

# UNDER THE DOME

WITH THE NCLA

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## AT MIDWAY POINT, BUSINESS AWAITING “OTHER SHOE TO DROP”

Compared to the 2013 Legislative session, so far the 2014 legislative session has been quite tame for business. But, rumors abound about legislation still anticipated but not yet introduced. Coupled with bills tackling major reform in telecommunications, April could prove to be a restless month for business.

The business community was braced at the start of the 2014 legislative session to be on the defensive yet again against labor and anti-fracking advocates. So far, none of the fears have been realized. The slow movement on the more controversial topics can largely be attributed to the tenuous political balance in the State Senate where Democrats hold a slim one-vote advantage. And that one vote advantage rests with Senator Cheri Jahn, (D-Wheatridge) who often crosses party lines to vote with Republicans on business legislation.

Despite the uphill climb to pass worker’s comp modifications out of the Senate, Representative Angela Williams (D-Denver), the Chair of the House Business Affairs Committee, has quietly been working behind the scenes with the AFL-CIO to craft a proposal to offer costly changes to the current worker’s compensation system. NCLA, standing with several other statewide business organizations, pushed back on Rep. Williams’ proposal early in the session which resulted in the delay and re-tooling of the proposal. Rep. Williams is now ready to introduce a proposal that is expected to draw business fire.

On oil and gas, anti-fracking advocates have read the legislative tea leaves and would have a difficult time overcoming the one-vote margin in the Senate to impose substantial regulations on fracking. Covering their political bases, they have opted to pursue two non-legislative solutions. They have lauded the actions of the Air Quality Control Commissions to approve more stringent rules against methane emissions from oil rigs. And, in February, they submitted a proposed constitutional amendment to give local governments more control over drilling.

That is not to say they aren’t pursuing some legislative approaches. Rep. Joann Ginal has introduced legislation to study the health affects of oil and gas operations and House Majority Leader Dickie Lee Hullinghorst continues to work on legislation to address the local control issue legislatively rather than by constitutional amendment.

While business has awaited these more controversial issues to drop, various economic development bills have been working their way through the process. Many of those bills are various tax credits encouraging and supporting various key business sectors. NCLA supports several of the measures including a tax break for angel investors in startups and a bill to alleviate a portion of the business personal property tax.