



Colorado Kicks Off Its Policy Making Season

*A compilation of the issues highlighted by Governor Jared Polis and
Speaker of the House KC Becker*

Colorado's Legislative and Executive Branch kicked off their respective policy and decision-making season with the drop of the gavel at the General Assembly and the Inauguration of Governor Jared Polis.

Continuing his theme to "Be Bold", ahead of his inauguration, Governor Polis, noted that "I will do things differently. We are focused on the big ideas — meaning things that will really move the dial and improve the quality of life for Coloradans."

His administration is prepared to push aggressively on a number of issues — from education to health care to corporate tax breaks — from the start, leveraging the Democratic majority in the General Assembly to advance his agenda.

"If it was easy, it would have been done already," he said. "I don't think anything we are tackling is easy because it wouldn't have been left to be done if it was."

Holding a "Trifecta" and more of power, Democrats wield historic influence in shaping Colorado's public policy landscape. Below a compilation of the key issues and agenda items noted by Governor Polis in his first State of the State address. Weaved throughout, thoughts on the same issues by newly minted Speaker of the House KC Becker (D-Boulder) from her opening day remarks. President of the Senate Leroy Garcia (D-Pueblo) was not specific to policy items during his remarks.

Climate Change

- Our commitment to reaching 100% renewable energy by 2040 is not just about climate change.
- Modernize both our grid infrastructure and our regulatory processes to ensure all Coloradans are reaping the full suite of benefits associated with swift adoption of renewable energy.
- Take advantage of modern technology to use energy more efficiently — cleaning our air and saving consumers money in the process.
- My goal is to lead the statewide transition to a clean, sustainable, and growing economy. It is imperative for our climate, our security, our health, and our economic growth for all Coloradans.
 - Lead with policies that support, enable, and accelerate market investment.

- Work with stakeholders across Colorado on outcome-based approaches that promote innovation, and that deliver emissions reductions from all sources, reductions in consumer costs, and sustainable economic growth for communities across Colorado.
- It means working to electrify our cars and buses and trucks
- Some of the hardest-working people in Colorado today work in the coal and oil-and-gas industries and we will not leave them behind
 - Creative financing mechanisms ensure that consumers pay lower rates as we move to renewables and help provide for a transition that is just and fair both for workers and for communities directly impacted.
- Speaker Becker highlighted climate change as her top priority
 - “It’s threatening our thriving outdoor economy and our livelihoods.
 - “We need to expand our commitment to renewable energy, give local communities the tools they need to prepare for the impacts of climate change and creating strong goals to limit carbon pollution.”

Oil/Gas

- Polis: “It’s time for us to take meaningful action to address the conflicts between oil-and-gas drilling operations and the neighborhoods they impact, and to make sure that all of our communities have clean air and water.”
- Becker: “Colorado’s way of life is threatened by the growing conflict between neighborhoods and oil and gas. Our state has grown, and schools and neighborhoods are butting up against oil and gas operations. It’s time we update our laws to reflect this new paradigm.”

Health Care

- Our ultimate objective is to bring universal, high-quality, affordable care to every Colorado family. We know that won’t happen overnight, but the work we will do together in this legislative session will put us on the right path and bring us closer to our goal.
- Paid family leave
 - I will include a formal budget request to provide paid parental leave for all state employees
 - It’s time we finally establish a paid family and medical leave program in Colorado
- Create the Office of Saving People Money on Health Care led by Lt. Gov Dianne Primavera
 - reduce patient costs for hospital stays and expenses,
 - improve price transparency,
 - lower the price of prescription drugs, and
 - make health insurance more affordable
- Opioid epidemic
 - Work on solutions that focus on both addiction prevention and access to effective treatment.
- Rural Disconnect

- Empower the Division of Insurance to protect consumers and support rural and mountain communities working to lower their health care costs.
- Establish a reinsurance program to reduce costs and save Coloradans money.
- Set up a way for Colorado to safely import prescription drugs from Canada.
- Becker: “We must work together to address skyrocketing health care costs by promoting transparency in insurance, drug pricing and medical expenses. It also means we must tackle surprise billing and help provide more stability to our health insurance markets.”

Education

- Fully fund free, full-day kindergarten and preschool
 - The costs of all-day kindergarten could be between \$225 million and \$247 million.
- Student loan relief for teachers in high need areas of the state
- Transparency to student loan process and provide basic consumer protection for borrowers
- Improve graduation rates by investing in proven programs that prevent kids from falling through the cracks
 - Improve behavioral health in school
- Inequity in the funding of education across the state, district by district, is a broader problem lawmakers face. Expect a comprehensive solution to be offered by members of the Joint Budget Committee.
- Becker:
 - “We must continue to invest in early childhood education, K-12 and higher education.
 - “We will build on the bipartisan successes of workforce development programs in communities across the state.”

Transportation

- We must upgrade our antiquated roads and highways and limited public transit options.
 - Not equipped to sustain a growing 21st-century economy.
- We must come together around a bipartisan funding mechanism for our future transportation needs that the voters of this state will accept.
- Becker: “Coloradans are tired over the lack of investment in roads, bridges, and transit. That means coming up with creative and collaborative solutions to our transportation problems.

Labor

- We will value every job. We will respect every worker and every shareholder.
- We will protect the rights of workers to organize and collectively bargain for the pay and benefits they deserve, and the rights of shareholders to lead their companies.
- Becker: “Women and people of color should be paid equally for equal work.”

Affordable Housing

- Becker: “Access to affordable housing continues to be out of reach for many people. That means we need to invest state dollars in our affordable housing trust fund.

Outdoor recreation

- We will continue to defend our public lands, promote access to outdoor recreation, and stand up for the outdoor industry's 230,000 and growing Colorado jobs

Agriculture/Water

- We need to make sure today's farmers and ranchers, and tomorrow's, have the tools to succeed.
- Water
 - commit to a bipartisan and sustainable funding source for the Colorado Water Plan.
- Partner with Rocky Mountain Farmers Union's Co-Op Development Center to reduce barriers to employee ownership and grow wages in the agriculture sector.
- Work with the Rural Colorado Venture Capital Fund to expand access to capital and help the next generation of farmers thrive.
- Seize the opportunity to make Colorado the national leader in industrial hemp production.

Broadband

- We must expand access to broadband.
- Cut red tape that forces communities to go through costly and lengthy elections build out their own broadband infrastructure.
- Continue the creation of Strategic Regional Broadband plans to make high-speed internet access a reality across our entire state.

Tax Policy

- Make our tax code more fair [sic], so that we can reduce rates for Colorado families and small businesses.
- Auditor has closely examined which deductions are benefiting our economy, and which are being exploited by corporations at Coloradans' expense.
- Vendor fee
 - 90 percent of the retailers in our state are small businesses.
 - It's time to cap the vendor fee and use the savings to lower rates, which will benefit small businesses and millions of working Coloradans.

Criminal Justice

- We will address the inequities in our criminal justice system.
 - Tackle discriminatory practices that make people of color, individuals living with mental illness, and Coloradans experiencing poverty more likely to face incarceration.
- Criminal justice reform is an economic necessity and a human-rights necessity