



## **Under the Dome, Week 14**

### *Highlights of the Week*

This week marked the one month mark for legislators to wrap up all their business for the 2017 legislative session. As of Thursday, 710 bills and resolutions have been introduced, 132 bills have been postponed indefinitely, 138 have been signed by the Governor, and bills are still being introduced daily. The House spent Monday morning making closing remarks on the FY 2017-18 budget. In the end it passed almost nearly partisan lines with only one Republican, JBC member Bob Rankin, voting with the Democrats to support the budget. The Senate is waiting to form a conference committee until a few other bills make their way through the process including SB 267, Sustainability for Rural Colorado, which faced its first hearing in the Senate Finance Committee. The bill which enterprises the hospital provider fee, provides funding for rural schools and rural roads as well as requiring cuts to state agencies, passed the committee with only one no vote from Senator Neville. SB 267 was amended to increase the bonding capacity from \$1.35 billion to \$1.7 billion. Of the \$1.7 billion, \$1.3 billion is for transportation while \$400 million is for capital construction (mainly controlled maintenance). The bill was supposed to be heard by the Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday morning but was delayed while negotiations continue behind the scenes.

On Tuesday, the Senate Transportation Committee took up HB 1242 which would refer a measure to the ballot to ask voters to increase sales tax to pay for transportation projects. During committee, sponsors President Grantham and Senator Baumgardner offered a variety of amendments to make the bill more palatable to Republicans. The amendments adopted increased the maximum repayment amount for the bonds from \$5 billion to \$5.5 billion, require a \$50 million CDOT buy in for the bond payment, added \$100 million General Fund to pay for CDOT's bond payment, reduced the sales tax increase from .62% to .5%, gave CDOT a percentage of money instead of a fixed amount, eliminated the multimodal transportation options committee, and required a best value contractor for projects. The bill passed with bipartisan support and now faces the Senate Finance committee on April 25<sup>th</sup>. SB 213, a bill to authorize autonomous motor vehicles, cleared a final hurdle in conference committee this week and then was re-passed by the House and Senate. The Senate also unanimously passed SB 028 which will allow county departments of human services to communicate more effectively with the military family advocacy program while serving military families and the body gave initial approval to a compromise bill that will allow 9<sup>th</sup> graders to take the PSAT instead of the Colorado state assessment.

On Thursday, several House Committees met into the evening including the House Health Insurance and Environment Committee as well as the House Business Committee. The House Health Committee was considering several of the Lt. Governor's proposals to make health care more affordable for rural communities as well as HB 1318, Division of Insurance Annual Report of Pharmaceutical Costs Data. The bill by Representative Ginal requires health insurers to submit information to the state's Commissioner of Insurance regarding pharmaceuticals covered under individual and group health insurance plans. The information that must be reported includes: the total cost of pharmaceuticals, the net cost of pharmaceuticals expressed as a percentage of total medical costs, and a list of the drug classes of the 10 pharmaceuticals that were most dispensed and had the highest aggregate cost. The bill passed with an amendment that looks at aggregate gross costs and gross spending as compared to aggregate net costs and net spending at the request of pharmaceutical industry. However, Republicans on the Health Committee remained opposed and the bill passed with only Democrat support.

In the House Business Committee, members considered a plan to create a Colorado Secure Savings Plan. HB 1290 sponsored by Representative Pettersen and Representative Buckner creates a board of trustees to develop a plan for a public private partnership that would offer a low fee Individual Retirement Account to employees without access to workplace plans. The bill was amended to put in place additional protections for businesses: it does not apply to workers who have worked less than 120 days and directs the board to establish a warning system for businesses so that they are not penalized unnecessarily. HB 1290 also passed committee on a party line vote.

#### *Bills of the Week*

**Additional Regulation on Oil and Gas in Colorado** Although there is less than a month left of the 2017 legislative session, bills are still being introduced daily including HB 1336 by Representative Young and Representative Foote. Under current law, forced pooling applicants must hold a hearing before the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC). HB 1336 explains that a majority of royalty interest owners must join the application, establishes a 90 day notice period before the hearing, and requires an explanation of forced pooling laws to affected parties and a report to the COGCC listing the non-consenting owners. HB 1336 will be considered by the House Transportation and Energy Committee on Wednesday. The bill was introduced the same day that HB 1256, which aimed to change school setback requirements for the energy industry, was killed in the Senate Agriculture Committee and the House State Affairs Committee killed SB 035 which aimed to create harsher penalties for tampering with oil and gas equipment.

**Income Tax Returns Disclosure** Coming off the heels of the Trump candidacy, Democrat Representatives Hooton and Hansen and Senators Kerr and Jones introduced HB 1328. The bill would require presidential candidates and vice presidential candidates to file their federal tax returns (going back five years) with the Colorado Secretary of State, who then must publish the returns. HB 1328 is scheduled to be heard by the House Finance Committee on Monday, April 17.

**Reinvesting in Our Communities** The Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition has been keenly focused on sentencing reform at the legislature for the past few years. However, this year, the organization is turning towards a proposal to invest in communities as a preventative effort. HB 1326 sponsored by Representative Lee and Senator Gardner makes changes to parole that will result in savings. With the savings, the bill creates the reinvestment crime prevention initiative in DOLA to expand small business lending in Aurora and Colorado Springs and fund programs and projects through grants to reduce crime. The ambitious initiative is scheduled for the House Judiciary Committee on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Student Exemption From Immunization Requirements** A legislative session wouldn't be complete without a debate around immunization requirements in the state. Currently, Colorado has one of the most liberal immunization exemption policies in the country. Senators Neville and Marble, both huge advocates for parental choice in immunizations, brought forward legislation that would allow parents to exempt their child from the immunization requirements by submitting an exemption letter without using the official state Department of Public Health and Environment form. On Thursday afternoon, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee heard six hours of testimony for and against SB 250. It ended up passing the committee on a 3-1 vote with Senator Kefalas as the sole no vote. The bill will likely pass the Senate but faces a more difficult hurdle in the House.

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