



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 the limits employer liability for 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 some of problems and cost barriers to obtaining and using a Colorado I.D.
- Clarify that local governments can enter into contracts with a developer to provide affordable units in a proposed development in exchange for supports or waivers.
- 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.

Pay Equity

- Make the State Pay Equity Commission permanent. (Possibly via executive action)
- Align penalties for discrimination based on state charges with those available at a federal level. Extend coverage of non-discrimination law to employers of 15 or more, rather than the current 10 or more.

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 accident and sickness insurance could be required to offer maternity coverage. Insurers offering individual and group accident and sickness insurance policies would also have to cover contraceptive.
- Prohibit the distribution and sale of personal care products containing known, or probable carcinogens and reproductive toxins. (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 infected with H1N1 and other illnesses home, without financial penalty. (May be addressed through rule)
- Require employers to offer paid sick days.

Child Care

- Allow 12 month 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 infected with H1N1 and other illnesses home, without financial penalty. (May be addressed through rule).

Violence Against Women

- Update definition of spousal abuse in civil law related to parenting time
- Protections for animals in civil protection orders.
- Create criminal penalties for person committing domestic violence assault when a child witnesses that assault

For corrections, updates or more information, contact Chaer Robert at 720-913-8465 or chaer.robert@denvergov.org