

Status of Legislative Session Still Up in the Air

In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Colorado General Assembly voted on March 14 to shut down the state capitol for a period of two weeks. That legislative timeout is set to expire Monday, March 30, but members are expected to extend the shutdown until mid-April – and possibly beyond that.

Legislative leadership will meet on Monday to decide how to proceed. The legislature is also waiting for a decision by the Colorado Supreme Court concerning whether or not the time missed during the COVID-19 timeout can be made up after the scheduled Sine Die on May 6 (when the 120-day session is set to end). If the Supreme Court decides the General Assembly cannot extend the session, it is fairly certain that the Governor will call a special session to allow the legislature to finish up a number of constitutionally-mandated actions, including adoption of a state budget and a school finance act.

Governor Signs Several Bills Supported by CCI

While the General Assembly continues to idle in a self-imposed timeout, Governor Polis has taken action on a number of bills that passed before the shutdown – several of which were supported by CCI. The Governor has signed the following pieces of legislation into law:

HB20-1093, County Authority to License Short-Term Rentals

HB1093 grants a board of county commissioners the authority to license and regulate short-term rentals in the unincorporated area of the county. This authority is virtually identical to the authority currently enjoyed by every municipality in Colorado. A number of counties – especially those in the rural resort region - have been grappling with a number of health and safety issues related to unregulated short-term rentals in recent years. This bill was a CCI Legislative Priority for 2020.

HB20-1052, Privacy Protections for County Human Services Workers

Under current law, it is unlawful for personal information to be made available about caseworkers and law enforcement personnel. HB1052 expands the protections under statute to include all human services workers. This expanded definition will include employees of juvenile detention centers, county employees (including county attorneys) and human services contractors. The immediate family (spouse, children and parents) of human services workers would also be protected. Under the bill, human services workers may submit a written request to a state or local government official to request their information be protected if they feel that they or their family are in danger.

HB20-1124, Disaster Emergency Transfers from County General Fund

HB1124 extends the time frame in which counties – for the sole purpose of addressing roads and bridges destroyed by natural disasters – can transfer county general funds into the road and bridge fund. This limited flexibility was first authorized following the 2013 floods. At that time, the General Assembly and local governments alike thought these recovery projects could be completed by 2021. While the vast majority of 2013 flood projects have been completed, there are a few outstanding projects that are either under construction, waiting for FEMA review or are in the close-out process. HB 1124 states that this limited transfer authority begins eight years after the date of the Governor’s Final Declaration of an Emergency for the Disaster, including all extensions to the declaration.