

Take A Look At What Is Happening In Colorado State Policy News

Axiom Newsletter



March 6, 2017

"I have come to the conclusion that politics are too serious a matter to be left to the politicians."

-Charles De Gaulle

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Report Lists Colorado No. 1 In U.S. For Economy

CBS Denver

The economic future is looking good for Colorado. U.S. News and World Report listed Colorado No. 1 for the economy ahead of New Hampshire and Minnesota. Colorado is in the Top 10, No. 9 actually, when it comes to the best state in the nation. Massachusetts ranked first.

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Crowder, Thurlow team up to fix TABOR 'constraint on overdrive'

Colorado Statesman

Two Colorado Republican lawmakers are delivering on their promise from earlier this year to fine-tune TABOR, a 25-year-old constitutional restriction on how much the state can receive - and spend - without triggering tax refunds.

Rep. Dan Thurlow and Sen. Larry Crowder have introduced House Bill 17-1187 that seeks to change the way annual revenue limits set by the 1992 Taxpayer's Bill of Rights are calculated.

It's a first step that could allow the state to keep millions of dollars for roads, education and other priorities, starting with an extra \$175 million in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, according to legislative analysts.

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Bill Would Alter Way TABOR Revenue Limit Is Calculated

Associated Press

A proposal by two Republican lawmakers to potentially increase how much revenue the state can keep without issuing tax refunds has passed a Colorado House committee.

The Democrat-led House Finance Committee voted 10-3 Monday to refer the bill by Republican Rep. Dan Thurlow and GOP Sen. Larry Crowder to the House Appropriations Committee.

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Amid effort to modernize public records laws, Colorado attorney general pushes for more privacy protections

Denver Post

In behind-the-scenes negotiations on a bill designed to make government more transparent in the digital age, Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman's office offered a series of amendments that could dramatically expand the types of records that can be hidden from public view.

The draft proposal, obtained by The Denver Post, would add a new exemption to Colorado's Open Records Act to allow the government to withhold "any personal identifying information" for people who are not public employees - including something as simple as a name, phone number or address.

Open-records advocates and some state officials say that could allow the government to withhold or redact countless records currently considered public, including property or business records, or the names of people who communicate or do business with public officials. Even something as simple as a publicly available building permit often includes the name and phone number of a private citizen.

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Drama-laden open records bill survives another hearing Colorado Statesman

A bill aimed at modernizing Colorado's Open Records Act has survived its first Senate hearing - but with an amendment that could mean trouble down the road. The GOP-led Senate State, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee voted 4-1 Wednesday to send Senate Bill 40 by Democratic Sen. John Kefalas to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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Bill to unplug subsidies for electric vehicles clears Senate Complete Colorado

Colorado voters may get the chance to tell lawmakers what to do with some of their money if a bill that would end alternative vehicle tax credits continues to make its way through the legislature.

SB17-188, also known as the "Repeal and Repair" bill, cleared its first hurdle in the Senate Finance Committee on a 3-2 party line vote after hearing competing testimony on who the tax credit helps the most and what is clean energy.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Vicki Marble, who represents Larimer, Weld and Broomfield counties, and supported by the Independence Institute*, would end the credits earlier than originally planned.

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Colorado Students Continue To Flock To Online Charters, Despite Controversies KUNC

Colorado parents are leaving traditional school districts at a higher rate in the last five years. Their destination? Virtual schools. According to a report by the non-profit think tank A+ Colorado, charter schools -- both online and brick-and-mortar -- saw booms in enrollment that far outpaced growth at traditional districts between 2011 and 2015. Online charters alone grew at more than 500 percent in the last five years.

The Byers 32J school district serves 3,019 students -- just a small share of whom report to a classroom every day. While the tiny district comprises a mere two brick-and-mortar schools, it authorizes four online charter schools. And those charters are responsible for the bulk of a whopping 514.4 percent enrollment spike in the last five years, according to the report. Most of that growth has occurred in the four online charters the district authorizes.

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READ Act reform bill advances with full support from Colorado House Chalkbeat Colorado

The Colorado House of Representatives on Friday unanimously approved a bill that would

end a requirement that some of the state's youngest students be tested for reading in a language they are still learning.

House Bill 1160, sponsored by state Reps. Millie Hamner, a Frisco Democrat, and Rep. Jim Wilson, a Salida Republican, now heads to the Senate. The bill has bipartisan support in that chamber as well.

