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## Highlights of the Week

Despite closing in on the final days of the legislative session, 21 bills were introduced this week. It technically only takes three days to pass a bill once the rules have been waived, so legislation can be introduced until May 4<sup>th</sup>. The week started and ended with debates on K-12 assessments. The House Education committee met Monday to work through four pieces of testing legislation that had been waiting since February for a hearing. The bills including HB 1105: Revising Colorado Education Accountability Measures, HB 1123: Federal Testing Requirement Options for Local Education Providers, HB 1125: Colorado State Academic Standards and Flexibility, and HB 1208: Repeal the Common Core Standards were all killed in committee. Pieces of each of those House bills are contained in SB 257 and SB 223, the two major assessments bills introduced in the Senate. With bipartisan sponsorship, SB 257 received initial approval on the Senate floor Thursday evening and is awaiting a final recorded vote. SB 223, the “moms” assessment bill passed Senate Education Committee and then was referred from the floor back to Legislative Council. The joint committee killed the bill on Friday afternoon. HB 1323, the House’s version of a bipartisan assessment bill, received initial approval Friday morning. There were three contentious amendments that failed by a narrow margin, including one to take Colorado out of the PARCC consortium, another to eliminate the requirement for language arts and math tests in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and the third that would require CDE to offer 3-5 statewide assessments for local districts to choose from (vs the one – PARCC – currently offered). All three amendments failed. With both HB 1323 and SB 257 one vote away from heading to the other chamber, negotiations are intensifying. Adding to the focus on K-12 issues, current Education Commissioner Robert Hammond announced his intent to retire on Friday.

On Tuesday, the Senate passed the “Claire Davis” Bill in honor of the young woman who was shot and killed at Arapahoe High School in 2013, on a vote of 25-9. The bill will remove government immunity for school districts in instances of murder, attempted murder, first degree assault, or sexual violence. An individual can take action up to \$350,000 against a district. The bill is highly controversial, with school boards, superintendents, the teachers union

and the civil justice league opposed. The bill is currently waiting introduction in the House. The Senate gave final approval on Friday to SB 222, which builds on the telecom package passed in 2014 by increasing the cap for tax refunds to spur private investment in rural broadband infrastructure.

The House is also center stage for SB 177, an attempt to reform the construction defects law. The bill was sent to the House State, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee and is expected to be killed despite passing the Senate with strong bipartisan support. The package of workforce development bills passed the Senate Education Committee on Thursday. HB 1274 Creation of Career Pathways for Students and HB 1275 Career and Tech Education in Concurrent Enrollment passed with bipartisan support. HB 1170 Increasing Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness narrowly passed with Senator Hill, one of the bill sponsors, joining Senate Democrats to pass the bill. Legislative Council met on Friday to set aside funding for 2015 interim committees.

The Council, made up of House and Senate members, gave approval to interim committees to: look at tax credits in the state, study school finance, study racial profiling, and study safety in schools among others. These committees must also be authorized by passage of legislation through both Chambers and garner the Governor's signature. Legislative Council also approved the continuation of the Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission as well as the Legislative Oversight of the Colorado's Health Benefit Exchange. Legislative Council rejected a taskforce to study recruitment and retention of minority teachers as well as a bill to include the social cost of carbon in fiscal notes. The week ended on a positive note when governor Hickenlooper signed the budget in to law for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

## Bills of the Week

**TRANS II** This week, the Senate Transportation Committee considered SB 272 by Senator Baumgardner. The bill allows the state to borrow up to \$3.5 billion for specific transportation projects by issuing Transportation Revenue Anticipation Notes (TRANS). If the bill passes, it is referred to voters at the November 3, 2015, election, and would require approval of a majority of voters to become law. SB 272 is modeled after the 1999 TRANS bond program the state passed for highway projects. CDOT and the construction industry have voiced serious concerns with the bill, which would require the state to take on debt and would prioritize new road construction over maintenance. The bill passed the Senate Transportation committee down partisan lines.

**Statewide Initiative Process** Representative Court and Minority Leader DelGrosso are the co-prime sponsors on legislation requiring that Legislative Council prepare a fiscal impact statement for all ballot measures before they are submitted to the title board. The bill squeaked out of the House State Veterans and Military Affairs committee on Monday on a 6-5 vote and was approved by Legislative Council on Friday. Progressive groups such as AFL-CIO and

New Era Colorado are adamantly opposed to the bill, while the business community and the Colorado Children's Campaign support the bill. It heads to the House floor for debate this week.

**Crimes Against Pregnant Women** SB 268 by President Cadman permits an unborn child to be included in the definition of a person for purposes of prosecuting first- and second-degree murder, manslaughter, criminally negligent homicide, vehicular homicide, first-degree assault, second-degree assault, third-degree assault, and vehicular homicide. The bill is a direct response to the incident in Longmont where a woman's unborn child was cut from her abdomen and didn't survive. The bill passed the Senate Judiciary Committee down partisan lines Tuesday evening.

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