



COLORADO LEGISLATIVE SERVICES, LLC

Session Highlights, Jan 11-15, 2016

General Assembly Meets, Welcomes New Members and Leaders Set Tone

The Colorado General Assembly began their 120-day session on Wednesday this week, and some legislators and politicos predict a torrid political climate between the Democrats and Republicans in both chambers.

Speeches were given by party leadership to inspire and set the tone of the impending four months. While messages from Senate Preside Bill Cadman (R-Colorado Springs), Senate Minority Leader Lucia Guzman (D-Denver) and House Minority Leader Brian DelGrosso (R-Loveland) were about working together, House Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst (D-Boulder) took a stronger approach laying out what she plans to see pass this year, and at the same time criticizing what she considers extremist ideas.

“Ideologues and opportunists will try to impose their views on the woman who isn’t ready to have a family. They will try to rob her of the choice to make her own private medical decisions. We will defeat these ideologues and opportunists.”

Speaker Hullinghorst’s speech also laid the groundwork for bills that will: force Colorado companies to disclose offshore subsidiaries and shutdown subsequent tax benefits, mandate that employers go beyond federal rules when it comes to equal pay to women, require businesses to offer unpaid time off for parents so they can attend school functions (like parent-teacher conferences) for their children and to also examine and address climate change by reducing the state’s carbon footprint.

Not all her time was spent on policy though. She noted the passing of Representative John Buckner (D-Aurora) in May, which left an open seat now filled by his wife, Representative Janet Buckner (D-Aurora). The Speaker also welcomed Representative Cole Wist (R-Centennial) who was sworn in Tuesday as the replacement for former-Representative, now-Senator Jack Tate (R-Centennial) in House District 37. Senator Tate was picked by Senate District 27 Republican leaders to serve the remainder of a term left by Senator David Balmer (R-Centennial) who resigned in October to become that political director for state campaigns for the Humane Society Legislative Fund.

Other members who were recognized were Representatives Dianne Primavera (D-Broomfield), Max Tyler (D-Lakewood) and Ed Vigil (D-Fort Garland) as well as Minority Leader Brian DelGrosso (R-Loveland) who have all reached their term-limit at the end of this year and (at this time) do not plan to run for a new political office.

Eight others who will be leaving the House to run for higher office are: Representatives Lois Court (D-Denver), Rhonda Fields (D-Aurora), Su Ryden (D-Aurora), Daniel Kagan (D-Cherry Hills), Gordon Klingenschmitt (R-Colorado Springs), Kevin Priola (R-Henderson), Angela Williams (D-Stapleton) all vie for their respective Senate seats. Representative Jon Keyser (R-Morrison) will take on a handful of Republicans, including sitting State Senator Tim Neville to challenge US Senator Michael Bennet. And Representative Beth McCann (D-Denver) aims to win the Denver District Attorney race.

In the Senate, President Cadman (R-Colorado Springs), Majority Leader Mark Scheffel (R-Parker), Assistant Minority Leader Rollie Heath (D-Boulder), Senators Mike Johnston (D-Denver), Pat Steadman (D-Denver) and Linda Newell (D-Englewood) leave politics for now. Senators Mary Hodge (D-Brighton) and Morgan Carroll (D-Aurora) are each term-limited, but running for different offices. Senator Hodge seeks an Adams County Commissioner seat and Senator Carroll is hoping to unseat US Congressman Mike Coffman (R).

Hickenlooper Delivers State of the State

Second term Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D) called for collaboration in his State of the State address Thursday morning in front of the 100 members of the General Assembly, as he markedly expressed his top priorities.

Foremost in his speech, was the state's impending budget dilemma caused by a volume of complications in the state constitution. Hickenlooper reiterated his push to find some flexibility in the state's budget through working around the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR) and offered Republican opponents two options: exempt the fees paid by hospitals to allow more spending this year, or overhaul TABOR.

"If we can't make this very reasonable change, like many already allowed under TABOR, then what choice do we have but to re-examine TABOR?" Hickenlooper said, referencing a move to convert the hospital provider fee program to an enterprise fund. "Right now, no one can say with a straight face that our budget rules are working for us."

"Coloradans know we're not fully funding education," he continued. "They're fed up with traffic congestion. They're fed up with potholes. And they're fed up with our inability to expand our highway system."

He called for changes change that will lead to more affordable housing, specifically asking to extend the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, a pro-business incentive for investors and developers building low-income housing.

The solutions, he asserted, must rise above the party politics amid the primary and general presidential contests. The theme he offered: "Civility leads to collaboration. Compromise leads to progress."

