

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

Axiom Newsletter



January 16, 2017

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

"

-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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BREAKING NEWS

Democrat Mike Johnston to Announce run for Colorado governor in 2018

[Denver Post](#)

State Sen. Mike Johnston will kick off the 2018 Democratic primary on Tuesday by announcing that he's running for governor.

The early move by Johnston, a former teacher, high school principal and Obama education

adviser who's been active in Colorado school issues for several years, is a sign of the contentious gubernatorial campaign ahead. Incumbent governor John Hickenlooper, a Democrat, is terming out in 2018, and the contest to replace him will likely feature an all-star list of politicians from both sides of the aisle competing to win their party's nominations.

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Duran and Grantham Lay Out Session Priorities

Colorado Public Radio

As Colorado lawmakers head back to the Capitol for the new legislative session that opens Wednesday, House Speaker Crisanta Duran, a Democrat, and Senate President Kevin Grantham, a Republican, tell us about the issues and challenges ahead.

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President Grantham Announces Senate Republicans Agenda

Senate Republicans

Senate Bill 01 creates a grace period for small business owners to cure minor operational or administrative oversights before incurring a fine.

"Colorado's small businesses are the engine of our economy, and while they are still trying to regain their footing, burdensome regulations and redundancies only serve to hamper growth," said Neville. "We must help our job creators by getting the heavy hand of government out of the way to allow our small businesses to continue to improve Colorado's economy."

Senate Bill 02 repeals the Department of Regulatory Agencies scheduling ability and creates a standardized time table for rules review every three years, simplifying the review process and creating easier access for Coloradans.

"Colorado taxpayers demand accountability and transparency with every one of their dollars, and they expect government to work to streamline waste and inefficiency whenever possible," said Martinez Humenik. "My bill will standardize the process for DORA to ensure efficiency in rule review and eliminate burdensome regulation in a timely manner."

Senate Bill 03 will repeal Connect for Health Colorado, the state-sponsored health exchange which was implemented as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

"With any taxpayer funded organization there is an expectation of efficiency, accountability and successes. The failures of Connect for Health Colorado are obvious as premiums are skyrocketing while consumer choices continue to dramatically decline" said Smallwood. "It is time to repeal the broken Exchange and build plans for more robust, accessible, and affordable health care for Coloradans."

Senate Bill 04 allows medicaid recipients to receive treatment from health care providers that are not covered within the medicaid network.

"This bill is about access for Coloradans and giving them real health care choices," said Tate.

"My bill increases access for Medicaid recipients to a wider array of health care providers to ensure no Coloradan with the means will be turned away from quality specialized health care."

Currently state law allows post certified law enforcement and private security under contract with district or charter school to be armed on school campus. Senate Bill 05 empowers schools to develop a program that educates school employees on responsible use of a concealed carry permit to promote school safety.

"Colorado kids are our state's most precious assets, and their schools should be a bastion of

safety and education even in times of unrest," said Holbert. "My bill empowers county sheriffs to work with school districts to develop programs training school employees on emergency response and safety, with this we seek to discover how much training and certification is enough to protect our kids."

Senate Bill 06 creates concealed carry permits for active duty service members under the age of 21.

"Our brave men and women in uniform lay their lives on the line to guarantee our freedom here at home, it is time we return the favor and show trust in those with who make such great sacrifices for Colorado," said Cooke. "This legislation will create parity for active duty service men and women under the age of 21 and allow them to continue to protect us at home and abroad."

Text: Opening day speech by Colorado House Speaker Crisanta Duran

[Denver Business Journal](#)

Thank you all for joining us today as we begin the 71st General Assembly.

I'd like start off by recognizing some of the former elected officials who are here with us, including

The Honorable Wellington and Wilma Webb.

Former lieutenant governor Gail Schoettler.

Former speakers Mark Ferrandino, Frank McNulty and Doug Dean.

I would especially like to recognize the first Latino speaker of the House.

Speaker Ruben Valdez, I am honored to follow in your footsteps.

