

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

Axiom Newsletter



March 27, 2017

"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand."

-Vince Lombardi, executive, head coach, player NFL

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With Ken Salazar out, Ed Perlmutter and Cary Kennedy rev up for Colorado governor's race

Denver Post

Buckle up, Democrats. With Ken Salazar no longer running for governor, the primary to replace Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper in 2018 is about to go into hyperdrive.

The simple reason is power - as in now there's a power vacuum.

Among Colorado Democrats, Salazar boasts an unrivaled resume as a former U.S. senator

and Interior Secretary; not to mention his close ties to Hillary Clinton. All of those tools would have made him a formidable opponent, in spite of their potential to hurt him among his party's anti-establishment wing.

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Ken Salazar: Why I'm not running for Colorado governor in 2018

Denver Post

The 2018 election for governor of Colorado is a keystone to the future greatness of Colorado. Several individuals, both Democratic and Republican, have expressed an interest in serving as governor. I will not be among them.

This has been a difficult decision, because I love Colorado. I believe I would have won an election for governor, and that I would have been a successful governor for all the people of Colorado. However, my family's well-being must come first.

Colorado is the greatest state in the nation. Our people embody the great spirit of Western independence and common sense. The grandeur of our mountains, rivers, ranch and farmlands make us the most beautiful state in the nation and provide us our enviable quality of life. And our economy is the best in the nation thanks to the leadership of many over the years.

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Lundberg: 'Absolutely' it would be 'messier' to do away with Joint Budget Committee

Colorado Statesman

State Sen. Kevin Lundberg doesn't sound very enchanted with plans House Republicans have recently floated to change the way the Legislature writes the state's annual budget. The Berthoud Republican, a member of the powerful Joint Budget Committee, suggested in a recent interview with The Colorado Statesman that the six-member panel - three from each chamber and, because Republicans and Democrats split control of the General Assembly, three from each party - has opened its operations for all to see in an unprecedented manner and welcomes the involvement of any lawmaker who wants to participate.

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Colorado lawmakers hammer out the state budget bill. And no one is happy.

Denver Post

Colorado hospitals will lose more than a half-billion dollars, schools will get \$50 million less for classrooms and taxpayers won't see TABOR refunds in 2018 as state lawmakers shuffled money in a state budget bill that left little to cheer.

The cost-saving maneuvers made room for modest salary increases for state employees and larger pay hikes for judges, lawmakers and elected officials, as well as more money to

address problems in youth prisons and child welfare in the fiscal year that begins July 1. State Rep. Millie Hamner called the cuts to the hospitals a "really tough decision," but a necessary one, as lawmakers struggled to close a \$400 million shortfall.

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Colorado lawmakers introduce a \$26.8 billion state spending bill

Denver Post

Colorado lawmakers introduced a \$26.7 billion state spending bill Monday that offers a modest increase in state employee salaries and education at the expense of cuts to hospitals.

The state Senate will take the first votes Wednesday on the packages of budget bills and the attention will focus on the \$10.6 billion in discretionary spending. Senate Bill 254 was introduced Monday following a marathon session last week that stretched to 11 p.m. Wednesday.

The Joint Budget Committee struggled to balance the fiscal year 2017-18 budget bill as mounting demands conflicted with state spending caps under the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights.

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Guzman: A solution for our rural hospitals

Colorado Statesman

Delta. Montrose. Lincoln. Teller. Fremont. Las Animas. Morgan. Garfield.

These are a handful of counties in rural Colorado that are home to hospitals. Hospitals that not only provide access to life-saving health care for residents, but are most likely the area's largest employer. These hospitals are typically smaller than their urban counterparts, but they are pillars in their communities, empowering people to build their lives in the towns they have called home for years.

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Medicaid hiccups cause for concern and caution

Denver Post

What bad timing for Colorado's Medicaid system to look like it is incapable of accurately billing the federal government for Medicaid recipients or managing the claims providers make for services.

