, and preserving the environment. She wrapped up by reflecting on the dream of a better tomorrow and how despite the partisan differences, every legislator whether they are the “vote or the voice” share the goal of making Colorado better.

The complete avoidance of the term hospital provider fee and the budget in the Senate didn't translate to the House. Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, who is also finishing her last term in the legislature made her number one priority for the session crystal clear: enterprising the hospital provider fee. She warned that without the passage of this legislation which would provide state flexibility under the TABOR, the state will continue to face a budget crisis and need to cut funding to critical programs. The Speaker lauded Colorado's diversity and said a top priority was to continue to promote economic and social equality in the state. In addition to the commitment to hospital provider fee she urged the House to pass legislation to help small businesses reduce compliance costs and regulations the stifle growth, increase the number of students in the STEM field, increase opportunities for job training for veterans, ensure women are paid equal to men in state contracts, cap student loan rates, and closing loopholes that allow corporations to hide off shore accounts. Speaker Hullinghorst expressed her desire to improve the environment through the passage of a climate action plan at the state level. She also reiterated the sentiments of Minority Leader Guzman's commitment to increase access and availability of broadband. She didn't leave any doubt of where her top priorities lie in 2016.

Minority Leader DelGrosso, also in his last year of service, voiced his desire for a constructive session where political differences could be set aside to make Colorado a better state. His caucus is specifically championing legislation to increase funding in education in an equitable manner, decrease the regulatory burdens on small business, and improve government transparency and efficiency. He reaffirmed his support of construction defects legislation to increase the portfolio of affordable housing in Colorado and ensuring that any mineral right owner receives compensation in the case of Government blocking the use or access to that mineral right. Minority Leader DelGrosso's number one priority is increasing funding for the critical transportation needs in the state of Colorado. He would like to make sure that transportation sees a full five years of funding from the General Fund as directed under SB 228 while also pushing legislation to allow bonding to pay for individuals projects in high need areas of Colorado. The Minority Leader spelled out that turning the hospital provider fee into an enterprise is unconstitutional and he will not support any legislation that undermines the constitution.

As expected, all four leaders were fairly direct about their caucus priorities. How the dynamics, tensions, priority legislation, and the budget will all play out in the next 120 days in the newly restored chambers of the House and Senate and under the Gold Dome.

Senate President Bill Cadman Remarks: [http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci\\_29379895/colorado-legislature-senate-president-cadmans-remarks](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_29379895/colorado-legislature-senate-president-cadmans-remarks)

Senate Minority Leader Guzman Remarks: [http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci\\_29380341/colorado-legislature-senate-minority-leader-guzmans-remarks](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_29380341/colorado-legislature-senate-minority-leader-guzmans-remarks)

Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst Remarks: [http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci\\_29379636/colorado-legislature-house-speaker-hullinghorsts-remarks](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_29379636/colorado-legislature-house-speaker-hullinghorsts-remarks)

House Minority Leader DelGrosso Remarks: [http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci\\_29379650/colorado-legislature-house-minority-leader-delgrossos-remarks](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_29379650/colorado-legislature-house-minority-leader-delgrossos-remarks)

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