



Under the Dome, Week 13

Highlights of the Week

This week the Senate handed over the budget to the House for consideration and debate. Although the Senate's 45 amendments were deemed impressive at the time, the House introduced a total of 93 amendments to the budget and second reading debate extended over two legislative days. Many of the amendments mimicked those in the Senate while others tried to undo action taken in the Senate such as stripping funding for the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (this was unsuccessful and the funding for the survey remains in the budget). Republicans introduced a variety of amendments to defund certain state programs and transfer the money to transportation. Democrats ran the standard amendments to defund private prisons and put the money to K-12 education. Ultimately, there were several substantive amendments that were added to the budget in the House with bipartisan support. These included:

- A transfer of \$16 million state and federal funds from the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing to Colorado's struggling rural hospitals, achieved by capping the administrative costs HCPF can keep for administering the Hospital Provider Fee.
- \$16.3 million in Marijuana Tax Cash Fund for affordable housing grants and loans under the Department of Local Affairs
- About \$9.45 million from the High Cost Fund to increase rural broadband service
- An increase of \$1.5 million Marijuana Tax Cash Fund for the Tony Grampsas Youth Services Program
- An additional \$1.5 million for Colorado's film incentives program
- \$1.1 million for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program weatherization operations
- \$4 million from Marijuana Tax Cash Funds for marijuana research

There were several heated moments during the budget debate. Representative Williams ran an amendment to defund the driver's license program that is accessible to individuals despite their legal status and set off an almost hour and half long debate that saw the Speaker leave her post to address the sensitive issue. The night before, Representative Williams called for the budget to be read at length after an amendment he proposed to prevent any city or county defined as a sanctuary city from accessing DOLA grants was ruled out of order. The House clerks spent almost half an hour reading the entire long bill in to the record. There was also lengthy debate on an amendment by Representative Foote to prohibit the Department of Law from spending money on a lawsuit against a local community on behalf of private industry. The amendment was meant to go after Colorado's Attorney General who sued Boulder as a result of the local oil and gas moratorium. Legislators also took up the K-12 assessment debate once again,

unsuccessfully running an amendment to defund Colorado's testing program. The budget will receive a final vote recorded vote in the House next week. After that it will head to the Senate for a vote on the House amendments and then to conference committee where the JBC will make sure the budget is balanced and peel off amendments that don't have the support of two members of each chamber.

Although the House focused on the budget this week, they still took time to consider other legislation. With almost unanimous support, the House passed SB 213, which authorizes the testing and deployment of autonomous vehicles. After the bill passed the House, a new issue arose and the sponsors agreed to go to conference committee to resolve it. The House also passed Representative Michaelson Jenet's HB 1004 on a unanimous vote. The legislation requires that each state institution of higher education adopt a policy for assessing and awarding academic credit for college-level learning acquired while in the military. The House Transportation Committee met on Wednesday and passed HB 1229 by Representative Hansen and Representative Coleman. The legislation directs the Transportation Legislative Review Committee (TLRC) to hold a hearing on the potential benefits and costs of requiring the PUC to determine targets for the amount of energy storage systems that electric utilities should incorporate into their electric resource acquisition plans. There was an amendment to remove language around social benefits of storage and many committee members were unsure why legislation was needed to ask the TLRC for a hearing. The bill passed on a party line vote.

The Senate Education Committee passed HB 1160 to help ELL students with READ Act requirements, after reaching an agreement with the State Board of Education and proponents of the bill. The Senate State Affairs Committee also surprised bill sponsors and the lobby when they passed two bills unanimously that were expected to die. HB 1188 by Senator Moreno and Senator Coram makes harassment based on someone's physical or mental disability as well as sexual orientation a class 1 misdemeanor and HB 1186 requires insurance to allow women to access a one year supply of birth control.

Legislation to amend Colorado's construction defects laws was put on hold once again Wednesday. HB 1279 which was delayed the week prior, was moved once again. It is now scheduled to be heard in the House State Affairs Committee on April 12th. The sponsors blamed the budget and not an impasse on negotiations for the halt. Bills are starting to move quickly from introduction through committee. Next week's calendar includes consideration of legislation to enterprise the hospital provider fee for the benefit of rural Colorado, another bill to target sanctuary cities, HB 1230 which aims to protect Colorado citizens from federal government overreach, SB 035 which increases the penalty for tampering with oil and gas equipment, and many more.

Bills of the Week

Civil Forfeiture Take Two After legislation to address issues and concerns around civil forfeiture died in Senate Judiciary Committee earlier this session, proponents came forward with a new proposal in the House. HB 1313 by Representative Herod and Representative Humphrey is

designed to increase reporting on forfeitures and make the information about forfeitures more available to the public. The reports must contain which agencies received proceeds from a civil forfeiture and how those proceeds were spent. The bill has a diverse and bipartisan list of 40 sponsors and cosponsors and is scheduled to be heard in the House Judiciary Committee.

Income Tax Credit For Donation To Endowment Fund For the past three years, the nonprofit community in Colorado has introduced a bill to create an income tax credit for donations to endowment funds. However, due to budget stress, the bill hasn't passed. This year Senator Priola is trying again with the introduction of SB 287. The bill would create a tax credit for contributions to an endowment fund managed in line with the Uniform Prudent Management Of Institutional Funds Act. People may claim a credit worth 25% of their contribution with a \$25,000 maximum income tax credit per year.

Measures Of Postsecondary And Workforce Readiness On Thursday, the Senate Education committee considered SB 272 by Senator Priola, Representative Lundeen, and Representative Pettersen. The bill adds a student's ability to enroll in postsecondary education core courses without any need for remediation to existing performance measures of postsecondary and workforce readiness. The bill grants the State Board of Education the ability to set the achievement standards. Colorado Succeeds, Pikes Peak Community College, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, Ready Colorado, former Senator Keith King, and students came down to the Capitol to testify in support of the bill. The bill passed the Education Committee unanimously and was placed on the consent calendar.

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