



DCBA Bill Tracking:

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Highlights of the Week

The first full week of the 70th General Assembly kicked off with the Governor's inauguration festivities and ended with his State of the State speech. On Tuesday, the inauguration committee, Colorado Up, hosted a morning breakfast before the Governor was sworn in on the West Steps of the Capitol for his second term. New Attorney General Cynthia Coffman, Treasurer Walker Stapleton, and new Secretary of State Wayne Williams were also sworn in. An evening inaugural dinner at the Fillmore with performances by big name bands such as the Lumineers had attendees partying late into the night. On Thursday, the Governor outlined his priorities for his upcoming term in the State of the State. He proudly proclaimed that the "State of the State is Strong" which was met with thunderous applause. He made a commitment to continue economic development and policies to help the rural communities that are still struggling to regain footing after the devastating recession. He promised to focus on high quality, measurable K-12 education; affordability of higher education; and access to Colorado's open spaces and beauty via a statewide trail system. He acknowledged the work of the oil and gas taskforce which was meeting that day in Greeley and expressed his confidence that they would develop workable recommendations. The Governor wrapped up his State of the State by carefully addressing the issue of TABOR refunds and future budget pressures that need to be tackled so the state can continue to thrive.

The General Assembly began initial committee of reference meetings with the JBC to learn about the varying budget priorities of state agencies. They also were provided with updates on key initiatives that pertain to their committee. A few committees in the Senate even began hearing bills in committee. In the first two weeks of legislative session, 217 bills were introduced – 120 in the House and 97 in the Senate. Several familiar bills such as repeal of current gun control statutes, a "make my day" law for business owners, defining life at conception and felony DUI legislation were introduced. There are already many significant proposals related to K-12 education, which is expected to be a topic that dominates this legislative session. Senator Mike Merrifield introduced a bill to remove the 50% student growth requirement from teacher evaluations and also legislation to limit testing in schools to only that which is required by federal minimums. Under the current assessment system, the social studies tests are set to be given annually. Senator Kerr is running legislation to decrease the requirement to a sample every three years. On Thursday, Representative Navarro introduced HB 1104 which creates a state tax deduction for Colorado teachers. The bill would provide a \$250 deduction in fiscal year 2015 that will increase by \$250 in each of the following two years to offset the costs of books, supplies, computer equipment, and other supplementary materials purchased by the teacher and used in his or her

classroom. On Monday, the HB 1202 taskforce finished up their work and agreed on recommendations related to assessments in Colorado. Consensus was found on a handful of items including eliminating tests in the 12th grade and reducing/consolidating assessments in high school. The committee didn't reach consensus on the issue of social studies assessments or elimination of ELA/math tests in the 9th grade. The committee is now working on drafting their report to be presented to the state legislature in two weeks.

The Colorado Commission on Affordable Health Care met and elected Bill Lindsey, president of Lockton Companies' Benefit Group and former chair of Colorado's Blue Ribbon Commission for Health Care Reform, as the chair of the commission; and Cindy Sovine-Miller, president and CEO of Sovine Miller & Company, a political consulting firm, as the vice chair. Additionally, the Commission announced the Colorado Health Institute was awarded the contract to provide research and the Keystone Group, Inc. will provide administrative and support.

This week, the JBC also completed their initial figure setting for common policies and community provider rates. The JBC approved a 1% salary survey and merit pay increase as well as covering 80% of health, life dental benefits. The JBC was not pleased with how the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing has allocated community provider rates in the past. They decided to increase community provider rates in every line item except the medical premiums line item by 2.7% (this would include providers through the Department of Human Services and the Department of Corrections). The medical premiums line including Medicaid providers only received a .5% increase. The JBC will begin hearing supplemental requests for Departments next week. General committee work is also set to pick up, with most committees scheduled to hear a number of bills. We also expect new legislation to continue to come across the desk. The issues we are still waiting to see introduced include: physician assisted suicide, the Homeownership Opportunity Alliance backed legislation to increase condominium home ownership and reform construction defects law, and proposal for free higher education tuition for children aging out of the foster care system.

Bills of the Week

Infrastructure Funding On Thursday, Minority Leader DelGrosso introduced HB 1109 to protect the funding to the Highway Users Tax Fund designated under SB 228. Under current law, when funds begin to flow to the HUTF and capital construction fund as directed by SB 09-228 it does so for five years continuously. However, if TABOR revenue hits a certain point, the transfers are reduced or eliminated. This bill adds a year to the transfers every time a year is removed to ensure a full five years of funding occurs. The bill is assigned to the House Finance Committee.

Reporting Missing Children Representative Nordberg introduced legislation which establishes requirements for state agencies to report missing children in the foster care system. HB 1078 will direct State Child Welfare agencies to immediately report missing foster children to help ensure quick recovery. Proponents argue this legislation is important because foster children are often targeted by human traffickers.

Biosimilar Products For a number of years, the pharmaceutical industry has been in conversations and negotiations to address the issue of biosimilar drug products. SB 071 will allow a pharmacist to

substitute a biological product if the FDA takes action to determine biological products are interchangeable with prescribed biological products if the practitioner has not indicated that the prescription must be dispensed as written. A majority of pharmaceutical companies are supporting the measure, though there is opposition to the bill from some industry players and pharmacies.

Workforce Development The first of what is expected to be many workforce development bills was introduced this week, SB 082. The bipartisan legislation authorizes a county to establish a workforce development program to provide financial assistance to high school graduates in the county who pursue post-secondary education or training from an accredited institution of higher education or certified program. The bill is sponsored by the bipartisan team of Senators Hodge and Marble, and Representatives Moreno and Lawrence, and is assigned to the Local Government Committee.

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