



## Hope for Our Colorado...Protect Our Colorado

Promises for Bipartisanship, Saving Coloradoans Money and Reducing Crime

The gavels dropped, and just like that - the start of the 2nd Regular Session of the 73rd General Assembly kicked off. From the Governor to the President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, and the Minority Leaders, the topics of concern are similar - extreme inflation facing Colorado families, the safety of our communities, the environment, and impacts on our climate and early childhood education. The paths to address those concerns, however, differ significantly.

The NCLA enters the 2022 legislative session anticipating another rough ride for business. The State of our State, the state of business is challenged. With compounding policy and regulatory measures on business since our political landscape shifted to a tri-fecta, Democrat majority government, [Colorado's competitiveness and appeal for business has plummeted](#).

The NCLA enters the 2022 Legislative session emboldened. We will fight for restoration of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund using the available federal ARPA funds in order to assure no business in Colorado will be subjected to a UI Premium Surcharge. We will defend against more air quality policy changes that spur yet more onerous regulatory measures on northern Colorado's key industry sectors with questionable benefits but clear economic consequences. We'll resist labor bills that create greater liability for business, increased and undue costs, and approaches that should be allowed to emerge due to market forces not government regulation.

The tone is set for the legislative session in the first week by the legislative leaders that guide the debate and by Governor who holds an outsized platform from which to dictate the direction of the state. Insights into the priorities and direction are provided in their respective speeches. The minority party's voice is allowed to emerge on an equal stage to provide the counterbalance to the majority. Summaries of their Opening Day Speeches and the Governor's State of the State are shared below:

### **Governor Jared Polis' State of the State Address<sup>1</sup>** **Saving Coloradoans Money -**

- We must double down on our promise to help every business and family succeed. That means taking less of your hard-earned money in fees and taxes and putting more in your pockets and paychecks.
- Health care and education are where Coloradans face some of the highest costs
- We funded the Colorado Child Tax Credit for the first time in history, giving families with children under age six up to \$1,080 per year per child. We also doubled the state Earned Income Tax Credit, giving workers up to \$1,495 per year. We cut taxes for retirees by exempting social security earnings from the state income tax, saving seniors up to \$654 per year.
- Cut property taxes for farms, ranches, renewable energy projects, and homes, and next year, we will start letting every homeowner defer increases on their property taxes, ensuring they won't ever have to pay a tax bill they can't afford.
- My administration will work with both parties to continue cutting taxes and fees wherever we can, but never at the expense of teachers and law enforcement.
- To foster our entrepreneurial spirit, we should make it free for Coloradans to start their own business.

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<sup>1</sup> [\\*2022\\_house\\_journal.pdf \(colorado.gov\)](#) page 24 – 36.

- To keep costs down for entrepreneurs, he is proposing to reduce fees like the unemployment insurance premium and the Paid Family and Medical Leave premium, resulting in hundreds of millions in savings for the businesses and workers that power our economy.

#### **Behavioral Health Care Agenda**

- Partner with local governments and school districts to offer integrated physical and mental health services, bolstering our often overworked behavioral health workforce, and getting Colorado children the support they need to be happy through [imattercolorado.org](http://imattercolorado.org).
- We have confidence that many excellent recommendations that came from the Behavioral Health Transformational Task Force will lead to tremendous strides in looking after the mental health of our fellow Coloradans.

#### **Education Agenda**

- The Governor has a plan for historic investment in Kindergarten through 12th grade education, which will reduce the Budget Stabilization Factor to a 13-year low, while increasing per pupil funding by roughly \$12-13 thousand per classroom, supporting smaller class sizes and enhanced pay for teachers. We must take the RESPONSIBLE approach by setting money aside to keep up with these investments for future years.
- He is proposing stronger support for our state's institutions of higher education, including an expansion of available financial aid, and investments to help reduce costs and keep tuition flat.

