

COLORADO STATE SENATE

MAJORITY OFFICE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TUESDAY RECAP:

SENATE TACKLES 29 BILLS TODAY



DENVER -- With only 22 days left in the legislative session, every day the Senate is working on numerous notable bills that typically garner media attention. Today, the Senate heard 12 bills on third reading and 17 bills on second reading. With the goal of informing you, but not spamming you, we are providing you with this recap of today's major accomplishments. Below are bill summaries and quotes from the bill sponsors.

BILLS APPROVED ON THIRD READING: Legislation the Senate approved on third reading today now moves to the House of Representatives for approval.

SB 14-179, FLOOD DEBRIS CLEANUP

Sponsors: Sen. Jeanne Nicholson, D-Gilpin County, and Sen. Scott Renfroe, R-Greeley

Summary: The historic September 2013 floods clogged watersheds with debris, blocking water from flowing and posing future flood risks. This bill invests \$2.5 million into stream restoration grants, allowing local governments and private entities to mitigate future flood risks.

"This bill will accelerate efforts to clean up and restore damaged streams and rivers, providing communities with peace of mind that their watersheds are ready to handle future runoff and heavy rain events," said Sen. Nicholson.

Vote count: 34 to 1

SB 14-088, SUICIDE PREVENTION COMMISSION

Sponsor: Sen. Linda Newell, D-Littleton

Summary: Colorado has the eighth highest suicide rate in the nation, and in 2012, more than twice the number of people died from suicide than motor vehicle accidents. This bill addresses those devastating statistics by establishing a commission of experts to provide recommendations to the legislature about suicide prevention in Colorado.

“Suicide is a silent crisis impacting the lives of too many Coloradans. By forming a public/private commission, we can more significantly address this stigmatized issue. We’ll be able to prioritize limited public resources and attract private dollars for rural and urban suicide prevention,” said Sen. Newell.

Vote count: 22 to 13

SB 14-001, COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY ACT

Sponsors: Sen. Andy Kerr, D-Lakewood, and Sen. Cheri Jahn, D-Wheat Ridge

Summary: Since 2008, in-state tuition at colleges has gone up by a range of 22.4 percent to a whopping 68.7 percent, making a degree unattainable for many students. To help ensure that college is affordable, this bill allocates an additional \$100 million to Colorado public colleges, with \$40 million of that going to financial aid. In addition, it puts a six percent cap on yearly tuition increases for resident undergraduate students.

“Within the next month, nearly 46,000 Colorado students will graduate from high school. For some of them, college or trade school is out of reach because of cost. We need to ensure that students can continue their education if they so choose. Our economy requires it. By 2018, nearly 70 percent of jobs in Colorado will require a degree or technical certificate,” said Sen. Jahn.

“The College Affordability Act is historic. Through the recession, education suffered major cuts. With this legislation, we are making a tremendous effort to reinvest in education, which we all know is the foundation of our economy,” said Sen. Kerr.

Vote count: 34 to 1

BILLS APPROVED ON SECOND READING: Legislation the Senate approved on second reading today must still be approved on third-reading.

HB 14-1017, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Sponsor: Sen. Jessie Ulibarri, D-Westminster

Summary: The need for affordable housing continues to grow in Colorado with rent increasing 27 percent in the past 10 years. This bill addresses that problem by expanding two programs within the Division of Housing: the Home Investment Trust Fund and the Housing Development Grant Fund, and reinstating the state Low Income Housing Tax Credit.

“Colorado is experiencing a unique problem: rental prices are at an all-time high, and vacancies are at an all-time low, and that applies across the state. This bill will help Colorado families struggling to maintain the most basic necessity – a roof over their heads,” said Sen. Ulibarri.

HB 14-174, RURAL PROSECUTORS

Sponsors: Sen. Mike Johnston, D-Denver, and Sen. Rollie Heath, D-Boulder

Summary: This bill creates the Prosecution Fellowship Program in the Department of Higher Education. The fellowship will be available to Colorado law school graduates who want to be prosecutors in rural areas.

"We are constantly listening to the people of Colorado statewide. District Attorney's offices in rural parts of the state told us they faced difficulty in recruiting and retaining prosecutors, and together we looked for solutions. This bill will help fill the need," said Sen. Heath.

"This program provides a critical pipeline of attorneys for our rural areas that struggle to attract and retain the legal support they need," said Sen. Johnston.

SB 14-167, OPPORTUNITY SCHOOLS / ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES

Sponsor: Sen. Rachel Zenzinger, D-Arvida

Summary: Alternative education campuses serve high-risk students who fall into one or more of these categories: dropout, expelled, adjudicated youth, pregnant/parenting, drug/alcohol abuse, insufficient credits, and more. In an effort to help high-risk students attain a high school diploma or equivalency, this bill creates the Opportunity Schools Pilot Initiative, which will provide additional funding for alternative education campuses.

