



Nexus Weekly Legislative Report April 6, 2018

The Colorado General Assembly convened this week for the 13th week of the legislative session. This was another busy week at the Capitol, as the FY18-19 budget for the state, known as the Long Appropriations Bill, which was debated in the House and passed last week, had its 2nd reading debate in the Senate.

The Senate debated the Long Bill late into the evening on Wednesday. They readopted a number of amendments that also made their way onto the House bill. One of the amendments supported by both chambers added \$2 million General Fund to the Department of Public Safety for wildlife preparedness, as the state expects one of the driest summers on record, which substantially increases the risk for wildfires. There were also amendments for rural broadband, suicide prevention, affordable housing and more pay for Medicaid health care providers. The most controversial amendment to be adopted by both the House and Senate was a \$35 million increase in the Department of Public Safety for school resource officers in public schools. Democrats generally opposed an increased law enforcement presence in public schools for various reasons. This amendment was also controversial for procedural reasons, as two JBC members from the Republican party voted to support the amendment in order to get it passed—a move that went against the long standing tradition of JBC members voting against every amendment offered on the Long Bill which the JBC writes and sponsors.

Next week, the JBC will meet as a conference committee and decide how to rebalance the budget. There was a lot more money for the General Assembly to move around this year compared to previous years, which is why around 50 amendments were adopted in the past two weeks to the budget. Both the House and Senate Long Bill debates brought the Long Bill to a state of unbalance, and the JBC must make the tough decisions on how to rebalance it.

On Monday evening, the House Education committee heard [HB18-1232](#)—New School Funding Distribution Formula—by Representative Young. This bill would create a new school finance formula which gives more money to schools based on their size factor, number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, number of students who are English language learners, number of students who have special needs and factors in the cost of living in a school district. The bill would only take effect if voters approve a ballot measure no later than the 2022 statewide general election that increases funding for preschool through high school public education. The bill was a collaborative effort of superintendents throughout the state who are seeking increased funding for K12 education. The committee laid over the bill to vote on at a different time. Some of the House Education members are having trouble supporting the bill because it is tied to a ballot measure; similar funding proposals have already been defeated by the voters twice recently before on the ballot.