My immediate predecessor, whose record of service to this state over many years is tremendous. Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, thank you for your hard work, your leadership, and your mentorship.

I also want to thank the employees who have put in the long hours to make today possible.

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Text: Opening day speech by Colorado Senate Minority Leader Lucia Guzman

[Denver Business Journal](#)

Good morning, everyone! It is truly an honor to be here, at this Well, where so many have stood and delivered important messages. I want to echo President Cadman in welcoming you all to Opening Day of the 2016 Legislative Session in the Colorado General Assembly. Thank you friends, family, honored guests, for joining us for the first of what I anticipate will be a very interesting and productive 120 days.

I want to begin by paying tribute to those Senators who are fulfilling the final legislative sessions of their terms. Let us not see them as lame ducks, but rather, as Senators of great wisdom and experience who will join with the rest of us to work hard for the People of Colorado. Their knowledge, passion, and experience is that which we should seek out during these forthcoming months. I would like to recognize them each by name: Senate President Bill Cadman, Senate Majority Leader Mark Scheffel, Assistant Senate Minority Leader Rollie Heath, Senator Mary Hodge, Senator Michael Johnston, Senator Pat Steadman, Senator Linda Newell, Senator Morgan Carroll

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Text: Opening day speech by Colorado House Minority Leader Patrick Neville

[Denver Business Journal](#)

Madam Speaker, Madam Majority Leader, esteemed colleagues and honored guests, welcome to the First Regular Session of the 71st General Assembly.

I would like to congratulate our returning members and all of the newest members for winning the support of their district. Representatives Beckman, Benavidez, Bridges, Catlin, Coleman, Covarrubias, Exum, Gray, Hansen, Herod, Hooton, Jackson, Kennedy, Lewis, Liston, Mckean, McLachlan, Michaelson Jenet, Valdez, Weissman, and Williams. I remember my first day, and it will go fast, make sure you take a moment to look around and let this amazing experience sink in. Serving in the state Legislature is a distinct honor, and I look forward to working with all of you.

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Media roundup: Researcher says CO's legislature is the most polarized in the nation

[Colorado Independent](#)

So this seems worth noting going into a new legislative session today:

"Colorado's lawmakers are the most polarized they've ever been, and are also the most polarized in the country, according to Boris Shor of the University of Houston and Nolan McCarty at Princeton University," reports Colorado Public Radio. CPR's Nathan Heffel spoke with Shor for a must-listen interview. The researcher doesn't think Colorado's new voter-initiated laws that should open party primaries to unaffiliated voters will help much, either. Ouch.

I particularly liked when Heffel noted how local reporters in Colorado had, in their own interviews for CPR, been pointing out ways in which they have noticed this shift on the ground.

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In State of the State, Hickenlooper digs back into fiscal thicket

[Colorado Satesman](#)

Gov. John Hickenlooper likely had to rewrite the State of the State speech he delivered Thursday, or at least rethink it. He surely thought he would be addressing a Legislature controlled by Democrats working in concert with a Clinton administration in Washington. Things didn't turn out that way.

Instead, the governor as speaking to the same kind of Legislature he spoke to last year - a divided Legislature where Democrats control the House and Republicans control the Senate. So he delivered a speech similar to the one he delivered last year. At nearly every turn, he lamented the lack of money lawmakers have to spend on "core services" in the state,

including education and health care, and on long-overdue updates to the state's transportation and communication infrastructures.

It was a speech designed to sell members of the public and special interests lever-pullers, hoping they might apply just the right amount of pressure on Senate Republican leaders to bring change. It included a steady mix of familiar Hickenlooper persuasion techniques. There were folksy laugh lines and Quaker-inflected requests for relatively modest investments aimed at making great improvements for those most in need.

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Governor to create a broadband office

Grand Junction Sentinel

Katelin Cook is a solid Republican.

As such, the economic development coordinator for Rio Blanco County had no problems with being one of several invited guests of Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper when he delivered his sixth State of the State address to a joint session of the Colorado Legislature on Thursday.

