



Today the Governor gave his annual State of the State address in front of all 65 members of the House, 35 members of the Senate, justices of the Colorado Supreme Court, Congressmen Polis and Perlmutter, his cabinet and executive team, as well as a full gallery of Colorado citizens. Governor Hickenlooper's State of the State was upbeat and covered Colorado's success and need for future improvement. He clearly charted out his priorities for his next term: continued economic development, robust K-12 education, affordable access to higher education, balancing the need for energy growth and independence with public health and private property rights, work to improve support service provided through the Department of Human Services, strengthening Colorado's infrastructure, and innovative means to tackle Colorado's impending budget pressures.

Governor Hickenlooper received a standing ovation when he declared that "Colorado's state of the state is strong." He began by applauding the work of the Colorado Water Conservation Board on the first ever Colorado Water Plan. He touted Colorado's status as one of the top states for economic growth and development. Colorado is a leading state in IT start ups, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing. Aerospace alone employs over 25,000 people in the state of Colorado with high earning wages. Governor Hickenlooper's goals for the next term is to recruit, retain and grow talent in the state while also continuing to hatch and grow new businesses and lure other opportunities from out of state. The Governor echoed what both the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate said about reaching out to rural Colorado to ensure they catch up with the rest of the state in terms of economic recovery. He plans to support rural Colorado through expanded broadband passed through last year's telecomm reform package and the Job Creation and Main Street Initiative. Governor Hickenlooper next shifted focus on providing resources to help those individuals who are long-term unemployed. He believes strategic and targeted work force development will benefit both employers and employees.

The Governor said the best workforce development is a strong K-12 education system. This year he proposed an additional \$480 million in education funding including a one-time transfer of \$200 million from the State Education fund for school districts to use at their boards discretion. Colorado's kids need to receive a high quality education to compete in the global economy which is why accurately measuring student growth is so important. He said he was looking forward to reviewing the recommendations of the HB 1202 taskforce and highlighted the areas of consensus thus far such as easing testing demands on 12th graders, streamlining testing in the early years, and finding flexibility with the social studies tests. However, he was very clear that consistent assessments in math and English are fundamental. The Governor is also committed to recruiting, retaining, and growing high quality teachers in the state through licensure reform, fair evaluation systems, and incentives for the best teachers to continue their work. He will continue to work towards equal access of quality education to all children through funding

equity, innovative school models, and continued support of charter schools. The Governor transitioned to his goal to reduce the cost burden of higher education in the state. He has proposed \$107 million in funding for higher education this year. He is pleased to see a cap on tuition growth of 6% and placed \$30 million in his budget request for the new Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative. The Scholarship Initiative launches a network of state-matched scholarship funds across the state. He wrapped up his education piece by urging the general assembly to begin thinking of diversified ways to fund both K-12 and higher education.

On the topic of energy, The Governor listed off nearly a dozen regulations and protections put in place for the industry under his administration. Governor Hickenlooper noted the work of the oil and gas taskforce as breaking down barriers between opposing sides and starting much needed conversation. He is looking forward to reviewing the recommendations and balancing the desires of industry, local communities, and the public health of Coloradans. Colorado is one of the healthiest states in the national and his administration is commencing a new program "The State of Health." His administration is focused on decreasing teen suicide and providing support to those who suffer from mental health issues through the launch of the first ever statewide mental health crisis system. The goal is to decrease suicide and violence that spouts from untreated mental health conditions. The Governor touched on his continued commitment to protecting children in the state of Colorado. He is requesting \$6.6 million for 130 additional caseworkers so current caseloads in child welfare can decrease. A state of the state wouldn't be complete without addressing the continuing progress of Colorado's legalization of recreational marijuana. He congratulated state agencies for their tireless work on developing strong and important regulations. He also called for the federal government to allow banking for the medical marijuana industry.

The topic of state revenue and funding was much anticipated in light of the impending TABOR refunds. Governor Hickenlooper kicked off by insisting the state prioritize funding for Colorado's infrastructure and roads. The state is projected to grow by 3 million in the next 20 years and the time to take action on developing new funding sources is now. He expressed the need to expand I-25 and I-70 through creative funding partnerships and get serious about tackling the transportation funding shortfall in the state. The Governor tried his best to carefully navigate the issue of TABOR and budget pressures within the state. He didn't provide a solution but he made it clear that whether government is big or small it must work. He put his support behind legislation that would provide the fiscal impact of any initiative that makes it on the ballot. He encourages everyone in the room to deal with the budget realities and determine a strategic way to allocate resources. Governor Hickenlooper wrapped up his fifth State of the State address by asking everyone to come together, address the tough issues on the table for Colorado, and create a future that benefits all Coloradans.

Text of Governor John Hickenlooper's Speech:

http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_27326274/colorado-governor-john-hickenloopers-state-state-address

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