



**2026 Legislative Session
Week in Review
2/27/2026**

Lawmakers putting in the hours

After a week debating issues from immigration to protecting Colorado fruits and vegetables, Friday was “gun day” at the Capitol as both chambers settled into debates on Democratic firearms bills.

The Senate was wrestling with SB 26-043, which would impose regulations on the sale of firearm barrels, while the House was fighting over HB 26-1144, the proposed ban on “ghost guns.”

The Senate was still debating as the day turned to early afternoon, but the House gave preliminary approval to its bill.

Other top bills debated on the floors this week included measures on these issues:

Housing – There was long debate before House 38-26 passage of HB 26-1114, which would restrict the minimum lot sizes that local governments can require.

Immigration – The Senate argued at length over SB 26-005, the bill that would allow individuals injured during an immigration action to sue federal agents in state court. It passed 20-11.

Pet sales – HB 26-1011, which puts certain restrictions on animal sales by pet stores, received preliminary House approval.

Vegetables – The House voted 65-0 to pass HB 26-1031, which to label produce as Colorado-grown when it’s not.

Also, Sen. Cathy Kipp, D-Fort Collins, was elected Senate president pro tempore this week. She replaces former Sen. Dafna Michaelson Jenet of Commerce City, who recently resigned to take a non-profit job. A vacancy committee appointed former Democratic Rep. Adrienne Benavidez to Michaelson Jenet’s old seat.

Tallying the bills

The steady flow of new bills continued in the last week. Here are some of the more interesting ones:

- **Driverless trucks** – HB 26-1286 requires that a commercial motor vehicle have a human present when the vehicle is being driven by an automated driving system. Bipartisan.
- **Gambling** – SB 26-131 would create new requirements and prohibitions for sports betting, including restrictions on advertising, proposition bets, credit card deposits and push notifications. Bipartisan.
- **Mental health** – HB 26-1301 would ask voters to increase alcohol and marijuana taxes to raise revenue for a state mental health hospital in Aurora and civil commitment facilities in Mesa County. Democratic.
- **School paperwork** – HB 26-1299 would reduce administrative burdens on Colorado schools by eliminating or streamlining various state reporting, planning, and assessment requirements. Bipartisan.
- **Teachers** – HB 26-1291 proposes evaluations of highly-rated teachers be done every three years, rather than the annual reviews now required. Democratic.

As of Friday morning, 435 bills had been introduced.

The Week for the JBC

Staff memos presented to the Joint Budget Committee within the last several days highlighted the challenges of balancing the 2026-27 state budget and warned that there may need to be deeper cuts than previously proposed by Gov. Jared Polis or discussed by the committee.

The budget conversation is now starting to include options such as adjustments to K-12 spending and to the state employee collective bargain agreement.

The JBC is well into figure setting for the 2026-27 state budget and has less than four more weeks to work until release of the quarterly revenue forecasts on March 19. Those will set the financial boundaries within which the committee will have to balance the budget.

But major questions remain about how lawmakers will close a budget gap estimated at \$552 million to \$700 million by committee Staff Director Craig Harper.

Polis' budget balancing plans lean heavily on slowing the growth of Medicaid costs and one-time tactics like privatizing Pinnacle Assurance.

But Harper warned the committee that “constraining the growth in Medicaid will be a necessary component. However, staff’s analysis indicates that closing the gap will almost

certainly require significant reductions to other ‘big six’ departments with large General Fund appropriations.”

As a reminder, the big six are Health Care Policy and Financing, Education, Higher Education, Human Services, Corrections, and the Judicial branch.

As for Polis’ one-time tactics, JBC remains deeply skeptical of many of them and hasn’t acted on any of them.

In the face of all that the committee soldiered on this week, meeting mostly in the afternoons because House floor work ate up the mornings. Members approved a lot of tough cuts to Department of Education grant programs but delayed key decisions on state construction spending.

On Friday JBC worked through figure setting for a particularly sensitive area of the budget – behavioral health programs.

Bill Updates

HB26-1001, Housing Developments on Qualifying Properties (Oppose)

PM spoke with the Special District Association and Metro District Council to see if they had any concerns around this bill as it relates to responsibility of the debt. Both groups do not currently have a position on this bill but based on our inquiry are having their lawyers look into it. We will update you as we learn more.

HB26-1119, Authority for Different Mill Levy Rates (No position)

This bill was presented during the Property Tax Commission but did not move forward. This year, it is a Gov’s Office effort that was presented to Rep. Woodrow to run. This bill could negatively impact metro districts by reducing property taxes.

SB26-046, Property Tax Administrative Procedures (No position)

This bill makes multiple changes to procedural requirements for the administration of property tax in 2 broad categories: deadlines and requirements for transmitting information. **The bill aligns the regular and late application dates for the qualified-senior primary residence real property classification and the property tax exemption for qualifying veterans with disabilities and their spouses.**

Notable stories of the week

(To save you time, here are links to key stories of the week that you should read if you haven't already.)

