



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE:

END OF SESSION REPORT & RECAP

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May 21, 2024

2024 Session Overview

- The Colorado General Assembly debated 705 bills in the 120-day lawmaking term that began January 10th, 2024, and ended May 8th, 2024.
- Democrats hold a 23-12 majority in the Senate and a 46-19 majority in the House. The party also controls the governorship, creating a Democratic state government trifecta. At the start of the 2024 session, Colorado was one of 21 state legislatures where neither party had a veto-proof supermajority in both chambers.
- The Capitol in many respects is the most hostile workplace in Colorado. Two Democratic lawmakers, citing the vitriolic environment of the legislature, resigned late last year. And despite a call for civility from Speaker Julie McCluskie at the outset of the 2024 session, it was clear that member-on-member intimidation continued (at times) to mar public business at the Capitol.
- But public business did get done. Unlike last year, the end of the Colorado legislative session came with no fireworks — no protest walkouts, no intra-caucus tensions boiling over into public, and no last-minute implussions of keystone policy bills.



2024 Session Overview

- The 2024 Colorado legislative session was an active one, including a resurgence of the “oil and gas wars” and a subsequent truce, unprecedented momentum on sustainable housing development, the establishment of dedicated funding for transit via fees on polluting industries, state action to reduce ozone pollution, and a defense against federal attacks on clean water. There was also progress made on building electrification and renewable energy siting, setting the state up for more comprehensive standards in the future.
- At the end of session, legislative leaders characterized the recently ended session as a “breakthrough” four months that laid crucial policy groundwork for transformation of the state’s housing, transportation, and environmental situations. Governor Polis, first elected in 2018, described it as the most “significant legislative session” while he has been governor.



2024 Session – Denver Engagement

- The City & County of Denver ended the 2024 legislative session with the following bill positions:
 - **44 Support Positions**
 - **1 Oppose Position**
 - **15 Monitor Positions**
 - **8 Amend Positions**
- The city was deeply engaged in the legislative process this year, taking 68 official positions on legislation during the 120-day legislative session.
- The city weighed in on numerous areas of policy, including items related to local government, housing, human services, transportation, workforce, education, mental health, equity, criminal justice, taxation and more.



2024 Session Key Issues

- **Land Use/Housing** - In all, six major land-use reform bills passed the legislature before it adjourned. This includes measures dealing with minimum parking requirements, density goals near transit and accessory-dwelling units, and a ban on local occupancy limits that aren't safety related.
- **Firearms**: Legislators voted on a number of firearms bills this session. While many lawmakers supported these efforts, several bills drew criticism from Republicans, who claimed they would violate the Second Amendment, while Democrats argued they would enhance public safety.
- **Transportation**: This year legislators focused on creating a new fee on rental cars to fund construction of long-distance passenger rail throughout the state, enshrining grant programs that allow transit agencies to offer free transit during ozone season and provide free transit for youth year-round, and a failed effort focused on reforming the Regional Transportation District (RTD).



2024 Session Key Issues

- **Environment:** Despite bipartisan agreement on a handful of key reforms, Colorado's 2024 legislative session highlighted the deep divides and entrenched interests that define some of the state's thorniest and longest-running environmental challenges. Colorado Democrats and environmental groups began the year with an ambitious plan to crack down on ozone pollution from the oil and gas industry. It was the most significant new attempt to regulate drilling since a sweeping health and safety overhaul passed by Democrats in 2019, and the opposition it drew from deep-pocketed industry groups was similarly intense.
- **Health Care:** In recent years, the Colorado General Assembly has seen several initiatives related to health care reform, including the creation of the Colorado Option program and a rejected ballot measure that would have established a statewide universal healthcare system through a constitutional amendment. This year we saw additional efforts around health care.



2024 Session Key Issues

- **Taxes:** Predictably, lawmakers entered the 2024 legislative session with a focus on affordability for Coloradans as average costs rise for housing, groceries, and other living expenses. They did so by passing a series of tax credits and tax-related fiscal measures that seek to keep more money in people's pockets or find a way to return it during tax season.
- **Business:** For business groups, this session may go down not only as one where they once again beat back multiple bills that they say would have made it more difficult to operate in this state but actually passed several proposals that will improve Colorado's competitive landscape.
- **Criminal Justice:** Democrats last year passed several criminal justice reform bills, including a law to help protect children from being tricked by law enforcement in police interrogations, and another to curb local immigration detention. Those successes helped fuel cautious progressive ambition for 2024, though it didn't take long for familiar political dynamics to reemerge this year.