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Rally Held To Support Affordable Care Act In Denver

CBS Denver

Hundreds rallied at Civic Center Park on Saturday in support of the Affordable Care Act. Demonstrators say the program has helped millions of Americans get access to health care.

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Telehealth bill on way to governor

Pueblo Chieftain

A bill cosponsored by two Southern Colorado legislators that clarifies rules for telehealth services to patients passed the Senate 35-0 on Thursday and heads to the governor's desk for signing.

State Sen. Larry Crowder, R-Alamosa, and state Rep. Donald Valdez, D-La Jara, joined Rep. Perry Buck, R-Weld County, and Sen. Kerry Donovan, D-Delta, in sponsoring the bill. The legislation, House Bill 1094, clarifies the services rendered under health benefits plans to assure that a health plan cannot restrict or deny coverage of telehealth services based on the communication technology or application used to deliver the telehealth services; the availability of telehealth services does not change a carrier's obligation to contract with providers available in the community to provide in-person services; a carrier is to apply the applicable copayment, coinsurance or deductible amount to health care services a covered person receives through telehealth, which amount cannot exceed the amount applicable to those health care services when delivered through in-person care; and telehealth includes health care services provided through Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act-compliant audio-visual communication or the use of a HIPAA-compliant application via a cellular telephone but does not include voice-only telephone communication or text messaging.

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High country ailment: Nederland's only doctor loses Medicaid validation

Boulder Daily Camera

The only doctor serving Nederland and a surrounding mountain area of about 500 square miles between Evergreen and Estes Park has been ordered to stop treating Medicaid patients, leaving more than a thousand clients with few easy options. Dr. Michael Camarata, who runs Nederland's Columbine Family Care, received notice Feb. 13 from the state Department of Health Care Policy and Financing alerting him to the

prohibition that took effect the first of this month. That department administers Health First Colorado, the new name for Colorado's Medicaid program.

As a result of that notice, Camarata's loyal clientele is being sent scrambling for health care, and he is faced with possibly having to close down his office.

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Colorado considers felony for tampering with oil, gas drills

Greeley Tribune

A Republican proposal to increase penalties for tampering with oil and gas equipment has cleared an important hurdle.

But Democrats are likely to block the attempt to make it a felony, not a misdemeanor, to tamper with or vandalize drilling equipment.

Sponsoring Republicans say extremists are breaking locks and otherwise damaging drilling equipment.

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Colorado Business Group: Repealing Obama's Methane Rule 'Is The Right Thing To Do' For Western Communities

Western Wire

One of Colorado's top business leaders is calling on the U.S. Senate to swiftly repeal a last-minute regulation from the Obama administration targeting oil and natural gas development on federal lands.

Using the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to overturn the so-called "venting and flaring" rule is a pro-growth move that will help the economy, encourage energy development, create jobs and boost tax revenues in the West, Jeff Wasden, president of the Colorado Business Roundtable, told Western Wire. The rule, imposed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the final months of the Obama administration, restricts methane emissions from oil and gas development on tribal and federal lands.

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Corporate groups squeal about ending corporate welfare

Independence Institute

Rumors are swirling around the Capitol that corporate lobbyists are lining up in opposition to SB17-188, the repeal of the state income tax credit for "innovative vehicles." It isn't surprising.

Whenever their place at the taxpayer trough is threatened, they squeal like a ____ (fill in the blank).

We call SB17-188 "repeal and repair" because instead of giving millions of dollars annually to rich guys in the Denver metro area and corporations, the money will go the Highway Users Trust Fund (HUTF) to be used for roads and bridges.

What are "innovative vehicles"? They include electric cars and trucks as well as some natural gas vehicles, which can net individual buyers and corporations a taxpayer-funded tax credit

anywhere from \$5,000 to \$20,000 per vehicle depending on the vehicle.

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Apartments v. Condos: Colorado's construction defect debate, explained

9 News

Once again, state lawmakers are arguing about changing construction defect laws. At the heart of this issue is condo buildings-- specifically, the lack of them. Those who want to change the law argue it's too easy to sue the builder of a condo and get a big jury award. Those who want to keep the law how it is argue the homeowners need to be able to get their day in court if the builder messed up.