"Right now, our conflicts aren't serving us: conflicts in our state constitution, in this building, and certainly not in Washington," he said to the joint session of the General Assembly.

"In today's politics, we revel in getting our way without giving an inch, and stopping the other guy from getting anything done," he continued. "We've made these the only things that count as wins. And the American people lose. This 'you're either with us or against us' mentality hurts our state and our country, and it undermines our democracy.

"Let's strive, I mean really try, to be more bipartisan this session," he said. "Let's forgo cheap shots in favor of civility and productive dialogue."

That seemingly bipartisan tone is one that has garnered national-attention for the Governor. But to Republicans in the State House and Senate, the message seems to be wearing thin.

"We are going to have the largest budget in our history," President Bill Cadman (R-Colorado Springs) told the Denver Post Thursday afternoon. "And when [Democrats] talk about these budget cuts all they are really talking about is reducing the growth rate of government programs. We are not actually talking about any cuts."

Remarks about the implementation of the Clean Power Plan and plans for future transportation funding demonstrated the partisan divide in the chambers: Democrats frequently standing to applaud, Republicans mostly staying seated. All however, sent Governor Hickenlooper off the House floor cheerfully, showering him with white rice and well wishes for him and his fiancé, Robin Pringle. The couple's wedding is scheduled for Saturday, January 16.

Science and Cultural Facilities Reauthorization Bill Introduced

A bipartisan group of Colorado's legislative leadership launched the effort to renew the Denver metro area's Scientific and Cultural Facilities District introduced legislation Wednesday, the first day of session, aimed at moving the district's renewal one step closer to the ballot in November.

With more than a majority of state lawmakers already signed on as co-sponsors to **SB16-016**, Senate President Bill Cadman (R-Colorado Springs) and Senator Pat Steadman (D-Denver) will serve as co-prime sponsors in the Senate and House Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst (D-Boulder) and Representative Polly Lawrence (R-Douglas County) will serve as co-prime sponsors in the House.

"I think we are all happy to help with the process that truly protects and promotes arts and culture funding across our seven metro area counties and the communities that call them

home,” said Speaker Hullinghorst. “I know in my home county of Boulder, the 27-year track record of funding support for arts and culture has helped to create the vibrant arts community we all enjoy today.”

During the 2016 General Assembly, state lawmakers will be asked to consider some of the most sweeping changes ever proposed to the nearly 30-year-old district. These changes include substantial shifts in the way district revenues are distributed, which will result in increased funding to medium and small arts, culture and science organizations funded by the district. The tax level itself, however, will not increase under the proposal. Lawmakers must first approve changes to the district before they can be submitted to the ballot for consideration by voters in November.

“Local communities are empowered to make their own decisions about taxes and spending,” President Cadman said. “They have already examined their support of these community-oriented facilities and can continue to make these choices for themselves.”

For the investment of one cent on every \$10 spent the district, the diverse array of cultural organizations contribute more than \$1.8 billion to the regional economy and employ more than 10,000 people. Citizen support for the hundreds of arts and culture organizations that receive district funds has resulted in world-class facilities and unprecedented access for traditionally underrepresented populations. More than 13 million people, 4 million of them children, attend SCFD-funded programs each year; many for free or reduced rates.

“This district is really a national model for how arts and culture funding can work to help create a diverse set of offerings,” said Senator Steadman. “The pooling of our resources here in the metro area to support organizations of all sizes has been the key to ensuring that all metro area residents, and really all Coloradans, have access to a broad array of world-class facilities, smaller local experiences and everything in between.”

The legislation will have its first hearing in front of the Senate Finance Committee on January 26. Four of the five committee members: Senators Owen Hill (R-Colorado Springs), Mike Johnston (D-Denver), Andy Kerr (D-Lakewood), and Chris Holbert (R-Parker), are already listed as cosponsors of the bill.

“For all of us working on and supporting the renewal effort, we know that we are working on behalf of our communities,” Representative Lawrence said. “Voters have told us on three different occasions that they want to contribute to these organizations across our region and in their own towns.”

Denver Metro area voters created the SCFD in 1988 and approved the one cent on \$10 sales and use tax to provide for the enlightenment, entertainment, and education of the public. Scientific and cultural facilities accomplish this through the production, presentation, exhibition, advancement or preservation of art, music, theater, dance, zoology, botany, natural history or cultural history.

The SCFD was renewed by regional voters in 1994 and most recently, in 2004. In 2016, voters will again have the opportunity to approve this initiative which supports nearly 300 arts, science and cultural organizations so they can provide and expand access and programs for the public. Counties in the SCFD include Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas (except the towns of Castle Rock and Larkspur) and Jefferson.