#### **Workforce Agenda**

- Governor Polis is proposing that we waive licensing fees for nurses and mental health care workers, as well as for our nursing homes and assisted living facilities whose residents have been particularly vulnerable throughout the pandemic. Eliminating these fees puts money back into the pockets of dedicated healthcare workers.

#### **Public Safety Agenda**

- Spend the next five years making Colorado one of the top ten safest states in the country.
- Promoting and funding a responsible public safety plan that builds on historic legislation of years past, gives much-needed support and funding to local law enforcement while also investing in community-based approaches and organizations that can help prevent violent crime from occurring.
- Focusing on training and recruiting efforts for police, supporting community policing models, increasing access to mental health services, offering early intervention grants, increasing support for domestic violence victims, and making safety improvements in our schools and on our streets.

### **President of the Senate Leroy Garcia's Address**

- Every Coloradoan deserves:
  - A safe, reliable place to lay your head to rest
  - A stable income that allows you to provide for yourself and your family
  - A life free from violence and discrimination
- The American Rescue Plan Act gives us an opportunity with hundreds of millions of dollars at our disposal. It is a one-time chance to create transformational change. This spending will be the result of bipartisan groups of legislators and experts to chart these expenditures to include:
  - Increase the supply of affordable housing
  - Stabilize the behavioral health system
  - Support our children to ensure improvements to education, training, and support needed for bright futures.
  - Support small businesses to grow our economy.
- President Garcia noted, "Colorado's future gets brighter when we confront our challenges with the relentless optimism that better is possible, only if we choose to make it the only possible outcome."
- He concluded, "*And colleagues, I want to share my gratitude for each and every one of you. This partnership had a little bit of a rocky start, as you might recall. However, three years later, this chamber has set an example for the rest of the country by leaving the partisan antics to Washington DC so we can focus on making the lives of Coloradans better*".

### **Senate Minority Leader Chris Holbert's Address**

- Three facts have become undeniable for most Coloradoans over the last year. Our state is less affordable, and families are less safe, students are further behind.
- Median home prices have grown 53% since 2016. Energy prices have increased 10 to 50%- much of this due to increased regulatory burdens. 73% of Coloradoans categorize cost of living increases as an

extremely serious problem. Senator Woodward has one bill that will allow struggling families to deduct their rent from their income taxes. He has another bill to allocate a portion of our state historic revenue windfall into the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund to bring down costs for employers.

- Crime rates are at 25-year highs with a 6.5% increase in violent crimes, an 18% increase in aggravated assaults, and a 29% increase in homicides. Over 300 people were murdered in Colorado last year. We are #2 in the nation for per-capita car thefts – second only to Washington DC.
- Elected leaders were hesitant to condemn the anarchists who attacked our State Capitol, and law enforcement was villainized in the press by elected officials, all while criminals returned to the streets rapidly. What do you expect would happen? Black Coloradans are just over 4% of our population yet make up 13% of all crime victims – without taking action to put an end to the crime wave is an injustice.
- We worked together in 2019 on police reform, ending chokeholds, and supporting body cameras. We worked to get bad officers off the streets, but now we need to ensure families are safe in their communities.
- One way to secure our streets will be Senator Cooke's bill to establish grant programs to hire more police officers and provide better training and will come from the communities they serve.
- Minority Leader Holbert concluded, "*Senate Republicans will introduce a package of legislation – our Commitment to Colorado – that provides direct relief to the People of Colorado, working to bring down the cost of living, secure our neighborhoods, and provide more educational choice to our students.*"