As Republicans look to overhaul the system - House Speaker Paul Ryan's plan fundamentally alters and ultimately reduces federal support of the Medicaid programs run by states - it would be nice if Coloradans could have confidence that ours is responsibly doing its job of providing health insurance to low-income families, children, adults and disabled individuals.

Unfortunately, that confidence may be waning due to two recent (albeit completely unrelated) revelations. The first was that the state over-billed the federal government for somewhere between \$20 million and \$40 million. The second was that providers of care for disabled

adults were having their claims incorrectly denied by a newly launched payment system.

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Republican Obamacare replacement falls well short of meaningful reform

Complete Colorado

President Trump and Congress have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform America's health care system. The goals of any meaningful health insurance reform should include: (1) Maximize access to affordable, quality care; (2) reform the insurance marketplace by moving purchasing power and decision-making away from bureaucrats, insurance companies and employers and toward consumers and patients; and (3) rein in runaway costs on the federal budget - costs that taxpayers ultimately pay.

So how does the Republican Obamacare replacement plan, the American Health Care Act (AHCA), measure up to these goals? It needs improvement. In its current form, AHCA should be defeated.

The Obamacare Medicaid expansion continues for years, as do many of Obamacare's expensive benefit mandates and taxes. Worst of all, the refundable tax credits contained within AHCA are merely a new twist on Obamacare's subsidies to insurance companies. None of this is good for patients. None of this is good for taxpayers.

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GOP kills measure to change TABOR spending caps

Grand Junction Sentinel

Instead of increasing taxes - as another proposal working its way through the Colorado Legislature would do to pay for transportation projects - a solitary Republican tried to persuade his fellow GOP senators Monday to go along with a bill that would accomplish the same task without raising taxes.

Regardless of that suggestion, the GOP-dominated Senate State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee voted along party lines to kill the measure, which was introduced by Rep. Dan Thurlow, R-Grand Junction. Sen. Ray Scott, R-Grand Junction, who chairs the committee, voted against the measure.

The measure, HB1187, would have based the state's revenue cap on a five-year rolling average of personal income rather than annual inflation and population increases, as has been the case with the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights since voters approved it in 1992.

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Grantham: Don't call new construction defects bill a 'compromise'

Colorado Statesman

Senate President Kevin Grantham tossed some cold water this weekend on the bipartisan backslapping that greeted the introduction of a new bill aimed at resolving longstanding tensions over construction defects litigation policy and spurring moribund condominium

construction across the state.

"Don't call it a compromise," the Cañon City Republican told The Colorado Statesman on Saturday. "It isn't a compromise."

House Bill 1279, introduced late Friday night, includes policies in common between two competing Republican-sponsored and Democratic-sponsored bills that have met their end or will soon meet it in committees controlled by the opposing party. The new bill requires a majority of the members of a condo project's homeowners' association to OK pursuing a complaint for defective construction against builders. It also requires strict disclosures about the anticipated cost of filing a complaint and the potential difficulties selling units while a lawsuit is under way.

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Colorado driverless car bill wins bipartisan support in state Senate

Colorado Statesman

A Colorado legislative proposal meant in part to attract automated car entrepreneurs advanced in the state Senate on Tuesday. The bill is being promoted by its sponsors for being ahead of the curve nationwide and welcomed by the burgeoning industry. Supporters played down public-safety and job-loss concerns posed by driverless car technology, arguing that the bill establishes a regulatory framework for the state where there is none, even as driverless vehicle experiments are beginning to take place on the ground in Colorado.

House Bill 1187 Senate sponsor Owen Hill, a Colorado Springs Republican, conceded that some might see the bill as establishing rules that were too open. He answered that the time was right to act, that just now in Colorado, someone could well be enjoying a self-driving-car ride, drinking a latte in the back seat, and there would be no laws governing the experience.

