



2026 Under the Dome - Week 11

The legislature was busy in committees and on the floor this week, working through the nearly 500 bills that have been introduced thus far in the session. Most days saw the six members of the Joint Budget Committee excused from floor work to meet as a committee and vote on orbital bills and budget allocations for state agencies. To close the gap exposed by last week's revenue forecast, the committee made a significant number of actions, including reductions in controlled maintenance and capital funding for state agencies, higher education and K-12 and a swap of tobacco cessation funds, marijuana tax cash fund and State Education Fund dollars for programs that the committee previously voted to pay for out of the state's general fund. The JBC is expected to finalize their budget decisions early next week and then introduce the budget ("long bill") in the House of Representatives about a week later than initially planned.

Other committees were also hard at work, with long hearings across the board. The House Finance Committee took up consideration of a 70-page tax bill that expands and extends tax credits for wildfire and beetle kill mitigation, job creators and investments in clean energy, modifies the state's electric vehicle and electric truck tax credits, and repeals the enterprise zone commercial vehicle credit and new business facility employee tax credit among others. As introduced, [HB 1289](#) Modification of Certain Tax Expenditures would save the state \$89 million in FY 26-27 and \$159.4 million in FY 27-28 and is being seen as a piece of puzzle to balance's state's budget. The bill was amended in committee, and a new fiscal note will be released prior to the bill's next hearing, which will be in the House Appropriations Committee.

The House Health & Human Services Committee heard extensive testimony in support and opposition to [HB 1327](#) Large Employer Worker Health-Care Support, legislation that would charge a fee to large employers for each employee that relies on the state's Medicaid program for their health insurance. Covered employers are those with more than 500 employees. The bill passed on a party-line vote and will be heard in the House Finance Committee on Monday.

The House Education Committee gave unanimous approval to [HB 1317](#) Unified Postsecondary Talent Development System, legislation to create a committee to develop a plan to transition oversight of the state's workforce development programs to the department of higher education. Sponsors indicated that more than 100 programs currently exist over a myriad of departments.

The sponsors of [HB 1261](#) Motor Vehicle Consumer Protection asked members of the House Business Affairs and Labor Committee to postpone indefinitely (kill) their bill without hearing witness testimony. They indicated that they intend to work with stakeholders over the interim and bring back legislation on the topic next session. At the same hearing, the committee amended and approved by a 10-3 margin [HB 1263](#) Conversational Artificial Intelligence Service Operator Requirements. The legislation establishes requirements for operators of online chatbots.

After a similar measure was also vetoed by Governor Polis last year, sponsors have introduced [HB 1286](#) Automated Driving System Commercial Vehicles as a referendum, meaning if it passes the legislature, Colorado voters would have the final say at the November 2026 election. The measure would prohibit the use of self-driving commercial vehicles weighing more than 26,001 pounds on Colorado highways unless a licensed commercial driver is physically present in the cab, monitors the vehicle and intervenes if necessary. Drivers would also be required to sit in the driver's seat when transporting hazardous materials. The bill passed the House Transportation & Energy Committee with 12 in support and 1 opposed.

As expected, the Senate Business Affairs and Labor Committee voted along party-lines this week to advance [HB 1005](#) Worker Protection Collective Bargaining. A focus of intense negotiations that fell apart during the 2025 session and culminating with a veto from Governor Polis, the proposal to eliminate the second election to negotiate a union security agreement is expected to face the same fate this year.

Legislators are pursuing the state's first [guardrails on online betting](#) since sports wagers began, introducing [SB 117](#) Permissible Methods of Selling Lottery Tickets which would roll back rules by the state's lottery commission to allow fully online games that players can finance through credit card purchases and [SB 131](#) Sports Betting Protections which would limit television advertising of sportsbooks, prohibit bets on individual player performance, and set deposit limits. The bills both passed the Finance Committee by a one-vote margin and will now go to the Appropriations Committee.

The Senate Transportation & Energy Committee adopted significant amendments to [HB 1007](#) Improve Consumer Use Distributed Energy Resources, bringing the state's utilities in to a neutral position, and subsequently passed the bill unanimously.

The Senate Health & Human Services Committee approved unanimously and referred to the consent calendar both [HB 1002](#) Provider Participation in Health Insurance and [HB 1024](#) Raising the Age of Voluntary Relinquishment of a Child which changes the allowable age of voluntary relinquishment from 72 hours to 30 days or younger.

The Senate this week introduced several new bills including [SB 147](#) Lobbyist Regulation, which would establish a process for advocacy days at the capitol and registration of nonprofit lobbyists, as well as requiring state agency legislative liaisons

to register their positions on bills. The Senate also introduced [SB 149](#) Pathways for Individuals with Mental Health Disorder with significant changes to the state's current system. Colorado has paid tens of millions of dollars in fines under a court order called a consent decree because of the wait times for competency evaluations and services. Recently the legislature learned that annual fines are expected to increase to nearly \$100 million a year.

Colorado Democrats are meeting in Pueblo this weekend to nominate candidates for the 2026 ballot and decide on the party's policy priorities at state assembly. The Republicans state assembly is scheduled for April 11, 2026, also in Pueblo.

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