- Former Rep. Benavidez chosen to succeed Sen. Michaelson Jenet (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/02/26/vacancy-committee-selects-former-state-rep-adrienne-benavidez-to-replace-sen-dafna-michaelson-jenet/>
- Senate debate gets heated on immigration bill (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/23/colorado-senators-hold-heated-debate-on-latest-immigration-bill/>
- How HCPF's Medicaid fraud scandal unfolded (Post) - <https://www.denverpost.com/2026/02/22/colorado-medicaid-errors-transportation-fraud/>
- Study: Data center tax breaks would increase taxes on the poor (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/02/23/proposed-data-center-tax-breaks-would-increase-taxes-poor-coloradans-analysis/>
- Battle lines drawn over prostitution decriminalization (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/23/battle-lines-drawn-as-colorado-considers-decriminalizing-prostitution/>

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, Feb. 27

- Former Rep. Benavidez chosen to succeed Sen. Michaelson Jenet (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/02/26/vacancy-committee-selects-former-state-rep-adrienne-benavidez-to-replace-sen-dafna-michaelson-jenet/>
- Bill would impose new fees on booze (Post) - <https://www.denverpost.com/2026/02/27/colorado-alcohol-tax-fee-treatment/>
- State DAs oppose bill to limit police access to consumer data (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/26/colorado-district-attorneys-oppose-bipartisan-bill-limiting-government-access-to-bought-data/>

Thursday, Feb. 26

- Lawmakers seek to curb gambling addictions (Post) - <https://www.denverpost.com/2026/02/25/colorado-prop-bets-ban-sports-betting/>
- Audit: Rape kit testing backlog reduced (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/25/state-audit-rape-kit-backlog-reduced-but-more-work-needed-to-hit-goal/>
- Eviction bill killed in committee (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/25/bipartisan-opposition-sinks-eviction-bill-in-colorado/>
- Bill would give local governments more flexibility in noise regulations (CPR) - <https://www.cpr.org/2026/02/26/local-city-county-noise-regulations-bill/>

Wednesday, Feb. 25

- Lawmakers consider multiple changes to marijuana laws (Westword) - <https://www.westword.com/news/colorado-lawmakers-considering-big-changes-cannabis-laws-40846639/>
- Pet sale limits advance (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/24/colorado-house-advances-bill-to-ban-pet-stores-from-selling-dogs-and-cats-as-opponents-warn-of-black-market-surge/>
- Bill seeks to protect kids from chatbots (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/02/25/colorado-chatgpt-chatbot-regulations/>
- Measure proposes to evaluate highly rated teachers only every three years (CPR) - <https://www.cpr.org/2026/02/25/highly-rated-teachers-every-three-years-evaluation-bill/>
- Ethics panel finds probable cause for some Weinberg allegations (Post) - <https://www.denverpost.com/2026/02/25/weinberg-ethics-hearing-disposition/>
- Change in school board elections rejected (Chalkbeat) - <https://www.chalkbeat.org/colorado/2026/02/25/state-lawmakers-reject-change-to-how-school-board-members-elected/>

Tuesday, Feb. 24

- Senate debate gets heated on immigration bill (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/23/colorado-senators-hold-heated-debate-on-latest-immigration-bill/>
- Kipp chosen Senate president pro tempore (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/23/colorado-senate-democrats-choose-sen-cathy-kipp-as-president-pro-tempore/>
- Ethics committee narrows case against Rep. Weinberg (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/23/with-deadline-looming-colorado-house-ethics-committee-narrows-case-against-rep-ron-weinberg/>
- Bill would require wellness checks for missing students (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/23/colorado-colleges-must-conduct-wellness-check-if-a-student-is-reported-missing-under-proposal/>

- Renewal of corporate tax credits advances (Sum & Substance) - <https://tssc Colorado.com/legislators-give-bipartisan-backing-to-extending-job-growth-incentive-tax-credit/>

Saturday, Feb. 21 – Monday, Feb. 22

- How HCPF’s Medicaid fraud scandal unfolded (Post) - <https://www.denverpost.com/2026/02/22/colorado-medicaid-errors-transportation-fraud/>
- Study: Data center tax breaks would increase taxes on the poor (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/02/23/proposed-data-center-tax-breaks-would-increase-taxes-poor-coloradans-analysis/>
- Bill seeks to resist Trump’s push for coal (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/02/23/colorado-coal-plants-bill-trump-orders/>
- School districts push back at Polis’ plan to reclassify vehicle tax revenues (Sun) - <https://coloradosun.com/2026/02/23/colorado-school-funding-cuts-specific-ownership-tax-polis/>
- Battle lines drawn over prostitution decriminalization (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/23/battle-lines-drawn-as-colorado-considers-decriminalizing-prostitution/>
- Candidates line up to succeed Michaelson Jenet (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/23/at-least-6-candidates-vying-to-replace-former-sen-dafna-michaelson-jenet/>
- Bill would ban former ICE agents from becoming cops (CO Pols) - <https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/02/20/colorado-bill-disqualifies-former-ice-agents-from-getting-job-in-local-law-enforcement-bills-in-brief/>
- Lawmakers seek to plug federal workplace safety gaps (CO Newslines) - <https://coloradonewsline.com/briefs/colorado-workplace-safety-rules/>
- Competing bills target social media companies’ responsiveness to law enforcement (Chalkbeat) - <https://www.chalkbeat.org/colorado/2026/02/20/colorado-bills-change-social-media-response-to-law-enforcement/>
- Coal communities transitions bill moves in House (Sum & Substance) - <https://tssc Colorado.com/bill-would-mandate-coal-community-employers-give-hiring-preferences-to-workers-losing-jobs/>