



COLORADO

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DATE: March 31, 2019
TO: Transportation Commissioners, Executive Director, Executive Management Team, Branch Managers, and Office Directors
FROM: Andy Karsian, Office of Policy & Government Relations
RE: Legislative Update

The annual debate to finalize the state budget began last week under the dome. In even years the House begins the budget debates and in odd years it is introduced in the Senate first. Two and a half weeks are dedicated to the budget during which legislators discuss interesting amendments and policies as the budget passes from one legislative chamber to the next.

Legislation

As of today, CDOT is tracking 28 bills for possible direct or indirect impacts to CDOT, its employees, and the state's transportation network. Below are summaries of a few bills introduced or heard this week.

Senate Bill 19-207 (Annual State Budget Bill – Long Bill):

The debate over the budget this year differed significantly than prior years. After caucusing to prioritize amendments to the Long Bill, the Senate came with 30-40 fewer amendments than in years past. Traditionally, the caucusing and amendment discussions are done on Wednesday and the floor debate follows on Thursday going late into the night. This year, the Senate concluded caucuses and began debate on Wednesday afternoon. Thwarting expectations of a late night, the Senate concluded debate in around four hours for the entire budget.

One reason for the speedy process this year was an agreement made prior to the floor debate between Senate leaders on transportation funding. Leadership agreed to reduce the amount of new state revenue to other state agencies and dedicate that funding to highways. This new funding equaled \$106 million. As the deal was announced just prior to the Senators going on the floor, the change in allocations and the speed of the debate surprised quite a few people. The following day, on Friday, the Senate gave their final approval to the budget and sent it to the House.

Once the Long Bill comes to the House floor for debate, all bets are off on how the new \$106 million will be allocated. The House is not beholden to what the Senate does and can strip the new funds and replace them in the original agency budgets. After the House debate and final vote, the Joint Budget Committee reviews the new amendments both chambers put on the budget. The JBC has the final legislative authority to make the final decision on what the budget shall include before it is sent to the Governor for his signature.

House Bill 19-1265 (Yield Right of Way for Snowplows in Echelon Formation):

Anyone driving on the interstate during or after snowstorms has seen snow plows travelling in a diagonal formation scooping snow from one plow to the other until it is pushed to the shoulder. This plow formation maximizes the efforts for clearing a road and getting it safe for travel. Unfortunately, some drivers force themselves through the echelon formation endangering themselves and the state snowplows. This bill creates a traffic offense for when drivers pass through a snowplow echelon formation. Vehicles may still pass single plows on multilane highways when using 'extreme caution'; however, this bill makes it illegal to pass snowplows when they are in the echelon formation.

