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The Colorado General Assembly convened for their 14th week of the 2018 session, which means there is about one month left before the General Assembly adjourns sine die. Both chambers still have major policy decisions to make around PERA reform, health care transparency, higher education funding, congressional redistricting, legislative reapportionment and more.

The Joint Budget Committee met this Wednesday as a conference committee to deliberate on the amendments passed in both chambers over the past couple of weeks on the FY18-19 budget, known as the Long Bill. The committee is the decision maker as to which amendments will stay in the Long Bill, as they have to rebalance the budget. All of the amendments that passed in both chambers stayed in the bill. Overall, the budget is well balanced, mostly due to the extra revenue available this year. The JBC was able to invest significantly more dollars in higher education, education and transportation. The House accepted the conference committee changes to the budget this week. It now has to be accepted by the Senate and will then head to the Governor to be signed.

HB18-1341—Apprenticeship and Vocational Technical Training—by Representatives Covarrubias and Danielson passed second reading in the House this week. The bill requires the Department of Labor and Employment to create the Colorado State Apprenticeship Resource Directory. The department will collect detailed information on each apprenticeship program in the state, including the application process, requirements for enrollment, costs, and program outcomes. The bill as introduced only included union apprenticeships. Whereas, there are many non-union apprenticeships in the state, under the help of Governor Hickenlooper's office, that are working to establish the Swiss apprenticeship model in Colorado. The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment has been working in collaboration with the Department of Education and the Department Higher Education as well as other organizations and the business industry to create this model. The goal is that this bill will help those stakeholders and students seeking apprenticeships through data collection. The bill was amended on second reading in the House to broaden the scope of the bill, so that homegrown apprenticeships such as those offered by CareerWise Colorado can be included in the directory.

HB18-1260—Prescription Drug Price Transparency—by Representatives Ginal and Jackson, passed second reading in the House this week. The bill would require insurance carriers to provide information on the top 25 most expensive prescribed drugs in Colorado as well as the drugs that have the highest price increases from year-to-year. It also requires pharmaceutical manufacturers to provide a 90-day advance public notice when drug prices are increased along with an explanation for any increase over 10% above what the cost was 2-years prior. Amendments were brought to the floor by representatives on both sides of the aisle to include pharmacy benefit managers and health insurance carriers in the disclosure requirements outlined in the bill. Those amendments failed in the House, but they could also be offered in the Senate, where it is unclear if they would be supported.