



**2026 Legislative Session
Week in Review
3/6/2026**

Schools, prisons, Medicaid

The state budget is the biggest, roughest issue of the 2026 session, and there were developments this week on three of the most important chunks of state spending. Here's the rundown:

School funding – A measure introduced Thursday, SB 26-135, would ask voters for approval to tap TABOR surplus to boost K-12 funding. It's backed by the Colorado Education Association, other education groups and lots of Democratic lawmakers. It obviously wouldn't affect 2026-27 school funding, which is threatened with cuts.

Prison costs – Democratic lawmakers are chafing at the need to pay for rising prison populations. The Joint Budget Committee this week considered 2026-27 corrections budget requests but delayed action on major recommendations for more prison beds and dealing with prison guard overtime costs.

Medicaid waste – The Department of Health Care Policy and Financing has been hit hard by both rapidly rising Medicaid costs and administrative missteps. Within the last few days there's been news of massive overpayments for autism treatments and of a possible investigation by a Republican-controlled U.S. House committee. (Get details in news articles linked below.) Medicaid will be a top priority for the Joint Budget Committee next week, when it holds three figure setting sessions for HCPF.

Floor highlights of the week included long debates over some election bills, including HB 26-1113, which makes a variety of changes in election laws. It finally passed the House on a 41-22 vote. The measure to require greater transparency in ballot measure language, HB 26-1084, passed 40-22.

Two firearms bills that dominated floor debates last Friday received final votes on Monday. SB 26-043, which would impose regulations on the sale of firearm barrels, barely passed the Senate 17-16. HB 26-1144, the proposed ban on "ghost guns," passed the House 40-25.

The Senate knocked off before mid-morning Friday. But as noon approached the House was deep into a special orders calendar of more than 20 bills, including a contentious Friday more than 20 special orders bill on second reading, including, HB 26-1005, the proposed revisions to the labor peace act, and HB 26-1202, a contentious homelessness and housing bill.

Tallying the bills

In addition to the school funding bill noted above, here are some other bills of interest that were introduced this week:

- **Beavers** – HB 26-1323 would ban hunting or trapping beavers on public lands. Democratic.
- **Higher ed** – HB 26-1317 proposes creation of a committee to study moving various workforce development programs to the Department of Higher Education. (This apparently is the outcome of proposals made previously by Gov. Jared Polis.) It has powerful bipartisan sponsors.
- **Housing** – HB 26-1308 would require local governments to approve residential lot splitting under certain conditions. Democratic.
- **LGBTQ+ rights** – HB 26-1319 would protect the rights of employees to be open about their LGBTQ+ identity in the workplace. And HB 26-1322 would make it easier for victims of conversion therapy to sue therapists. Both Democratic.
- **School zones** – HB 26-1317 would expand the size of “school zone” on streets around schools and allow use of automatic detection devices to snag offending drivers. Democratic.

As of Friday morning, 458 bills had been introduced.

The Week for the JBC

The budget committee started the week with some lighter figure setting – the governor’s office, state treasurer and military and veterans’ affairs – before moving to CDPHE’s health divisions and then corrections.

For the health department, JBC deadlocked on the proposed cut to funding for local public health agencies and approved less funding than requested for improvements to the department’s mismanaged water testing lab.

JBC did vote to cut \$1 million from the comprehensive sex education grant program for school districts.

Next week the committee faces figure setting decisions for various parts of Health Care Policy and Financing on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. The rest of JBC’s calendar isn’t much easier, given that it includes the Department of Early Childhood, higher education and the Judicial branch.

Time is running short for the committee, given that the March revenue forecasts are less than two weeks away, on March 19.

Bill Updates

HB26-1272, Extreme Temperatures Worker Protections (Monitor)

PM followed up with CML regarding their oppose position. From their position, municipalities are currently exempt from OSHA, and this would impose additional responsibility and potential liability when it is likely that most municipalities are already doing this. It is also considered an unfunded mandate that could impose administrative burden.

SB26-098, State & Local Noise Abatement Authority (Monitor)

PM checked with CML regarding their support position. Their viewpoint is that a Colorado Supreme Court case ruling, cities are not currently able to permit events past certain times in a way they see fit affecting local control. This bill seeks to give local control back to municipalities to permit specific types of events. Colloquially being called the “Save Red Rocks” bill.