That's because the governor announced plans to create a dedicated state office to focus solely on the deployment of broadband throughout the state, a topic that Cook's county has excelled in advancing over the past two years.

Why?

Because the county's commissioners decided that instead of looking at internet connectivity as something only private industry should be involved with, they should see it as an infrastructure problem, no different than roads, sewers or water lines, Cook said.

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Grantham on health exchange: time to 'shed...dead weight of failed government policy

Colorado Politics

Colorado Senate Republicans hope to eliminate the state's health insurance exchange as part of a priority agenda this year.

Senate President Kevin Grantham, R-Canon City, dropped the proposal during his opening day remarks Wednesday as the legislature began its four-month session.

The news came as a surprise to Democrats, who quickly expressed skepticism, suggesting that it would be premature and risky to eliminate the online marketplace.

"We can't take 140,000 or 150,000 people and just chuck them down the drain because somebody wants to dismantle something like that," Senate Democratic Leader Lucia Guzman of Denver said shortly after Grantham's remarks.

Connect for Health Colorado was established in 2011 with legislation that passed with bipartisan support. Former House Republican Leader Amy Stephens of Monument sponsored the legislation at the time, arguing that the insurance exchange was necessary so that Colorado could chart its own course in the face of the Affordable Care Act.

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Grantham calls for health exchange repeal

Pueblo Chieftain

Colorado Senate President Kevin Grantham, a Republican, wasted little time in pushing his party's agenda Wednesday by calling for the repeal of the state's health exchange. Giving his opening speech as president on the first day of the 2017 session, Grantham pointed to the recent audit of the exchange that showed the state improperly documented or misspent \$9.7 million in federal grants.

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New Issues Brought Up On First Day Of Colorado's 2017 Legislative Session **Denver CBS 4 News**

It was a historic opening day of the 2017 legislative session as Rep. Crisanta Duran, D-Denver became the first Latina speaker of the House in Colorado. There is new leadership in both chambers this year. Sen. Kevin Grantham, R-Canon City, took over as president of the Senate. Lawmakers will take up lots of new issues, including several dealing with schools. There's a bill to outlaw spanking in schools, and another to allow guns in schools. Rep. KC Becker, D-Boulder, has a bill to examine school pipes for lead. "Lead has been outlawed since about 1978 for water pipes, but a lot schools in Colorado, of course, were built before then," Becker said.

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Five big issues that got lawmakers talking at Chalkbeat's annual legislative preview **Chalkbeat Colorado**

Two days before the dawn of another legislative session, Chalkbeat Colorado convened a bipartisan panel of five lawmakers Monday to handicap what to expect on the education front, from school finance to preschool discipline.

About 175 people bought tickets to our second annual legislative preview featuring:

- Sen. Tim Neville, R-Littleton, member of the Senate Education Committee
- Rep. Brittany Pettersen, D-Lakewood, chair of the House Education Committee
- Rep. Bob Rankin, R-Carbondale, member of the Joint Budget Committee
- Sen. Nancy Todd, D-Aurora, member of the Senate Education Committee
- Rep. Jim Wilson, R-Salida, member of the House Education Committee

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Democrats take control of Colorado Board of Education; Schroeder appointed chair **Denver Post**

Angelika Schroeder was selected with unanimous support Wednesday to serve as chair of the State Board of Education, the first action taken by a newly constituted board under Democratic control for the first time in nearly 50 years.

Joyce Rankin, a Republican, was unanimously chosen to be the board's vice chair.

The shift in partisan control comes after a November election that saw Rebecca McClellan narrowly beat Republican incumbent Debora Scheffel. McClellan, a former Centennial City council member, ran on a promise of respecting local control of school boards and listening to classroom teachers and principals.

McClellan raised thousands of dollars more than Scheffel and was backed by both the state's teachers union and Democrats for Education Reform, two significant players in education politics that usually don't see eye to eye.

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Education funding debate a top priority for Colorado lawmakers, but bipartisan solutions elusive as session starts **Chalkbeat Colorado**

Colorado legislative leaders didn't mince words on the 2017 session's opening day: Improving Colorado's congested and crumbling roads is their top priority.

