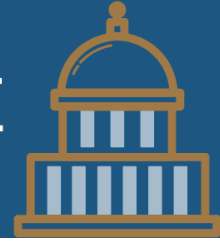


LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

3.23.20



➤ Politics at the Capitol

Last Monday (3/16), the Colorado Supreme Court accepted the request to review the issue of the 120-clock. The issue at hand is if the General Assembly must accomplish all its work within 120 consecutive days or if they may, under Joint Rule 44 (g), meet for 120 non-consecutive days if a disaster emergency has been declared.

If the General Assembly must accomplish its work within 120 consecutive days, that means some big decisions must be made by the second Wednesday in May (5/13). The only constitutionally required bill that must be passed is a balanced budget for FY 20/21. However, there are many decisions that go along with that, including the school finance act. The Supreme Court is accepting briefs on the issue until Tuesday (3/24), and oral arguments will proceed thereafter.

The legislature was due to return to work on March 30. However, that is unlikely to happen, as Speaker KC Becker stated that could be just to "gavel in and gavel back out" for an undetermined amount of time.

Other bills that will likely be high-priority for the legislature will be Paid Family Leave, immunizations, and sunset review bills.

Last Monday (3/16) the Joint Budget Committee met to hear the March revenue forecast. As anticipated, this forecast was much lower than what was predicted in December, and both the Legislative Council and the Office of State Planning and Budgeting provided a pretty grim picture of the difficult decisions the committee will face in the next few weeks as they attempt to finalize the budget during the legislative break.

The key takeaway from the revenue forecast is that there will be no additional revenue for FY 20/21. If you factor in inflation and caseload requirements as required for school finance or Medicaid, we're looking at a deficit—which is not allowed under the Colorado Constitution—so spending will likely have to be cut to current programs. Many decisions the Joint Budget Committee has already made may need to be revisited in light of this updated forecast.

Additionally, this means any piece of legislation that has a fiscal impact is unlikely to pass. Many Mental Health Colorado bills have a fiscal impact in FY 20/21. Although these fiscal notes are relatively small, any price tag puts a bill at serious risk at this point. We are working with partners and our bill sponsors on the best path forward for important pieces of legislation impacting mental health and substance use in our state. According to a press release by House Democrats, Speaker KC Becker stated, "The budget situation today is very different from the one in January, and that means new programs, grants, and other spending that isn't immediately tied to the pandemic are not likely to happen."

Last week, Colorado Representative Dafna Michaelson Jenet tested positive for COVID-19. Our thoughts are with her and her family.

➤ Budget Resources

- [LCS forecast](#)
- [LCS slides](#)
- [OSPB forecast](#)

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