2024 Session Key Issues

- **Education:** Schools and funding loomed large in the 2024 Colorado legislative session. State lawmakers approved a new school funding formula 10 years in the making. They passed a “fully funded” K-12 budget, provided financial relief for districts enrolling an influx of newcomer students, and gave a big budget boost to public colleges and universities. The new school funding formula prompted the most heated discussions.
- **Elections:** With a presidential election on the horizon this year, Colorado legislators passed a variety of bills to add protections for voters and further secure the state’s elections. Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold’s priorities going into the 2024 legislative session focused on protecting voters from manipulative campaign content, particularly related to artificial intelligence.



FY25 Budget

- Colorado Gov. Jared Polis signed the state's \$40.6 billion budget for the upcoming fiscal year in April, praising the historic funding for public education and bipartisan work of legislators for crafting a more normal budget as pandemic relief funds dry up.
- The 2024-25 budget is \$2 billion more than the current's year spending allocation. Those increases are driven by bigger allocations for health care, a significant expansion in the state's workforce and more money for schools seeing increased enrollment of immigrant students whose families illegally crossed America's southern border and traveled to Colorado. It is a 3.7% increase over last year's budget and reflects an increase of about \$1 billion in general fund spending.
- Perhaps most notably, the budget achieves a longstanding goal to fully fund public K-12 education in the state for the first time in 14 years by eliminating the so-called budget stabilization factor. The school-funding shortfall has been in place since the Great Recession and essentially amounts to a \$10 billion IOU to schools. The budget, through the school finance act, devotes about \$141 million to get rid of it.
- Though funding for public schools will increase by more than \$500 million and \$737 per pupil, spending will be at 1989 levels when adjusted for inflation.



Gubernatorial Vetoes

Here in Colorado, the Governor has three options for each bill that reaches his/her desk:

- **First, the Governor can sign a bill into law.**
- **Second, the Governor can veto it.**
- **Third, the Governor can allow the bill to become law without his/her signature. In Colorado, there is no “pocket veto” option.**

Some important things to keep in mind.:

- **During a legislative session, the Governor has 10 days to decide which of those three options will be used for each bill that reaches his/her desk. This clock expired in the final weeks of session.**
- **Now, after the close of session, the Governor has 30 days to make those decisions. So, this clock is now ticking.**

If the Governor takes no action on a bill, then when the applicable timeframe has elapsed, the bill becomes law without his/her signature.



Gubernatorial Vetoes

- In 2019, his first year as governor, Jared Polis vetoed five measures. In 2020, he vetoed three. He vetoed four bills in each 2021 and 2022. And last year Polis vetoed 10 bills passed by the General Assembly, a record for our current governor.
- Polis' predecessor, John Hickenlooper, also a Democrat, vetoed 14 bills in his first seven years as governor. He didn't veto any in 2013. But in 2018, Hickenlooper's eighth and final year as governor, he vetoed nine bills as he prepared to launch an ultimately unsuccessful presidential campaign. Hickenlooper was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2020. The record of most vetoes goes to Gov. Bill Owens, a Republican, with a prodigious 47 vetoes in 2005.
- If prior years are any guide, we can expect Governor Polis to veto between 3 to 6 bills. However, given budget constraints, Polis may choose to wield his pen to rein in spending on high-cost legislation.
- Governor Polis has until June 7 to sign or veto bills that came out of the 2024 legislative session.



A Look Ahead

- **The end of Colorado's 2024 legislative session means the end of an era in the General Assembly.**
- **When Colorado's legislature returns next year, there will be no more Democratic senators or representatives who were at one point in the minority and no more Republicans who served in the majority.**
- **You would have to go back 60-some years to find another period where there were no Democrats serving in Colorado's legislature who hadn't at one point been in the minority, as well as no Republican senators or representatives who hadn't served in the majority. Democrats controlled the General Assembly for a period from the mid-1950s into the early 1960s. Republicans, however, controlled both chambers of the Colorado legislature for decades from the late 1970s into the 2000s.**



QUESTIONS?