But funding the state's schools isn't far behind.

Colorado's first Latina Speaker of the House, Rep. Crisanta Duran, spoke at length about finding a way to send more money to the state's schools - and the consequences if lawmakers fail.

"The state simply doesn't have the money right now to make sure every boy and girl in Colorado has the tools to succeed and reach their full potential," the Denver Democrat said, according to prepared remarks. "Some students are being left behind. We're missing an opportunity to teach thousands of young Coloradans who need vital 21st-century skills in computer science and digital literacy."

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A conflict of visions on transportation funding **Complete Colorado**

Governor John Hickenlooper unsurprisingly said transportation projects need money in his keynote address at the recent 8th Legislative breakfast, at the Omni Interlocken Hotel in Broomfield (hosted by 36 Commuting Solutions and the Northwest Chamber Alliance).

The Governor illustrated the transportation situation by reminding everyone that highway utilization has increased 50% in the last 20 years while capacity has increased only 2%. While not offering leadership or ideas for addressing the situation, he described himself as 'agnostic' and open to any compromise.

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Highways top Colorado legislative talk, but deal is elusive **Coloradoan**

There's no debate - Colorado needs a big plan to pay for billions in needed highway upgrades.

But that's where agreement ended Wednesday as the state's divided Legislature began work for the year.

Republicans in the House and Senate gave differing takes on whether Colorado should ask voters to pass a new tax to pay for more than \$8 billion in transportation projects.

And Democrats are talking up different ways to pay for roads.

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Colorado governor calls for tax ballot measure to address transportation

Denver Post

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper on Thursday called for lawmakers to put a measure on the November ballot that asks voters for a tax hike to improve roads and expand transit, setting the bar for one of the top debates this session.

"We've had this debate for too long," the Democrat said in his annual State of State address.

"If talk could fill potholes, we'd have the best roads in the country."

The governor's 38-minute address also featured a forceful rebuttal to Republican efforts in the nation's capital and Colorado to dismantle the federal health-care law and Medicaid expansion, pledging he would "fight for a replacement plan that protects the people who are covered now and doesn't take us backward."

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Duran Brings Bipartisan Construction Defects Deal

Colorado House Democrats

The new speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives, Crisanta Duran, began the 2017 legislative session this morning by announcing a bipartisan compromise on construction defects reform, a perennial sticking point in the legislature.

In her opening day speech after being formally elected by the 65-member House, Speaker Duran said that she and the new Senate president, Kevin Grantham, R-Cañon City, had agreed to be prime sponsors of a bill intended to tackle the sticky issue of insurance, one of the issues identified by stakeholders as impacting new home starts.

The bill, with the co-prime sponsorship of Assistant Minority Leader Cole Wist, R-Centennial, and Sen. Angela Williams, D-Denver, is scheduled to be formally introduced this afternoon.

"By targeting insurance rates we're addressing the problem without reducing consumers' right to protect the property that they spent their life's savings to buy," said Speaker Duran, D-Denver.

The bill will allow insurers to go to court to apportion defense costs equitably among liability insurers who are required to defend a defect claim through an expedited process. The legislation seeks to address one of the root causes making it harder to build more condos,

without compromising consumer rights.

In other highlights of her opening day speech, Speaker Duran said she was involved in "promising discussions" with members of both parties in both chambers to devise a comprehensive statewide plan to upgrade Colorado's crumbling, overburdened transportation system.

"Anyone who's been on I-25 at rush hour, anywhere from Fort Collins to Pueblo, knows the need is real," she said, adding that the emerging plan "will provide new resources and will benefit our entire state."

Speaker Duran also noted discussions about education funding and a long-term solution to the state's chronic budget problems.

She closed with an appeal for "an inclusive Colorado" where bullying of people because of their gender, race, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation is off-limits.

Speaker Duran is the first Latina speaker in Colorado history. She presides over a House where Democrats expanded their majority to 37-28, a six-seat swing, in the November 2016 elections.

A text of Speaker Duran's speech is available [here](#).

