



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Kendra Black, Denver City Council

January 10, 2023

FOR CITY SERVICES VISIT | CALL
DenverGov.org | **311**

- The State Legislature meets Jan 9-May 11, 2023.
- The session is 120 days.
- While Legislators do have limits on number of bills, leadership often waives these requirements resulting in 700+ bills introduced each year.
- The GAVEL Amendment and other rules/laws impose requirements that are different than the City's. If a bill is discussed at committee, it can be amended, passed or killed.



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HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF DENVER'S PROCESS

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- During the 1990s, City Council and the Mayor independently contracted with separate lobbyists. This practice actually weakened the voice of *both* branches of government as state legislators were unsure who really spoke for Denver.
- There were also concerns about inefficiency and wasting of tax-payer dollars. For these reasons, City Council and the administration decided unified representation was more effective.
- Mayor Hickenlooper's chief of staff, Michael Bennet, developed the system we use today:
 - Denver has one voice.
 - Contracted lobbyists represent Denver as a whole.
- Additionally, due to the ever-increasing number of bills and the compressed rate of the session, Denver decided to take positions on bills with a *direct operational impact* on the city. (Denver does, however, take positions on major policy issues such as housing and climate even if no direct impact.)

The City Lobbying Team is comprised of:

- A Councilmember appointed by Council President
- City Council's Legislative Counsel
- Mayor's Legislative Director
- Clerk & Recorder
- DEN Representative
- Agency expertise as needed

The Lobbying Team's Internal Vetting Process

- **Denver only takes positions on bills after they're introduced and only if they have a direct impact on Denver.** Typically, each year 150-225 bills have a direct impact on Denver.
- When a bill drops that impacts Denver, the contracted lobbying firm sends it to the city team:
 - Legislative counsel immediately reads the bill and provides the initial legal analysis.
 - Legislative counsel farms bills out to CAO subject-matter experts.
 - Legislative director distributes to professional staff and city subject matter experts.
 - Council representative communicates with council members.
- All feedback is synthesized and a position is developed which is given to the lobbying firm who provides it to State Legislators in a timely manner – often in less than 24 hours.
- The lobbying team meets at least weekly and is in regular communication to decide upon Denver's official position -Support, Oppose, Amend, or take No Position. If City Council and the administration disagree on a position, the City may not take a position.

Councilmember Feedback on Bills

- The Council representative on the State Lobby Team schedules lobbyist updates at FinGov usually before, during and after the session.
- Councilmembers receive updates from the lobbying team.
- Prior to the session, council members, state legislators representing Denver, the mayor and the lobbying team normally have an annual meet-and-greet.
- During the session, weekly updates are provided to council via email.
- Council representative communicates with other members as needed on bills.
- Councilmembers should provide feedback as quickly as possible so that it can be sent with all feedback to the lobbyists in a timely manner.



Denver's Membership in the Colorado Municipal League

- The Colorado Municipal League (CML) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has served and represented Colorado's cities and towns since 1923.
- CML is the strongest advocate for local control and constitutional principle of home rule, both of which allow cities and towns maximum flexibility over municipal policy.
- While CML's largest member is the City and County of Denver, 270 cities and towns are members of the League led by a representative Executive Board. Councilwoman Kendra Black was elected to serve on the CML Executive Board for six years. She currently serves on the Policy Committee.
- One important factor Denver's legislative team will always consider is whether Denver's strategy and position on a Bill is better represented by CML?