### Speaker of the House Alex Garnett's Address

- What will move Colorado forward will be good jobs, healthy and safe communities, successful small businesses, well-funded schools, and a thriving workforce.
- Bipartisan work is necessary to build a safer, more affordable, and healthier Colorado for all. The symbolic appointment of Rep. Marc Caitlin as Vice-Chair of the Agriculture, Livestock, and Water Committee.
- While other states are outlawing abortions, Colorado will work to ensure that the right to access a full range of reproductive health care, including abortion, is never infringed upon.
- Public safety investments will be made to prevent crime and reduce recidivism to make our communities safer. We want to stop crime before it happens and will continue fighting to ensure that every Coloradan can feel safe in their community. We need to stop people, especially young people, from entering the system in the first place and to provide those who do with the tools they need to turn their lives around. This will be achieved through community-based solutions to homelessness, substance use, and working with local government to address and prevent pandemic-induced crime.
- Climate change is a threat to our state. Steps have been taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but we need to do more to ensure a cleaner, greener future.
  - Investing in air and water by cracking down on polluters, improving monitoring systems, and reducing emissions.

### House Minority Leader Hugh McKean's Address

- Inflation and the increase in the cost of living have been extremely difficult. The goods that once were affordable and fit within families' budgets are no longer, and with changing school schedules and a lack of child care, many families have to do with less in a world where everything costs more.
  - Consumer prices have increased 6.5% and producer prices by over 8%. This can be especially difficult in rural communities. Food costs for the average family is an additional \$200/month
- Hard times are not forgotten, but the good times often make us forget. The good economy we enjoyed for a few years resulted in legislation that was passed that went around the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights by swapping the word "tax" for "fee."
  - The gas tax that even the Governor noted this week - decided to delay the very fees that he told us were critical to pass, saying that delay saves people money even though the fee is just another tax.
- Families are worried about the safety of their community and their children.
  - Families face organized car theft rings, early morning raids robbing families on their way to get to work. The monthly crime rate in Colorado is up 15%.
  - Laws passed in the last few years have put our way of life at risk. The policies have hit urban neighborhoods especially hard and have forced families to choose between living where they want or moving to where they feel safe.

- Republicans fought for hours on end last year in committee rooms against the legislation that helped create the problems we see today.
- We lead the country in the rate of auto theft. Over the last ten years, Colorado's rate has increased by 135%, while the national rate was only 3%, and we have seen the largest increase in property crimes of any state. As a result, Coloradans have dealt with a 6.5 % increase in violent crimes, the highest levels in 25 years, including substantial increases in homicides and aggravated assaults.
- This legislature passed bills that have eviscerated policing in Colorado. Even while making claims to be getting tough on crime, the Governor and this legislature have passed legislation making Colorado less safe. It is no wonder why criminals can get away with so much today. The policies enacted here during the last three years did not help.
- Law enforcement leaders from across the state are speaking up about how this legislation has impacted their communities. Denver Police Chief has had to turn to federal agencies so that criminals could actually be held accountable for their crimes.
- Law enforcement leaders from across the state have expressed their concerns with shortening prison sentences and the reclassification of crimes.
- Retention of police officers is challenging across the state with increased regulations and demands from the legislature. Officers' safety is at risk, and departments worry about their ability to rely on officers and find new ones for the understaffed agencies. Public safety will worsen if we continue to let individuals who were arrested back out on the streets with either low or no bond. By condemning all law enforcement officers as bad cops, de-policing is rising, and officers are pulling back from community patrols.
- Rising crime has a price tag. That cost is about \$27 billion, nearly 77% of the state budget, or \$4,762 a year for every Coloradan.
- We have to return to the "broken window" theory of policing that emphasizes all our laws and focuses on training and rigorous reporting procedures for our law enforcement professionals.
- Our colleagues say they share these ideas, but we have seen the reality of their policies after having had complete control of this state for the last three years.
- *Minority Leader McKean concluded, "Our Commitment to Colorado will help improve the cost of living, offer solutions to make our communities safer, and give parents the tools to make decisions and improve the education of their children. We have a message and a direction to help heal and recover this state from all of the destruction of the last three years."*

### **NCLA Tracking Report**

On a bi-weekly basis, the NCLA Board reviews and considers its position on pending legislation. See the [NCLA 2022 Legislative Tracking Report](#) list the measures thus far introduced that the NCLA is monitoring and upon which the NCLA will or has taken a position.