



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

Human Rights & Community Relations

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Possible 2010 State Legislation

Budget issues are likely to again dominate the legislative discussion. Next year is a transitional year. The state has historic revenue shortfalls due to the bad economy—and will make more cuts to an already very lean State Government. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (federal stimulus) monies are plugging some holes with enhanced Medicaid, education and other funding. ARRA dollars also carry requirements of maintenance of effort – prohibiting certain budget cuts at risk of losing large amounts of federal money. As these funds disappear over the next year and a half, Colorado not only loses federal funds, but certain programs will lose their federal protection against budget cuts.

One approach to the budget shortfall is to eliminate certain tax credits and sales tax exemptions, thereby increasing revenues. This option is newly available (due to a court decision) to legislators who have run out of many other options. Expect those currently benefitting from tax credits to make their best argument of why they should be continued. Continuing such credits will now be weighed against the impact of cuts the budget shortfall would otherwise require.

Poverty

- Add interest rate cap for pay day lenders.
- The State Department of Human Services will propose adjusting eligibility criteria for ColoradoWorks (TANF).

Legislation from the Economic Opportunity and Poverty Reduction Task Force includes.

- Restore the State Earned Income Tax Credit for the working poor to first place as Tabor refund mechanism. In 2005, an additional temporary reduction in the income tax rate bumped the EITC from first place, which could add years to the wait for an EITC return. Those who do not earn enough to owe federal taxes get no benefit from permanent or temporary reductions in the income tax rate. They would benefit from the EITC. Revenue projections are low enough that no TABOR refunds are expected for the next few years. But in a way, that could make this a good time to take this action.
- Eliminate one barriers to employment for ex-felons. Legislation would clarify and limit employer liability actions of employees who are ex-felons.
- Evaluate the effective of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) \$10 million/year Strategic Use Fund.
- Spell out evaluation measures for the Economic Opportunity and Poverty Reduction Task Force.
- Address a number of problems and cost barriers to obtaining and using a Colorado I.D.
- Continue local government – developer agreements (for affordable housing) under new property ownership
- Allow one year continuing eligibility for food stamps, if no change income in household income. Expand outreach to people eligible who are not applying. (About half of eligible people do not apply). Allow those with gross incomes up to 200% of Federal Poverty level to qualify as long as their net income is below 100% of FPL.

Education

- There will likely be another attempt to allow Colorado residents who graduate from Colorado high schools to attend college as residents, regardless of immigration status.



Health

State Action could depend on federal action/inaction and the State Budget hole.

- Eliminate gender discrimination in the pricing of individual health insurance policies. Even if federal legislation passes which includes this, it would not be effective for years. As people lose jobs, or as employers drop health insurance, the role of the individual market will grow. Should women be paying up to 40% more for the same policy?
- Insurers offering individual health insurance could be required to offer maternity coverage.
- Address known, probable or possible carcinogens and other toxins in personal care products. (Safe Cosmetics Campaign)
- Certain Family Medicaid eligibility qualifications maybe be updated and altered from the 1996 AFDC standards including income disregards.
- Allow up to 7 absences per month without losing Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, to allow parents to keep child infect with H1N1 and other illnesses home, without financial penalty.
- Add to the list of topics in City and County Comprehensive Planning to plan for Health Care and Family Planning Services.
- Allow Advance Practice Nurses who can write prescriptions for birth control to also fill those prescriptions. In many rural areas, having a prescription is just the first step of a long process when there is no nearby pharmacy, or that pharmacy does not dispense birth control.
- Require employers to offer paid sick leave.

Child Care

- Allow continuous eligibility for Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, so that parents and those working with parents have time to troubleshoot problems without disrupting the child.
- Allow up to 7 absences per month without losing Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, to allow parents to keep child infect with H1N1 and other illnesses home, without financial penalty.

Violence Against Women

- Update definition of spousal abuse in civil law related to parenting time
- Protections for animals in civil protection orders.
- Allow victims of trafficking to enroll in the address confidentially program
- Exclude adult reports of their own childhood sexual abuse from mandatory child abuse reporting requirements

Pay Equity

- Make the State Pay Equity Commission permanent.
- Align penalties for discrimination based on state charges with those available at a federal level.

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