



Lobbying • Strategic Planning • Coalition Building

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2015 DRCOG LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

It has been the pleasure of the lobbying team of Danny Tomlinson, George Dibble, Ed Bowditch, and Jennifer Cassell to represent the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) at the State Capitol, and to work with the staff and board members of DRCOG. As in past years, we have been engaged in a number of issues, some more labor intensive than others, but all important to the organization, its members, and constituents. We continue to develop and maintain strong relationships at the Capitol on behalf of DRCOG and are recognized as a trusted resource for reliable, credible information for the administration, legislators, regulators, and staff.

We have especially enjoyed working with Jennifer, Rich, Jayla, Flo and staff, and are appreciative of the strong support of the Board leadership and their willingness to become involved in issues critical to the mission of DRCOG.

This summary briefly describes some of the activities in which we have been engaged during the past year at the Colorado General Assembly and with various state departments and agencies. If you should have any questions we are happy to provide further details.

I. LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW

During the recently concluded 2015 general session we closely reviewed each of over 680 individual pieces of legislation that were introduced for possible impact on DRCOG and its member governments. Of those, we initiated tracking, monitoring, and/or lobbying activities on about 130 bills. Of those 130 bills, working with staff, we determined that 45 bills merited special attention because of their potential impact and we actually lobbied a DRCOG position on 24 of those bills. The 45 bills that we took special interest in dealt with the budget, seniors, water, transportation, and various local government issues.

Of the 24 individual bills we actively lobbied on behalf of DRCOG during the 2015 session, we enjoyed an 87.5% success rate in our efforts to pass, defeat, or amend. This notwithstanding split control of the House and Senate. Each house engaged in killing bills passed by the opposite house – including SB15-177, Construction Defects; HB15-1018 Elder Abuse; and HB15-1100 Funding for Senior Services.

State Funding for Senior Services

After many years of working in cooperation with various senior advocacy groups to increase appropriations to the Older Coloradans Fund, we once again were able to secure additional funding for senior services. An additional \$4 million will go into the Older Coloradans Fund to then be allocated to the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), such as DRCOG. These agencies in turn fund home delivered meals, in home services, and non-emergency transportation to assist seniors in living independently. Ultimately, these services save the state money by avoiding the need to reimburse providers for more expensive emergency and institutional care, while allowing seniors to remain in their own homes. The total state funding for senior services is over \$21 million for FY 2015-2016.

Strategic Planning on Aging

In collaboration with AARP and the Bell Policy Center, we worked hard to pass HB15-1033, which addresses the need for the State to plan for its growing aging population. The bipartisan measure creates a task force to develop a Strategic Plan on Aging to address the economic, workforce, and social effects of this demographic shift. After lobbying the bill relentlessly in the Senate, the bill passed in the final days of the session.

The following is a *sample* of some of the 2015 legislation in which we were involved on behalf of DRCOG. While this list does not contain all of the bills we worked on, it does give a feel for the scope of legislation with which we dealt.

BILL NUMBER	SUBJECT	DRCOG POSITION
HB 15-1029 Buck / Kefalas	Health Care Delivery via Telemedicine	DRCOG – Supported • Signed into law
HB 15-1033 Primavera / Crowder	Strategic Planning Group on Aging	DRCOG – Supported and drafted • Signed into law
HB 15-1233 Landgraf / Aguilar	Respite Care Study Task Force	DRCOG – Supported • Signed into law
HB 15-1302 Primavera / Martinez Humenik	Assisted Living Facility Administrator Continuing Education	DRCOG - Opposed • Killed in Senate State Affairs
HB 15-1077 Wilson	Modify Late Vehicle Registration Fee	DRCOG – Opposed • Killed House State Affairs
SB 15-018 Neville T. / Neville P.	Repeal Late Vehicle Registration Fee	DRCOG – Opposed • Killed House State Affairs
SB 15-172 Jones / Foote	High-Performance Transportation Enterprise Accountability	DRCOG – Opposed • Killed in Senate Transportation
SB 15-177 Scheffel & Ulibarri / DelGrosso & Singer	HOA – Construction Defect Lawsuit Approval Timelines	DRCOG – Supported • Killed in House State Affairs
SB 15-008 Roberts / Vigil	Promote Water Conservation in Land Use Planning	DRCOG – Supported • Signed into law
SB 15-212 Sonnenberg / Winter	Storm Water Facilities Not Injure Water Rights	DRCOG – Supported • Signed into law
SB 15-234 JBC Members	Budget Bill (Additional Funding for Seniors)	DRCOG - Supported • Signed into law

II. BUDGET OVERVIEW

The economic report issued by the General Assembly stated on March 20, 2015:

“Economic growth in Colorado and the nation will remain strong. The health of households and businesses will continue to improve with gains in jobs, consumer demand, credit conditions, and real estate markets. In FY 2014-15, General Fund revenue is expected to be \$49.1 million higher than the amount budgeted to be spent or retained in the statutory reserve. This figure is net of a \$50 million increase in expectations for General Fund revenue,

a \$69.7 million set aside for a TABOR Limit refund, and changes in law resulting from the supplemental budget package.”