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Right to repair bill collapses

ColoradoPolitics.com

A bill to keep developers, builders and contractors out of court over construction defects died in a state House committee Wednesday. House Bill 1169 would have allowed builders to fix or settle the issues before the homeowner or homeowners association could sue. Most supporters refer to such a proposal, adopted by several states, as "right to repair," but opponents call it "caulk and walk." The bill is one of four introduced this session to chip away at lawsuits over construction defects. Supporters of limits on lawsuits say litigation drives up the cost of insurance for builders.

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Supermarket booze talks in legislature opens big-box stores to attack

ColoradoPolitics.com

A debate over a measure framed as a "cleanup" of full-strength alcohol sales in supermarkets devolved Monday into a referendum on big-box versus small retailers. Democrats were at odds with each other over whether the measure from Sen. Angela Williams, D-Denver, would result in "wiping out" small liquor stores. "What are we doing to our small businesses?" Sen. Rhonda Fields, D-Aurora, asked Williams and supporters of the bill. Senate Bill 143 would extend liquor licenses to stores with a pharmacy on premise regardless of the ownership of the pharmacy license. The measure addresses a problem some stores have experienced: selling off a pharmacy facility but continuing to run a pharmacy on premises.

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Permanent tax break for tobacco retailers advances with help from cigar-loving lawmakers

The Denver Post

An effort to extend a tax break for Colorado cigar retailers advanced Tuesday with the help from a couple powerful aficionados.

Senate Bill 139 would allow companies that sell cigars and some tobacco products to claim a refund of the state's 40 percent excise tax when making out-of-state sales. The measure does not apply to cigarette sales.

The legislation's supporters argue the tax credit is necessary to prevent double taxation because the retailers pay taxes in states where the products are sold.

The bill won overwhelming approval Tuesday in the state Senate with support from the chamber's leader and the bill's sponsor, who are both well-known cigar fans.

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Study finds patients choosing cannabis over opioids

UPI

Researchers from the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria have found patients prefer cannabis over opioid medication to treat chronic pain and mental health issues.

"This study is one of the first to track medical cannabis use under the new system of licensed producers, meaning that all participants had physician authorization to access cannabis in addition to their prescription medicines," Associate Professor Zach Walsh of UBC and co-author of the study, said in a press release.

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Home pot delivery? Colorado lawmakers to discuss bill this week

9 News Denver

On Wednesday, Colorado lawmakers will hear a senate bill aimed at allowing both medical marijuana facilities and retail dispensaries to deliver to your home.

Currently sales have to be made in person at a physical retail store.

Under the proposal, retail shops could apply for a permit and then have an employee or approved contractor drive the product from their shop to your door.

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Colorado lawmakers inch towards allowing marijuana consumption clubs

ColoradoPolitics.com

State lawmakers on Wednesday began slowly moving towards allowing marijuana consumption clubs, even as the White House has signaled a possible crackdown.

One of two bills passed the Republican-controlled Senate Business, Labor and Technology Committee with bipartisan support.

Another bill, Senate Bill 192, which would allow for marijuana deliveries, was also heard on Wednesday, though lawmakers delayed a vote on the measure.

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Trump won't "turn his back" on Colorado when it comes to legal marijuana, GOP lawmaker says

Denver Post

A top Republican lawmaker in Colorado is casting doubt on whether Donald Trump's administration will crack down on the legalization of marijuana, saying the new president wouldn't "turn his back" on states' rights.

Colorado Senate President Pro Tem Jerry Sonnenberg, the chamber's No. 2 Republican and a Trump supporter, reacted after the statement from White House spokesman Sean Spicer that recreational pot will face "greater enforcement."

"I'm not sure I'd put too much thought or too much credit into what he was saying,"

Sonnenberg told reporters Monday morning. "This president has been all about federalism and giving the states more authority, this just flies in the face of that. So I would anticipate not much coming from that."

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Colorado AG wants Sessions to look at state's marijuana industry before imposing crackdown

7 News Denver Channel

Attorney General Jeff Sessions painted a grim vision of violence in America on Tuesday, telling state law enforcement officials that a recent uptick in killings threatens to undo decades of progress and suggesting police would be more effective if they were subjected to less federal scrutiny.

In his first major policy speech as attorney general, Sessions said his Justice Department would continue to prosecute officers for wrongdoing, but suggested federal civil rights investigations could hinder their effectiveness.

"We need to help police departments get better, not diminish their effectiveness, and I'm afraid we've done some of that," Sessions told the gathering. "So we're going to try to pull back on this. I don't think it's wrong or mean or insensitive to civil rights or human rights. It's out of a concern to make the lives of people, particularly in poor communities, minority communities, live a safer, happier life."

