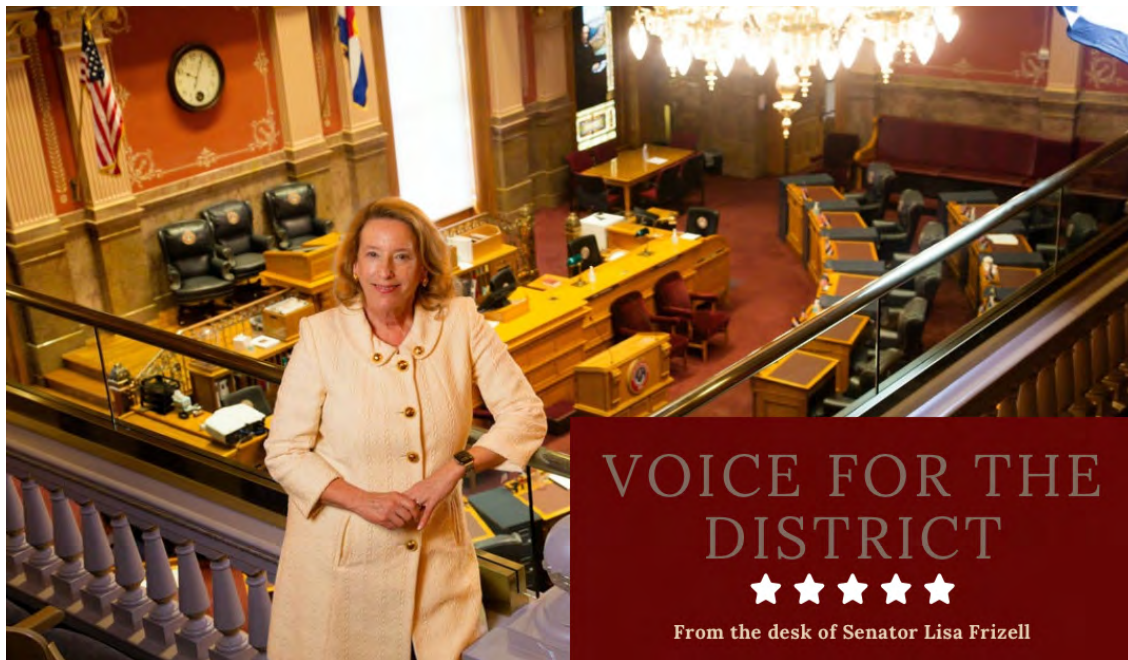




LISA
FRIZELL

SENATE DISTRICT 2



2026 Legislative Session

Week Fourteen - Debating the State Budget

Greetings Lori,

This was arguably the most significant week in the State Legislature. The Senate took on the Long Bill, and managed to remedy the budget – for now. After many hours of debate, and introduction of amendments, we are one step closer to balancing the budget as required by the Colorado Constitution. This year, Sine Die is set for May 13th which is rapidly approaching! I am honored to be serving another session as your State Senator. Please read on for my update from the Capitol!

My Bill Updates

[SB26-140](#) ‘Exempt Drugs From Rx Drug Affordability Bad Reviews’ passed on Third Reading in the Senate on Monday and will be heard in the House soon. This bill prohibits the Colorado Prescription Drug

Affordability Board (PDAB) from creating an upper payment limit for prescription drugs used to treat rare diseases/conditions or for licensed biological products derived from human blood or plasma. As mentioned in last week's newsletter, this policy will ensure that drugs used to treat rare conditions remain accessible to patients.

[SB26-049](#) 'Homeowner Natural Disaster Mitigation' incentivizes homeowners to save for mitigation and recovery from frequent wildfire and hail events experienced in the state. The goal is to provide greater disaster protection by creating an income tax reduction for contributions to a qualified catastrophe savings account. When homes are more prepared to withstand disasters, repair costs go down and insurers are more likely to provide - or perhaps even reduce the cost of coverage. This bill was heard in the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday, and is now headed to Appropriations. You can learn more about this bill in this [article](#) published by The Sum & Substance.

The Long Bill

The Senate survived budget week! We started on Monday with an introduction of [HB26-1410](#) 'Long Appropriations Bill' along with the sixty-four accompanying "orbital bills". All sixty-five bills were heard in an extensive Appropriations committee hearing on Tuesday morning, followed by Second Reading on Wednesday, and Third Reading on Thursday. If you would like to follow along with the remainder of the budget process, you can stay up to date on the JBC finalizations [here](#).

After being heard in the House, there were only five amendments adopted with bipartisan support. The most notable came from Representatives Winter and Clifford – a transfer of \$1.5 million each from the Superintendent Subprogram in Corrections and the Disease Control and Public Health Response Division in CDPHE to the Colorado Auto Theft Prevention Authority in DHS. It's important to note however, House amendments to the Long Bill and orbitals that were adopted are stripped once the bill comes to the Senate by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Senators must run and pass the same amendments again in order for them to be maintained.