Builder liability bill 1st on list for Colorado Legislature

[Associated Press](#)

The Colorado General Assembly opened its session Wednesday. Here's the latest from the first day:

11:20 am.

Affordable housing is the first order of business for the new Colorado Legislature.

Colorado's new Democratic House speaker says she and the Senate's Republican president are introducing a bill to reduce developer liability and promote affordable housing.

Democratic Rep. Crisanta Duran of Denver says the bill addresses liability insurance rates that make it harder to build condominiums. She did not elaborate.

Homeowners groups have said they fear a bill to change builder liability could give developers too much power.

Duran says she and Senate President Kevin Grantham of Canon City worked late Tuesday on the bill, which addresses insurance rates that make it harder to build condominiums.

The bill is being introduced Wednesday, the first day of the 2017 legislative session.

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Consensus on building-defects law, but no road map

[Grand Junction Sentinel](#)

Republicans and Democrats in the Colorado House and Senate said Wednesday they've come to an agreement on long-sought construction defect legislation, but are at odds over

what to do about paying for needed transportation infrastructure.

In the midst of opening day ceremonies for the 2017 session of the Colorado Legislature, newly minted House Speaker Crisanta Duran, D-Denver, and Senate President Kevin Grantham, R-Canon City, said the two sides have come together on dealing with construction defect lawsuits and how they impact affordable housing projects.

"President Grantham and I, with Assistant Minority Leader (Cole) Wist and Sen. (Angela) Williams are introducing a bill that will address high insurance rates, one of the root causes making it harder to build more new condos," Duran said.

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Touted bipartisan construction defects bill draws tentative response

Colorado Statesman

This year's heavily anticipated construction defects reform bill dropped on Wednesday, opening day of this year's legislation session, and it has so far garnered a general wait and see reaction that mostly comes off as an anti-climactic: "Is this it?"

For years lawmakers and special interest groups have been wrestling over the state's construction defects law, which made it easier for homeowners to sue builders for shoddy work. The result is that lawsuits have multiplied, litigation costs have piled up, builder insurance rates have climbed and condo construction in particular has dropped.

Parties have struggled to strike the right balance between protecting builders and protecting consumers.

Gov. John Hickenlooper listed the issue among his top priorities in his State of the State address Thursday.

"We have a housing crisis, plain and simple," he said.

"Too many people and not enough units adds up to unaffordable rents and skyrocketing home prices. I've said it before: we need more affordable housing.

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Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments

Office of the Governor

The Conservation Easement Oversight Commission meets at least once each quarter to review applications for conservation easement holder certification and to review any other issues referred to the commission by any state entity. The Division of Real Estate convenes the meetings of the commission and provides staff support as requested by the commission. A majority of commission members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and actions of the commission require a vote of a majority of such members present in favor of the action taken.

For a term expiring July 1, 2017:

- Sarah Elizabeth Parmar of Lakewood, to serve a representative from a local land trust, and occasioned by the resignation of Andrea Farnsworth Johnson of Crested

Butte, appointed;

for a term expiring July 1, 2020:

- Sarah Elizabeth Parmar of Lakewood, to serve a representative from a local land trust, reappointed.

The Urban Drainage and Flood Control District Board of Directors assists local governments in the planning, design, construction and maintenance of multi-jurisdictional drainage and flood control projects.

Four members of the 23-member board are mayors from Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder and Jefferson counties.

For a term expiring January 31, 2018:

- Honorable Bruce Owen Beckman of Littleton, reappointed;

for a term expiring January 31, 2019:

- Honorable Joyce Jay of Wheat Ridge, reappointed.

The Water Quality Control Commission develops and maintains a comprehensive and effective program for prevention, control and abatement of water pollution of the waters throughout the entire state.

For terms expiring February 15, 2020:

- David Baumgarten of Gunnison, to serve as a representative who lives west of the continental divide, reappointed;
- Jane Kees Clary of Centennial, appointed;

Calculator

House Bills Introduced: 68

Senate Bills Introduced: 82

Dead Bills: 0

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