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Under the Dome, Week 7

Highlights of the Week

Week seven under the gold dome included introduction of key bipartisan legislative initiatives and closing the legislative debate on the physician-assisted suicide. Leadership from all four legislative caucuses came together Wednesday to announce their support for workforce development with a package of bills dubbed “Workforce 2.0.” The ten bill package aims to engage Colorado’s top businesses and industries in training Coloradans with the skills needed to fill positions in industry. Five of the ten bills were introduced Wednesday:

- HB 1287 – Apprenticeship Study: Directs CDLE to study methods to increase use of apprenticeship programs by businesses and make recommendations based on the study.
- HB 1288 – The Industry Infrastructure Grant Program: Creates a grant program to assist industry in Colorado to specify industry competencies and collaborate in education and training on these competencies in various settings.
- HB 1289 – Incentives for Student Success: Sets up a pilot program where school districts receive a \$1,000 bonus for each high school student who earns an industry certification, finishes a workplace training program tied to industry needs, or completes AP Computer Science.
- HB 1290 – Extend Transition Job Program: Adds an additional five years to the state’s current transitional job program.
- HB 1291 – Computer Science and Digital Literacy: Directs the Department of Education to update current K-12 standards to include tech skills, creates a voluntary resource bank for schools and districts that will start or expand computer science programs for students, and creates a grant program for public school teachers in Colorado to pursue additional education so they are qualified to teach computer science classes.

Three other bills within the package are already working their way through the process including SB 079, Aligning Student Academic Plans with Career Pathways, HB 1073 Qualifications for licensed electricians, and HB 1103 Clarifying License Pathways for Mental Health Professionals. The final two bills in the package are pending introduction.

On Wednesday, the House version of physician assisted suicide legislation was laid over until June, effectively killing the measure. HB 1054 did not have the 33 votes needed to pass out of the House and Democratic leadership wanted to spare the full House from the debate, was sure to be intense and emotional. Representative Ginal and Representative Court expressed extreme disappointment. The

proponents, led by the nonprofit Compassion and Choices, is expected to take the issue to the November 2016 ballot.

If physician assisted suicide files a ballot title, it will join more than one hundred others that have been filed up to this point. With Colorado in the crosshairs of the Presidential election and a relatively low bar to get measures on the ballot, this year has seen one of the highest filing rates ever. Potential ballot measures cover issues ranging from sales tax increase for transportation infrastructure, single payer health care (already on the ballot) to local control for oil and gas regulations, divestment from Iran, an increase to the state's minimum wage, allowing the sale of full strength beer and wine in grocery stores, and a statewide de-brucing that would free up revenues otherwise refunded per provisions in the TABOR constitutional amendment.

Friday morning, Senator Jessie Ulibarri announced he would not reelection for his Senate seat in 2016. He put his full support behind current Representative Dominick Moreno, who will run to replace him. As the current Assistant Majority Leader in the House, Representative Moreno was a shoe in for House Majority Leader if Democrats retained control of the House after the 2016 election. Not only are many local Adams County Democrats already vying for Representative Moreno's open seat but the announcement has left a vacancy for the next House Majority Leader.

Bills of the Week

Closing Tax Haven Loopholes The House Finance Committee passed legislation down partisan lines Wednesday to close offshore tax haven loopholes for corporations. HB 1275 also includes a component to place a question on the ballot to direct any monies received by the state as a result in to K-12 education. Supporters of the bill include the Colorado Education Association, the Colorado Association of School Executives, and various small business owners. Opponents who testified against the bill in committee were the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry, the Colorado Competitive Council, the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, Denver World Trade Association, and the Colorado Bar Association. The bill will next be heard in the House Appropriations Committee.

Restrictions on HOV Lanes A bipartisan measure by Senator Lundberg and Representative Singer seeks to prohibit CDOT from requiring a vehicle traveling in an HOV lane to use a switchable transponder to drive in the HOV or HOT lanes on state highways on a toll-free basis. SB 123 was debated in the Senate Transportation Committee on Tuesday. Opponents including CDOT and Conservation Colorado, both of whom argued that the bill completely removes CDOT's ability to collect tolls. Proponents countered that the fees for the HOV/HOT lanes are misleading to the public. The bill passed the Senate Transportation Committee with bipartisan support, and was debated for more than an hour on the Senate floor before leadership moved to lay over the bill until next week to give time for work on possible amendments.

Boycott Divest Sanction Last Friday, Representative Moreno and Representative Nordberg introduced HB 1284. The bill, considered by the House Business Affairs Committee this Tuesday, would prohibit the Public Employees' Retirement Association (PERA) from investing in national and international companies that engage in the Boycott Divest Sanction campaign aimed at delegitimizing the state of Israel. PERA will make its best efforts to identify all companies that have economic prohibitions against Israel and assemble those identified into a comprehensive list of restricted companies. The bill passed the House Business Affairs committee unanimously and passed the House Floor on third reading on a vote of 54-10 with one member excused.

Liquor License Exemptions in Higher Education MSU Denver and Colorado State University testified in support of legislation in the Senate Education Committee that grants an exemption to liquor license requirements for higher education institutions with a beer brewing program that allows students 21 years or older to taste the product as part of the curriculum. Amendments negotiated with the Division of Liquor Enforcement ensure that any product produced solely for purposes of an academic program cannot be sold without a license. HB 1042 passed committee unanimously and was placed on the Senate consent calendar.

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