The Senate Minority Caucus prepared nearly 40 amendments relating to the budget this year. I personally brought 8 amendments – two of which were adopted. These meaningful safeguards for the Intellectually and

Developmentally Disabled (IDD) community are outlined here:

- ***L.007 to HB26-1405*** ‘Cash Fund Transfers to General Fund’ sweeps \$7.1 million from the Governor’s Office of Information Technology Revolving Cash Fund with the intent to use \$0.5 million to fully fund family caregiver hours at the current level and use \$6.6 million to eliminate the waitlist for 24/7 services for disabled adults. While it took a lot of one-on-one lobbying of my colleagues, I’m so grateful that this amendment passed to maintain essential services for the IDD community in Colorado.
- ***J.094 to HB26-1410*** appropriates the \$7.1 million that was made available by L.007 as described above. Excess funds should not sit idle while critical services for the most vulnerable in our state go unmet. Fully funding family caregiver hours is a necessary support that was strongly advocated for by individual families who will be negatively impacted by a loss of funding. Similarly, eliminating the waitlist for 24/7 services addresses one of the most urgent unmet needs in the state. Currently there is a seven-year waitlist, and the Long Bill contained cuts that would extend the waitlist to between ten and 14 years. This is a responsible reallocation from surplus reserves that will continue direct care for IDD individuals. I truly hope the JBC keeps these amendments in the Long Bill as the process continues with a conference committee next week.

Additional legislation that was debated relating to the budget are the sixty-four orbital bills. Here are just two of the significant bills that provided funding updates:

- **[HB26-1411](#)** ‘Changes to Cover All Coloradans Program’ creates meaningful caps on both program participation and money spent by the state. The Healthcare Policy and Financing Department (HCPF) has overexpenditure authority over the Cover All Coloradans program, which provides state funded healthcare benefits to undocumented immigrants. This program was created legislatively in 2021, with an initial appropriation of approximately \$15 million. The current cost of the program exceeds \$115 million, because there is no limit to use or cost of services. I completely disagree with this program but the Minority has no way to eliminate it. There must be an end to unlimited increases in funding, and the only way to combat this extensive spending is by capping both dollars allowed

to be spent and the number of participants. My vote remains supportive as long as the bill is not amended —which did happen in the House. After a long floor fight, the House Majority was able to strip the caps off of the bill -and then when it came over to the Senate we put them back on after extensive debate. In short, I didn't vote for the program, I voted to cap the expenditures for the program.

- [HB26-1351](#) 'Healthy School Meals for All State Education Fund' - while I don't agree with the program overall, I voted in support of this bill. When Colorado voters originally approved Proposition FF in 2022, it was necessary to “borrow” start-up funding from the Department of Education until revenue was generated to support the program. Now that the second ballot measure was passed last year, approving additional funding, this bill repays the State Education Fund for the \$30 million originally borrowed. There seems to be quite a bit of inaccurate information out there on this bill, so I just wanted to set the record straight.

Golf Day

The Colorado Golf Alliance hosted their Day at the Capitol on Wednesday. They were spreading awareness on the positive impacts golf has throughout the state and on the environment. It was great to see some new faces along with familiar ones!



Bad Bills:

SB26-148 ‘Financing Utility On-Bill Repayment Program’ uses the Unclaimed Property Tax Fund (UPTF) to finance a clean energy initiative. The UPTF is money that is held by the State Treasurer who is the statutory caretaker of the funds on behalf of citizens until they go through the application process to retrieve them. Scraping funds from the UPTF has become a financing mechanism for the Majority to fund policies -and I completely disagree with taking dollars from a fund that doesn’t even belong to the State. The UPTF is not a piggy-bank on standby to the Colorado Government, it's a fund of citizens' assets waiting to be claimed. Amendments were added to the bill that simply add a loan cap of \$50,000 per applicant, retaining the fact that money will be accessed. This was heard in the Transportation & Energy Committee on Monday April 13, and referred to Appropriations.

SB26-036 ‘Prison Population Management Measures’ aims to reduce prison populations by encouraging early releases and lenient parole hearings for prisoners. This bill requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) to report to several agencies when bed availability drops below 3% for 30 days. To remedy this shortage, this bill requires prisons to review parole hearings and shorten sentences for inmates when they are near eligibility for parole. The main issue with this bill is that criminals who are denied parole could still be released from prison and transferred to other

state-run facilities. Many reasons can lead a judge to deny an inmate parole or revoke the parole such as rule violations or insufficient completion of expectations and requirements (such as housing upon release). Rather than providing the DOC with more beds when requested this bill ignores the actual issue of over-incarceration -which is our high crime rates, and instead releases criminals from their original sentences. This bill passed through the Judiciary and will next be heard in the Appropriations Committee.