"By providing high-risk students with innovative support that addresses their educational and personal needs, such as counseling and substance abuse treatment, we can greatly improve their chance of completing high school and succeeding in college or their chosen career path," said Sen. Zenzinger

SB 14-166, "BY COLORADO"

Sponsors: Pres. Morgan Carroll, D-Aurora, and Sen. George Rivera, R-Pueblo

Summary: Money spent at locally owned businesses circulates at least three times more in the community compared to money spent at a non-local chain. In an effort to boost the economy, this bill establishes the "By Colorado" database to easily connect Coloradans with local businesses.

"The reality is, if we support Colorado businesses, we support Colorado jobs. Coloradans want to take action and help the economy grow, and this convenient app empowers them to do that," said Pres. Carroll. "We are already leading the nation in the recovery with the fourth fastest job growth, but we can always do more. This app makes sure we are featuring Colorado businesses with pride. It is called 'By Colorado' spelled 'b-y' because it is about goods and services made by Coloradans."

SB 14-157, BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURE (BRAC) STUDY

Sponsors: Pres. Morgan Carroll, D-Aurora, and Minority Leader Bill Cadman, R-Colo. Springs

Summary: The U.S. Dept. of Defense will start the next Base Realignment and Closure evaluations in 2015. In an effort to retain and even expand Colorado bases, this bill commissions a study on the strategic and economic advantages of military missions in Colorado.

"This study will help us to keep our military installations by proving what we already know to be true. Colorado's installations are a nerve center for national, as well as international security, and we have top talent in the state," said Pres. Carroll.

SB 14-150, SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Sponsors: Sen. Nancy Todd, D-Aurora, and Sen. Rachel Zenzinger, D-Arvida

Summary: The current student to school counselor ratio is nearly 400:1. This bill addresses the insufficient numbers of school counselors in Colorado public schools by making several changes to the School Counselor Corps Grant Program, including: doubling total annual grant funding from \$5 million to \$10 million; expanding eligibility to all middle and high schools; and extending grant funding cycles from three years to four years.

"When students are able to work with counselors, they have a greater chance of being successful. This program is reaching out to a diverse group of students throughout the state. It's not just urban students; it's not just rural

students. Based on the proof in the pudding, it's working. Given its benefits, we are going to expand it to help more students," said Sen. Todd.

"If our goal is to increase graduation rates in Colorado, then this is the bill to do it. If we want to decrease our remediation rate, then this is the bill to do it. If we want to increase our college matriculation rates, then this is the bill to do it. Let's invest into the school counselor program because it is proven to help students achieve success," said Sen. Zenzinger.

SB 14-144, RURAL RESIDENCY

Sponsors: Sen. Irene Aguilar, D-Denver, and Sen. Jeanne Nicholson, D-Gilpin County

Summary: This bill ensures rural and underserved areas of Colorado have access to quality primary health care services. Through the development of family medicine residency programs, the bill will provide opportunities for new family medicine physicians to train in rural areas and encourage them to move to rural Colorado.

"This bill addresses a real shortage of family medicine doctors in rural parts of the state, which is one of the primary concerns I heard while visiting health care facilities and speaking with providers during my statewide tour last summer," said Sen. Aguilar.

"This program helps rural communities, but also has the added benefit for helping fill the shortage of residency opportunities in Colorado for medical students. This bill will help students complete their education and training, and hopefully they will continue their careers in these underserved communities," said Sen. Nicholson.

SB 14-002: SAFE2TELL

Sponsors: Pres. Morgan Carroll, D-Aurora, and Minority Leader Bill Cadman, R-Colo. Springs

Summary: After the Columbine massacre, a program named Safe2Tell was established to give K-12 students an anonymous hotline to report school safety problems to authorities -- including, but not limited to, planned school shootings, bullying, drug and alcohol use, and planned suicides. The nonprofit-operated Safe2Tell was at risk of shutting down, primarily due to a lack of grant funding. This bill will keep this important program running by moving the operation from the nonprofit sector to the Colorado Attorney General's Office.

"There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of our kids. The Safe2Tell program gives kids an anonymous outlet to ask for help. We need to be there for our kids, and this program is a proven way to reach them," said Pres. Carroll.

SB 14-073, BROWNFIELD CLEANUP

Sponsor: Sen. Cheri Jahn, D-Wheat Ridge

Summary: Brownfield areas are environmentally contaminated areas that have been left abandoned, unused, or underused. This bill helps rural and urban communities to redevelop brownfield areas in a healthy way. It extends a state tax credit for environmental remediation and redevelopment activities, effectively leveraging private funds to clean up brownfield areas.

"Contaminated brownfield areas are not only a public health problem, but they are an economic drain and an eyesore. This bill is about empowering folks to take ownership of their communities and revitalize blighted areas," said Sen. Jahn.