



### **Weekly Legislative Report January 12, 2018**

The seventy-first Colorado General Assembly convened for its 2018 General Session on Wednesday, January 10<sup>th</sup>. Leadership of both the House and Senate addressed their assemblies Wednesday morning in opening day speeches. President Grantham and Speaker Duran took note of the issues that had been addressed successfully in 2017; notably, construction defects reform, the restructuring of the hospital provider fee and charter school funding equalization. Both chambers called for another collaborative legislative session, after a special session ended due to disagreements between the parties a few months ago, which some worried would continue into this general session.

Republicans and Democrats agreed that reforming of the Public Employees Retirement Association and increased funding for transportation were priorities for 2018. PERA reform will be difficult as it requires increased contributions and those increases must be allocated among employees, current and retired, employers and the state. The magnitude of the problem, tens of billions of dollars, is huge and every year that passes without a solution the cost goes up.

Transportation is also a problem measured in the billions of dollars. Both parties understand the need for increased transportation funding, but disagree on how to do so. Republicans in the House and Senate want to fund transportation needs with existing general fund resources, much like they did last session. Democrats and the Governor want to ask voters to approve an increase in tax throughout the state to bring in new revenue. There has not been an increase in the gas tax in almost 30 years.

Governor Hickenlooper gave his final State of the State address on Thursday morning. He focused on how the economy in Colorado has been successful in recent years, sparked by an entrepreneurial spirit in the state. Hickenlooper spoke about how our state needs continued investment in education for this economic boom to continue. He applauded the Education Leadership Council, a nonpartisan council committed to developing a collective vision for education, as well as CareerWise Colorado, which is working to bring the Swiss apprenticeship model to K12 education and business industries across the state.

Also notable, due to national headlines and a call for cultural change, leadership and the Governor spoke to the problem of sexual harassment at the Capitol and the need to address specific examples and to provide the framework for a new more robust protocol for dealing with it in the future. This theme will continue to be addressed throughout the 2018 session.