[SB26-159](#) 'Inmate Earned Time Formula for Sentence to Department of Corrections' directs the DOC to make policy changes which incentivize inmates to pursue activities that offer reduced time or time-served. This bill is bad because it completely undermines Proposition 128 - a voter approved measure that ensures violent criminals serve at least 85% of their sentence. The Majority's blatant disregard for public safety and voter preferences is abundantly clear with this bill and severely endangers the public if passed. This bill passed through the Judiciary Committee and passed on Second Reading in the Senate on Friday.

[SB26-116](#) 'Property Tax Modifications' removes the portable senior property tax exemption for seniors who applied and were approved for it beginning in 2024. It requires county assessors to remove the portable exemption entirely, and these property owners will no longer receive the property tax benefit. This action will impact approximately 2,400 seniors in the State. This bill also places a cap on the exemption amount for business personal property of \$58,000. This exemption has historically increased with inflation every two years, and benefits small business owners. This bill passed through Senate Finance on party lines and will be heard next in Appropriations.

[SB26-1308](#) 'Lot Splitting Approval by Subject Jurisdictions' allows property owners to split their property into two lots if specific criteria are met. The bill sponsors claim this will help prospective homebuyers afford new homes and increase housing inventory to help improve housing affordability. I oppose this policy because it increases state control over what should be a local government decision, and does not account for the increased demands on infrastructure. This bill will be heard in the Senate Local Government & Housing Committee next Thursday. If you are interested in Public Testimony, you can sign up [here](#).

[SB26-1114](#) 'Allowed Minimum Lot Size for Subject Jurisdictions' prohibits local governments from requiring lot sizes greater than 2,000 sq feet if the

property is intended for a single family home. While this seems like a fair measure to increase housing availability, I disagree with this policy because it ignores both the free market system and current development practices –and is another example of state overreach into decisions that should be made locally. Rather than working on lowering housing costs by reducing government regulation, this policy creates additional state oversight. This bill will also be heard in the Senate Local Government & Housing Committee next Thursday. If you are interested in Public Testimony, you can sign up [here](#).

Good Bills:

[SB26-149](#) ‘Pathways for Individuals With Mental Health Disorder’ aka the ‘Competency Bill’ authorizes a prosecutor to seek civil commitment for the enhanced protective placement of a defendant found to have a mental disability or developmental disability, who committed a crime of violence, and who poses a significant risk to public safety. This bill also establishes clear deadlines for requests and court decisions, ensuring due process and a speedy trial for defendants. Overall, Colorado will benefit from the creation of a more structured, responsive, and balanced approach to handling defendants with significant mental health needs that maintains a strong focus on public safety. This bill will be heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee on Monday.

[SB26-145](#) ‘Charter School Involvement in Local Ballot Questions’ promotes transparency in the bond development process and supports voter and school community decision-making. I like this policy because it encourages school districts to include charter schools’ construction needs in bond measures and mill levies, without mandating them. There is a significant percentage of the total public school population enrolled in a charter school, and this bill allows their growth to be managed with more representation and consideration. This bill passed in the Senate Chamber on Friday and heads to the House next.

[SB26-023](#) ‘School Finance Act’ adjusts the statewide base per pupil to account for inflation, and continues the phased implementation of a fair, modern funding formula. This bill provides districts with financial stability while ensuring resources are targeted to underserved students and rural communities. I support this bill because schools will benefit from the increase that will fund teacher salaries, classroom resources, and operational costs. SB26-023 will be heard in the Senate Education

Committee on Monday.

[SB26-015](#) ‘Commercial Sexual Activity with a Child Offense’ amends existing Colorado law and replaces the term ‘child prostitution’ with ‘commercial sexual activity’. Additionally, the penalty for internet luring of a child is increased from a class 4 felony to a class 3 felony. This is a necessary bill addressing sexual exploitation of children by introducing standard sentencing requirements to encourage prosecution. Thank you to Senator Byron Pelton for sponsoring this legislation that puts children first and safeguards their physical, mental, and emotional health rather than protecting convicted criminals. This bill passed unanimously through the Senate Appropriations committee as well as the Committee of the Whole on Second Reading.

Stay Informed

As the session continues, I would like to provide you with some resources to stay informed on what is happening at the Capitol. To watch current or previous debates on the floor of the House or Senate, you can visit the Colorado Channel on YouTube. Click [here](#) to watch.

The Colorado General Assembly [website](#) is also a great resource. Some of the information on this site includes tracking bills, listening to committees, and finding contact information for legislators. Committee proceedings the session will now be recorded and available for the public to view live, or archived meetings!

Thank you for allowing me to serve you,



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Assistant Minority Leader

Senate District 2

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