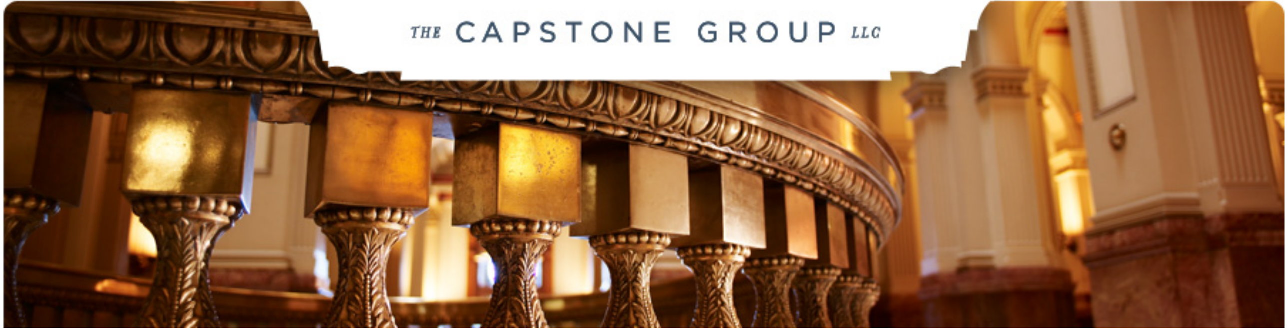

2026 Under the Dome - Week 3

On Monday, legislative Democrats held a press conference to tout three bills that they plan to run during the 2026 session taking aim at surveillance, captive-audience and wholesale pricing. Of these, only one has been introduced so far: HB 1012 Consumer Protections to Promote Fair Market Pricing, which would add requirements for price disclosures on delivery apps and require that vendors in “captive audience” areas such as stadiums, hospitals and airports, price what they are selling at the average price for a comparable item in the surrounding county.

The other measures highlighted at the press conference would prohibit surveillance pricing and wage setting and prohibit wholesalers from charging small businesses more than large retail corporations for goods. Both bills are expected to be introduced in the coming weeks. Each of the three is expected to draw significant press attention and activity from proponents and opponents.

The Joint Budget Committee continued with a full schedule, primarily working through votes on supplementals, but also presenting to committees of reference and, on Friday, approving bill drafts for introduction. The committee voted to advance most of the Governor’s suggested adjustments, including the reduction to higher education that was included in his fall 2025 Executive Order. The supplemental package is set to be finalized early in the week, and the JBC will hear public testimony on the budget on Monday afternoon. The JBC will turn their attention to figure setting decisions for the FY 26-27 budget on Wednesday.

Committees of reference began hearings on legislation this week. The House Education Committee approved HB 1016 Continuation of Open Educational Resources by a vote of 11-2. The bill, referred to the Appropriations Committee for further consideration, would help college students and professors access no-cost education materials.

SB 004 Expand List of Petitioners for Protective Order passed the Senate State, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee on a party-line vote. The bill adds health-care facilities, behavioral health treatment facilities, K-12 schools, and institutions of higher education as institutional petitioners that may petition a court for an extreme risk protection order.

Also on party-line vote, the Senate Health & Human Services Committee approved SB 032 Promoting Immunization Access. Both bills will next be debated by the full Senate on second reading.

On Friday, the House and Senate Energy & Environment Committees held a hearing with Xcel Energy, members of the Public Utilities Commission and officials from the areas impacted by this latest Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events. Business owners and residents testified to the impacts of the power outages. The Public Utilities Commission received written feedback from 4,000 individuals and heard testimony from dozens at a hearing on Wednesday evening.

As Governor Polis enters his final year, it's expected that his Cabinet will begin to see changes. This week, Behavioral Health Commissioner Dannette R. Smith announced her retirement effective February 2026 following a 35-year career in behavioral health. In January, Colorado Department of Higher Education Executive Director Angie Paccione stepped down. Governor Polis selected JB Holsten as her replacement. Holsten's Senate confirmation hearing is scheduled for next week.

There are now two proposals Democrats are aiming to place on the November 2026 ballot that would significantly alter Colorado's tax code. Taken alone, either of the two proposals – a graduated income tax that requires those with higher income to pay more and another that raises the state's spending cap - would represent a fundamental change to the state's tax structure. The Bell Policy Center is spearheading the proposal to change the state's income tax code from a flat rate tax to a graduated rate where lower-income people pay a smaller percentage in taxes while wealthier Coloradans pay a higher rate. Education interests are backing a separate proposal that would increase the state spending cap set by the TABOR amendment in the state constitution. Proponents have indicated that they do not see the measures as competing, but rather they both "attack the problem in different ways."

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