



Governor Hickenlooper clearly set the tone and top priorities of his administration heading into the 2016 legislative session this morning in his State of the State address. As in years passed he applauded Colorado for its unique nature, innovation, drive to succeed, and its citizens desires to be self-sufficient. “Colorado is the place you can chase your American dream. Colorado is THE place,” he enthusiastically exclaimed. The Governor reaffirmed his commitment to help Colorado’s rural economies gain pace with the rest of Colorado through Grand Junction’s Jump Start Colorado program the legislature passed last year. He also highlighted the growing attraction of rural Colorado to the aerospace community as well as the massive tourist growth Colorado has seen in the last few years. Similar to Minority Leader Guzman and Speaker Hunninghorst, the Governor strongly proclaimed a desire for broadband internet access to reach every “corner and corral.” He mentioned a handful of businesses such as DaVita, Intel, FiveStars and Gusto that have either moved to Colorado or significantly expanded their presence with the state. The Governor also touched upon his recent trade mission to Israel, the “cyber security capitol of the world,” where Colorado leaders in cyber security gathered information to help jumpstart the Cyber Security Center in Colorado Springs. The Governor pivoted his speech to the need for Colorado to grow a “world class talent pipeline.” He thanked the Lt. Governor for his commitment to closing the higher education attainment gap. Currently, minority students earn post-secondary degrees at half the rate of their white peers. Governor Hickenlooper reiterated his support of high standards aligned to statewide assessments. He thanked the general assembly for their work in reducing testing by thirty hours in the last legislative session and took the stance that 9th grade testing is not a negotiable and needed to be sure our kids succeed in school. Many times in his speech Governor Hickenlooper referred to the negative affects our current budget situation will have on Colorado such a reducing funding for higher education or decrease in quality of life.

A commitment to a physically and mentally healthy Colorado was expressed. The Governor noted that the new Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Hotline has received over 175,000 calls and that 93% of Coloradoans have health insurance. He expressed a desire to increase access the mental health treatment through the behavioral health crisis system and an integration of primary care. In a stronger message than he has sent in the past, the Governor expressed concern that marijuana edibles sent the wrong message to kids about marijuana. Work needs to be done to ensure edibles don’t resemble candy that can be found on the shelf at a convenience store. Colorado has the 5th highest suicide rate in the nation. In fact, in 2012, fire arm suicide numbers outpaced those who have died in car crashes. His administration is committed to working with the gun community to increase education and awareness of suicide prevention as part of the gun safety conversation. Governor Hickenlooper touted his Colorado the Beautiful Initiative which will ensure every Coloradan lives within a ten minute walk for a park or trail. Colorado is also rolling out the first-ever interactive trail maps to make it easier for people to plan and experience an outdoor adventure. The Governor also reflected on the lessons Colorado learned from the Gold Kind Mine . Colorado is recommitting to environmental clean up and water/air quality. The Governor said he will continue to uphold the highest public health and environmental standards

while promoting innovative energy development. Colorado's Climate Plan, which was released in the fall, will serve as the state framework for decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

As the Governor wrapped up his speech he turned his focus to the state of Colorado's roads and transportation infrastructure. Today's funding levels barely cover the maintenance needs of the state and with 2 million people projected to move to Colorado in the next twenty years, a permanent source of transportation funding needs to be found. Governor Hickenlooper was adamant that he doesn't support efforts to bond for transportation projects because it is merely "trying to drive your new truck across the state with a dollar's worth of gas." For the first time in a State of the State address, the Governor expressed his support for legislation to reform current construction defects reform as one way to tackle the issue of affordable housing while also asking for a yes vote to renew the low income housing tax credit.

Governor Hickenlooper urged the Colorado General Assembly to choose compromise and civility moving forward. He questioned why productive dialogue wasn't the first option in negotiations. The Governor strongly disagrees with the legal opinion that the "hospital provider fee" modifications violate TABOR and the constitution as enterprises are used in many instances through out state government. He forcefully stated "If we can't make this very reasonable change — like many already allowed under TABOR — then what choice do we have but to re-examine TABOR?" He direly predicted with out a change to current policy there will be no more money for education, to fix pot holes, or decrease congestion. As he left the chambers he made sure to say Go Broncos to the 100 member General Assembly.

Full text of Governor Hickenlooper's State of the State Address:

http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_29385265/full-text-gov-john-hickenloopers-state-state-speech

Mary Marchun

THE CAPSTONE GROUP LLC

mmarchun@capstonegroupllc.com

1576 Sherman Street Suite 300 | Denver, CO 80203

C: 303.594.8198 P: 303.860.0555

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