

2019 LEGISLATIVE RECAP

Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce Leads in Tough Legislative Session

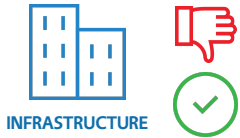
The Chamber identified key priorities for the 2019 session in a letter sent to legislators before the start of the session. We highlighted the importance of our pillars – **strong infrastructure, accessible health care and wellness strategies and an effective education system** – as key to our economic future. We committed to engaging on legislation any time it stood to impact our business community but also reinforced our commitment to other key priorities: supporting **our rural partners**, addressing the **rising costs of health care**, recognizing how important **economic development programs** are to attracting, expanding and retaining great jobs in Colorado. This session we focused primarily on protecting the system that has allowed businesses to flourish in Colorado and are committed to doing the same next session.

Key Bills for Business



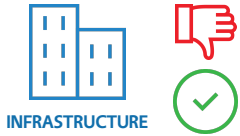
SB19-188: FAMILI Leave Mandate Amended to Study

As introduced, this bill would have created a \$1-2 billion mandatory employee leave program administered by the state and funded by a payroll tax. **The Chamber, our partners and our investors voiced concerns about the financial solvency of such a large, government-run program and the Governor agreed.** We also were concerned the mandate would have reduced benefits for Coloradans across the state whose employers already provide leave programs. **This mandate was amended into a study** that will assess the actuarial soundness of the proposal. We changed our position from opposed to neutral.



SB19-181: Oil & Gas Local Regulation

Although several key amendments were adopted to this legislation that lessened the impact on the oil and gas industry, the Chamber stayed opposed to this bill. The greatest challenge is that we don't agree with the premise that we can't produce energy, both fossil fuels and renewables, and protect our environment and our health. We also know that natural resources don't correspond with municipal lines, and creating a patchwork of regulations across the state isn't a good solution for protecting our environment.



HB19-1261: Climate Action Plan to Reduce Pollution

Sets unattainable goals without accountability.

While the Chamber is supportive of efforts to reduce emission of greenhouse gases, this bill merely sets goals and delegates unprecedented authority to the appointed Colorado Air Quality Control Commission. All Coloradans are impacted by policies aimed at addressing climate change; a balanced solution must have as many voices at the table to discuss this challenge – and the right venue to do so is at the Capitol through representatives who are accountable to Coloradans. Despite a request to Gov. Polis to veto the bill, the legislation passed.

Other Top Priorities



HB19-1239: Census Outreach Grant Program

Allocates funding for an accurate Colorado 2020 Census count

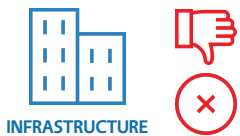
Federal funding makes up one-third of Colorado's budget and is determined by the state population collected through census data. An accurate census count is critical for ensuring adequate funding and appropriate congressional representation in Washington, so we were highly supportive of this bill to allocate dollars towards a complete count.



HB19-1257 & HB19-1258: De-Brucing

Asks voters to retain state revenue for transportation and education

House Bills 1257 and 1258 refer a ballot measure to the 2019 ballot that will let voters decide if the state can retain the revenue it collects in excess of TABOR (Taxpayer's Bill of Rights) limitations, allowing them to maximize the state's investment in the critical and historically underfunded areas of transportation and education.



SB19-225: Authorize Local Governments to Stabilize Rent

Would have allowed local government to impose rent control regulations

Research is clear that rent control further aggravates the crisis of unaffordable and inaccessible housing and actually harms the working families it aims to protect, so we opposed this bill that would have allowed local governments to set rent limits.



HB19-1273: Colorado Partnership for Quality Jobs and Services Act

Would have weakened Labor Peace Act

Colorado's Labor Peace Act is a unique legal middle ground between right-to-work and union shop states that has contributed to Colorado's economic well-being for 76 years. On the contrary, this type of policy would have increased the polarization of labor policy for our state.

Key Bills Impacting Policy Pillars



Education & Workforce Development

The Chamber supported two key bills that expanded workforce development and education attainment opportunities for high school students. Senate Bill 216 allowed certain districts greater flexibility in allowing students to participate in high-quality experiential learning by eliminating seat-time reporting requirements for those schools. Meanwhile, Senate Bill 176 modernized current concurrent enrollment opportunities and required that they lead to guaranteed transferable credit across all Colorado institutions. As an organization that supports multiple pathways to higher education, we were pleased to see these bills passed.



Infrastructure

The Chamber also supported Senate Bill 263 which delayed a referred measure asking voters to approve bonds for transportation funding from the 2019 ballot to the 2020 ballot. The delay allows the Colorado Department of Transportation to issue a Certificate of Participation, which will give them an additional \$500 million in funding now, rather than having to wait for funding through bonding. The bill also transferred \$50 million from the general fund to the highway users tax fund and extended a \$50 million general fund transfer from SB18-001. The Chamber has long supported putting more money into our transportation infrastructure system because a strong system is imperative to a successful economy.



Health and Wellness

Health care was a top priority for legislators this session, and a few key bills passed that have the potential to lower health care costs statewide. Most notably, legislators were committed to addressing out-of-network charges with House Bill 1174, legislation that established reimbursement rates for out-of-network providers who provide services at an in-network facility. Many of our hospital members identified this as an important issue to address. Hospitals also came together to shape legislation requiring more transparency for their industry with House Bill 1001. The Chamber supported both of these bills after lobbying for changes that would address concerns of various stakeholders.



Learn more about this session and the Chamber's policy work at denverchamber.org/policy.