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Colorado transportation bill clears first hurdle in the House

Denver Post

At a day-long transportation hearing at the Statehouse, lawmakers heard two things loud and clear: Coloradans care a lot about their roads. And they have a lot of opinions on how to pay for them.

Nearly 80 people signed up to testify before the House Transportation Committee on Wednesday for the first hearing on House Bill 1242, the major transportation funding bill negotiated by House Speaker Crisanta Duran and Senate President Kevin Grantham. The seven-hour debate stretched late into the night, with lawmakers adopting a slew of changes to the bill before passing it out of committee along party lines. The eight Democrats voted for it, while five Republicans voted against it, even after securing a key concession - the elimination of vehicle registration late fees under the state's FASTER law.

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Bill to legalize online pet-sitting sites gets first OK in

Colorado Legislature

Denver Business Journal

Colorado lawmakers moved to allow online pet-sitting platforms to operate legally in this state on Thursday, despite concerns from kennel operators that doing so could endanger pets or put existing facilities out of business.

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Salazar to pull Ralph Carr name off hot-button states' rights bill

Colorado Statesman

Relatives of 1940s Republican Colorado Governor Ralph Carr have asked that his name be removed from a legislative proposal that has generated political heat at the Capitol from even before it was introduced.

State Rep. Joe Salazar, a Democrat from Thornton and the sponsor of the "Ralph Carr Freedom Defense Act," said he was happy to comply with the wishes of family members and plans to remove the governor's name from the bill when it next comes to the floor for action - likely next week.

Salazar said he spoke to Steven Carr Wednesday night.

"We'll certainly do it as a courtesy and out of respect," Salazar said. "We talked, and I explained what the bill was about and he told me that the family isn't taking a position on the bill, that it's just that the bill has become so politicized that they'd rather have the name left off."

Salazar, a civil rights lawyer, drafted his bill in response to Trump campaign rhetoric that targeted immigrants and ethnic and religious minorities. Salazar said that talk of government registries and deportations and even internment spurred him to act.

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Despite claims, data show legalized marijuana has not increased crime rates

Colorado Statesman

Despite claims, data show legalized marijuana has not increased crime rates

by Brian Heuberger on March 22, 2017

Attorney General Jeff Sessions told reporters March 6 from the Department of Justice that he thinks there is "real violence" behind the use of recreational marijuana, but Colorado's marijuana advocates and others across the country are using state and local-level data to push back on Trump administration claims that legalizing marijuana somehow increases crime rates."

Sessions also told reporters he had a meeting the same day with the attorney general of Nebraska, who has expressed concerns about marijuana being transported from Colorado into Nebraska. "Experts are telling me there's more violence around marijuana than one would think and there's big money involved," Sessions said.

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As Colorado Gets Ready To Allow Pot Clubs, Indoor Smoking Still An Issue

National Public Radio

For three years, recreational pot has been legal in Colorado, but using it in public is still against the law. That will change this summer when pot clubs are slated to open. A blinking "open" sign hangs on the outside of an old building in a dark industrial zone just outside the Denver city limits. When the front door opens, smoke billows out. Inside is one of the state's few pot clubs, called iBake. Recently, members celebrated the anniversary of its opening.

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Gov. Hickenlooper Announces Boards and Commission Appointments

Office of the Governor

The Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education is composed of three members each from 13 western states. The commission studies the needs of professional and graduate educational facilities in this region, the resources for meeting such needs and the long-range effects of the commission's findings on higher education. Each state's commissioners submit a report to their Governor and General Assembly. For a term expiring Mar. 28, 2018:

- Kim Hunter Reed, Ph.D., of Denver, and occasioned by the resignation of Diane Cheri Duffy, J.D., of Louisville, appointed.

Calculator

Days Left to Sine Die: 44
House Bills Introduced: 294
Senate Bills Introduced: 253
Dead Bills: 111
Governor Signed: 82

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