In developing the budget for FY 2015-16, the General Assembly had approximately \$660 million of new General Fund revenues. Despite that seemingly large figure, the state’s budget was limited by a number of factors. Most of the new funding was required to address inflationary and enrollment increases in education and caseload increases in Medicaid. Outside of those commitments, the FY 2015-16 budget reflects the following priorities:

1. **Higher Education.** For the second year in a row, the state made a major commitment to higher education funding – about \$90 million, or a 12 percent increase in state funding. This additional support brings higher education close to its prerecession (2008-11) level of funding.
2. **Corrections.** The Department received an increase to reflect the costs of housing offenders in jails, private prisons, and halfway houses. The General Assembly also moved some lease purchase appropriations from the capital budget to the operating budget – and this shows up as an increase in the State’s operating budget.
3. **Services for Seniors.** Again, this past session the legislature recognized the needs of senior citizens – appropriating an increase of \$4 million, which is allocated to the state’s 16 Area Agencies on Aging to provide support for homebound seniors.
4. **Economic Development Programs.** The JBC allocated an increase of \$3 million for film production and \$4 million for tourism promotion within the Governor’s Office of Economic Development. In addition, the JBC extended funding for the Colorado Credit Reserve program, which helps small businesses gain access to capital for equipment purchases, infrastructure purchases, and expansion projects.
5. **K-12 Education.** Beyond the inflationary increases in K-12 education, the legislature authorized one-time funding of \$10 million for small, rural schools, and \$5 million for at-risk students. Finally, the General Assembly provided additional funding to “buy down” the negative factor by \$25 million. The negative factor is currently more than \$850 million.

III. INTERIM LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

During the 2015 legislative interim there will be 4 Interim Committees meeting. We will follow the Transportation and Legislative Review Committee; the Water Resources Review Committee; and the Legislative Health Benefit Exchange Implementation Review Committee for any impact to DRCOG.

We continue to follow the Joint Budget Committee during the interim and attend staff briefings on the Department of Transportation, the Department of Public Health & Environment, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Health Care Policy & Financing. Each of these departments has programs that impact DRCOG. Subsequently, we also attend the JBC hearings with the various departments and Executive Directors and the figure-setting sessions for the departments.

In addition, we will continually meet with individual legislators throughout the summer and fall to maintain relationships, stay abreast of issues, and monitor legislative developments.

IV. ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR FY 2015-16

Two recent economic reports (June 19, 2015) by Legislative Council and the State Office of Planning and Budget outline an increase in state General Fund revenues for FY 2015 – 2016. The economic outlook for the state remains positive with improvements in job growth and business activity. While there may be some retreat in the oil and gas industry and possible effects of national and global economic activity, the momentum for Colorado economic growth should continue. For details and an executive summary of these reports, please view both the reports of the State Office of Planning and Budgeting and the General Assembly's Legislative Council.

As of the June forecast, both offices project TABOR rebates of less than one percent of General Fund revenues in FY 2015-16, which means there would be a SB 09-228 transfer to transportation of about \$202 million.

Also increasing will be the challenges presented by the growing needs for increased funding for education, infrastructure and transportation, and human services including the addressing the needs of a growing aging population, among other needs. All of this under the potential shadow of a TABOR cap and Referendum C restrictions. These challenges will certainly be addressed by the 2016 Session of the General Assembly and are already being heard in the 2015 interim committees, currently meeting.

V. SUMMARY

We are quite proud of our record of accomplishment in achieving the desired results and goals of DRCOG. We place a strong emphasis on establishing and maintaining strong and lasting relationships among the elected members of the General Assembly, the legislative staff and the personnel of the executive departments of state government. The development of these relationships on behalf of DRCOG has positioned the organization as an effective, credible, and professional force in Colorado legislative and regulatory arenas.

Lobby Colorado Associates strives to represent the organization and its members in the most professional, ethical, and effective manner. We make every effort to be available to the DRCOG Board, its staff and members at all times and very much enjoy being a resource. We are most desirous of continuing the relationship that we have built with DRCOG and look forward to continuing to work with DRCOG for many years. Thank you very much for your support, guidance, and most of all, your friendship. We enjoy our relationship and are happy to provide any additional detail you might need for this summary report of our activities.

