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Highlights of the Week

This week the House debated and passed the FY 2015-16 budget in a much quicker manner than the Senate. Getting right to work on Wednesday morning, the House plowed through 39 proposed amendments in 7 hours. The House ran 12 fewer amendments than the Senate ran the week prior, although many were similar in content. Amendments included two attempts to de-fund statewide standardized tests for K-12 students, three amendments to fund the Southwest Chief Rail, increasing K-12 education funding by \$15 million, defunding CDPHE's immunization program, decreasing Hospital Provider Fee revenue, among many others. The House was much more successful in running and passing bipartisan amendments to the budget, gaining support for 12 additions to the Long Bill including:

- \$5 million for CDPHE's teen pregnancy prevention program (LARC)
- Three amendments to fund the Southwest Chief Rail Line
- An increase of \$1 million for the state film incentive program
- Roll over authority for the CHATS system under the Department of Human Services
- \$683,000 to improve dental care of children on Medicaid
- \$300,000 for data collection within the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Funding for increases health services in rural Colorado
- Funds for respite care services
- \$136,000 to retinal services for Medicaid patients
- \$65,000 for a statewide study of cyber bullying
- Footnote to study the economic benefits if US Highway 50 is improved

On Thursday, the budget passed third reading of the House with little discussion. The final vote was 45-20. Minority Leader DeGrosso rose in support of the budget with Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, a stark difference from the partisan tensions that were present when the Senate closed the budget the week prior. Next week, the Joint Budget Committee will meet in conference committee to hash out the differences between the House and Senate versions and ensure the budget is still balanced.

On Friday morning, the Senate and House Appropriation committees both met and heard more than 50 bills. Many were killed by their sponsors because of lack of funding. Others, which had funding set aside for them in the budget, were approved by the committee. Workforce development bills including HB 1276 Skilled Worker Outreach, Recruitment and Training, HB 1274 Creation of Career Pathways for Students, and HB 1275 Career and Tech Education in Concurrent Enrollment all got the nod in committee and will be heard next on the House floor.

The week kicked off in the House and wrapped up in the Senate with long debates on assessments, standards, and accountability in Colorado's K-12 system. The House Education committee heard hours of testimony urging the committee to support the bipartisan measure by Representative Wilson and Representative Buckner to streamline assessments and implement the recommendations of the HB 1202 taskforce. Many witnesses implored the committee to add back in a requirement for 9th grade assessment in English Language Arts and math. No one testified in opposition to the bill. Committee action on the legislation is expected Monday afternoon. The Senate Education committee also turned their attention to the issue this week, passing two bills on Thursday evening to completely overhaul Colorado's current assessment system and another that would move the state to sampling for social studies assessments. SB 233 by Senator Marble and Woods, known as the "mom's" bill, repeals the state's current standards and assessment system and returns to the 2008 requirements until new standards and assessments can be written. SB 257, a bipartisan effort by Senator Hill and Senator Merrifield, requires the State Board of Education to move up revision of the state's academic standards to 2016, and reduces standardized assessments to the minimum required by the federal government. SB 257 also enacts a three year stay on using student's growth in teacher evaluation. Although both bills passed with strong bipartisan support, they modify the same system so ultimately both cannot pass because it would be contradictory.

With 26 days left of session, 666 bills have been introduced with still more expected. Of those, 161 bills have been killed and 121 bills have been signed by the Governor. The Governor has yet to veto any bills for the 2015 session. On Friday morning, the much anticipated construction defects reform legislation was debated on the Senate floor. Senator Heath took the lead for the Senate Democrats speaking against the bill. The bill passed on a voice vote and a bipartisan support is expected for the third reading recorded vote scheduled for Monday. HB 1205, the tax credit expenditure review committee bill, passed the House on third reading unanimously. The bill was introduced in the Senate and will be heard by the Senate Business, Labor and Technology Committee. HB 1173, a bipartisan measure by Representative Mitsch Bush and Representative Rankin was hijacked on the Senate floor during second reading. The legislation, which creates penalties for passenger vehicles without adequate tread depth on their tires or chains/traction during winter months has experienced many ups and downs since its introduction at the end of January. It passed the House despite concerns from certain legislators that the bill exerted too much government control. The bill sat in the Senate for a while before it was introduced into a committee. On Friday, Senate Republicans added an amendment to increase the scope of the bill to the point where proponents believe it will be unworkable and incredibly expensive. The amendment requires that not just I-70 implement

the fines but also any highway that intersects with I-70. The future of the bill is uncertain at this time.

Bills of the Week

Access to Employee Files This week, Representative Salazar introduced HB 1342, which allows an employee or former employee to request copies of their personnel file from private sector employers. The state of Colorado, state political subdivisions, and financial institutions are exempt from this requirement. There are steep financial penalties to employers who do not comply. Before session began, the Colorado Chamber warned about the introduction of such legislation, and they plan to work vigorously against it. The bill is set to be heard in the House Judiciary Committee.

Coordinated Review of CO2 Emission Reduction Measures For the past few months, Senator Cooke has been working with stakeholders on SB 258. The bill prohibits the Air Quality Control Commission under CDPHE from submitting a state implementation plan for the reduction of carbon emissions from electric utilities to the EPA until certain conditions are met. The bill passed out of the Senate Agriculture committee on 7-2 with bipartisan support.

Hospital Liens President Cadman and Speaker Hullinghorst joined together this week to introduce a bill regarding hospital liens. The bill requires a hospital to submit charges for hospital care and services to a patient's payer of benefits, as defined in the bill, before a lien for hospital care is created. The bill is assigned to the Senate Finance Committee.

Funding for the National Western Center and Capitol Complex Projects The National Western Center is a proposed official partnership between the Western Stock Show Association, the city and county of Denver, Colorado State University, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and History Colorado to repurpose and reinvigorate the National Western Complex year round. HB 1344 by Representative Duran and J. Becker and Senators Steadman and Sonnenberg, authorizes the state to enter into a lease-purchase agreements up to \$250 million and with a maximum term of 20 years for the purpose of financing the construction of facilities for CSU at the National Western Center and affiliated facilities on the CSU campus. The bill will face its first hearing in the House Agriculture Committee this week.

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