Notable stories of the week

- New bill would ask voters to retain TABOR surpluses for K-12 funding (CPR) - <https://www.cpr.org/2026/03/05/cea-lawmakers-education-funding-bill-tabor/>
- U.S. House committee snooping around Colorado Medicaid program (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/05/u-s-house-probes-reports-of-fraud-waste-in-colorados-medicaid-program/>
- Another HCPF screwup – feds said it overpaid for autism treatments (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/03/02/colorado-wrongly-spent-78m-on-autism-therapy-office-of-the-inspector-general-says/>

All of this week’s news links

(Only a single link is provided for some events that were covered by multiple outlets. Multiple links are provided for some major stories.)

Friday, March 6

- New bill would ask voters to retain TABOR surpluses for K-12 funding (CPR) - <https://www.cpr.org/2026/03/05/cea-lawmakers-education-funding-bill-tabor/>
- U.S. House committee snooping around Colorado Medicaid program (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/05/u-s-house-probes-reports-of-fraud-waste-in-colorados-medicaid-program/>
- Bill to change open records law fails again (Post) - <https://www.denverpost.com/2026/03/05/colorado-open-records-responses-bill/>

Thursday, March 5

- House GOP leader concerned about Dem political speeches (Chalkbeat) - <https://www.chalkbeat.org/colorado/2026/03/06/lawmakers-introduce-tabor-refund-ballot-measure-bill-to-fund-schools/>
- Legislators take aim at swipe fees (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/05/colorado-legislators-eye-changes-to-credit-card-swipe-fees/>
- Bill would curb Xcel condemnation powers (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/04/colorado-lawmakers-move-to-curb- eminent-domain-powers-after-xcel-dispute/>

Wednesday, March 4

- Bill proposes consolidation of higher ed, workforce programs (Chalkbeat) - <https://www.chalkbeat.org/colorado/2026/03/05/lawmakers-begin-higher-education-labor-and-workforce-merger/>
- Dems united in opposition to Polis reducing Peters' sentence (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/03/04/tina-peters-jared-polis-sentence-democrats-legislature/>
- Election bills moving swiftly (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/03/ballot-access-dual-office-ban-bills-move-swiftly-through-colorado-legislature/>
- “Captive audience” pricing bill dies (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/03/03/captive-audience-pricing-colorado-bill-fails/>

Tuesday, March 3

- Committee advances sexual assault bill (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/02/colorado-lawmakers-tackle-legislation-on-sexual-assault/>
- Bill proposes leave-from-work guarantee for lawmakers (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/02/colorado-bill-would-require-employers-to-grant-legislative-leave-to-state-lawmakers/>
- Benavidez sworn in (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/02/colorado-senate-swears-in-adrienne-benavidez-after-district-vacancy-win/>
- Sponsors believe reduced testing would ease student stress (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/03/03/colorado-cmas-reduce-state-standardized-testing-time/>

Friday, Feb. 27 – Monday, March 2, 2026

- Another HCPF screwup – feds said it overpaid for autism treatments (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/03/02/colorado-wrongly-spent-78m-on-autism-therapy-office-of-the-inspector-general-says/>
- Gun control bills advance in both chambers (Post) - <https://www.denverpost.com/2026/03/02/colorado-gun-control-3d-printing/>
- Bill would reduce testing times for lower grades (Chalkbeat) - <https://www.chalkbeat.org/assessment-and-testing/>
- Emissions reporting bill suffers bipartisan defeat (Sum & Substance) - <https://tssc Colorado.com/committee-kills-bill-dealing-with-emissions-reporting/>
- Lawmakers debate surveillance bills (Post) - <https://www.denverpost.com/2026/03/02/colorado-big-data-privacy-surveillance-bills-legislature/>
- Bill would create process to shorten prison sentences (CO Newslines) - <https://coloradonewslines.com/2026/03/02/colorado-second-look-prison-sentences/>
- Farmworker overtime bills split Dems (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/02/competing-overtime-bills-for-agriculture-workers-split-colorado-democrats/>
- Pollinator protection bill defeated (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/03/02/rural-lawmakers-and-colorado-farmers-defeat-pollinator-protection-bill-backed-by-gov-polis/>