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Gov. Hickenlooper, Sen. Bennet & Sen. Gardner invite one of the country's most iconic conventions to Colorado

Office of the Governor

Governor John Hickenlooper, Senator Michael Bennet and Senator Cory Gardner today sent

a joint letter to the Outdoor Retailer Show to encourage its consideration of Colorado as its new home for the popular recreation convention.

In the letter, Colorado's senior leadership states that the state is the perfect new location for the Outdoor Retailer show given Colorado's bipartisan commitment to maintaining and protecting public lands.

"Colorado is unmatched in the opportunities to connect with outdoor enthusiasts," said Gov. Hickenlooper. "We truly believe the show will not only find a new awesome home here but will also land new audiences."

Senator Bennet added that the outdoor industry's values are aligned with those of Colorado. "As Coloradans, we value and protect our public lands because we recognize the enormous influence they have on our quality of life and our outdoor economy," said Bennet. "The abundance, accessibility, and beauty of public lands in our state makes Colorado a perfect destination for the Outdoor Retailer show."

Senator Gardner echoed that Colorado's outdoor recreation industry makes this opportunity a win-win for both the state and the show.

"Colorado's commitment to public lands coupled with its booming outdoor recreation industry makes it the premiere location for the Outdoor Retailer show," said Gardner. "I'm thrilled to support Colorado's bid to host this event and showcase our state's natural beauty."

The Outdoor Retailer Show announced earlier this month that it is looking for a new host state. Colorado today submitted the letter to the show's organizer, Emerald Expositions, indicating that the State plans to respond to the company's request for proposal (RFP).

Gov. Hickenlooper announces Executive Director for Broadband Office

Office of the Governor

Governor Hickenlooper announced Anthony (Tony) Neal-Graves as the executive director to lead Colorado's Broadband Office.

Neal-Graves will be responsible for driving the state's broadband strategy, utilizing strong public and private sector relationships in communities across the state to support broadband expansion throughout Colorado.

In Colorado's rural areas, only 7 in 10 people have access to broadband. The state wants to raise rural broadband availability from 70 percent to 85 percent by the end of 2018, and pave the path to achieve 100 percent access for all of Colorado by 2020.

"We are working tirelessly to make sure every county throughout the state has the tools needed for economic development--especially in rural areas," said Governor Hickenlooper. "Tony's leadership will help move the needle so that all Coloradans have improved access to broadband services sooner rather than later."

Neal-Graves said, "I'm honored to be joining Colorado in this effort. There is a great broadband team in place, strong public-private partnerships, and tremendous will to get the job done. I'm excited for this challenge".

Neal-Graves comes to Colorado from Intel Corporation where he was the vice president in the Internet of Things Group. He worked at Intel for more than 15 years on numerous domestic and international businesses requiring strategic vision, aggressive timelines, and creative technology solutions. Prior to Intel, Neal-Graves spent more than 20 years in the

communications industry working for AT&T Bell Laboratories and Lucent Technologies.

The Broadband Office will be housed in the Governor's Office of Information Technology and will collaborate closely with the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade and the Department of Local Affairs, among others. Neal-Graves' first day will be March 15.

Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments

Office of the Governor

Gov. John Hickenlooper today announced Boards and Commissions appointments to the Council of Advisors on Consumer Credit and the Advisory Board.

The Council of Advisors on Consumer Credit advises and consults with the Assistant Attorney General concerning the Attorney General's powers under the consumer credit code.

For a term expiring September 30, 2019:

- Richard Robert Jones of Centennial, to serve as a member of the public, appointed.

The Stroke Advisory Board evaluates potential strategies for stroke prevention and treatment, and develops statewide needs assessments identifying relevant resources to improve quality of care for stroke patients. Each January 1, the Board submits a report specifying its findings and recommendations to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the corresponding committees in the State House and State Senate.

For a term expiring August 1, 2018:

- Dongwoo John Chang, MD, FRCS (C) of Denver, to serve as a physician who is actively involved in stroke care and who is a board-certified in neurosurgery, and occasioned by the resignation of John Lawrence Hudson of Lakewood, appointed.

Calculator

Days Left to Sine Die: 65
House Bills Introduced: 224
Senate Bills Introduced: 211
Dead Bills: 83
Governor Signed: 27

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