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Calendar



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Staff



Partners



Publications



Videos



Awards

[Return to Headlines](#)

School Board Advocate: November 16, 2018



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In this issue:

- Purple-ish Trending Blue and Does It Really Matter?
- Amendment 73 Advances the Ball
- "One Last Thing Before I Leave"
- CASB at the Capitol
- Hope Smiles

Purple-ish Trending Blue and Does It Really Matter?

The 2018 November general election will be remembered for a few things. Firstly, Colorado Democrats, and many unaffiliated voters for that matter, rose up to express their clear displeasure with President Trump. Secondly, Colorado voters reaffirmed their reluctance to pass a general tax increase statewide. Finally, many local voters supported their local communities with school district bond and mill levy elections. What does it all add up to? Was it a blue wave? Is the Colorado GOP forever vanquished from the levers of power at the state Capitol? Is Colorado truly a blue state now?

The answer to these questions will be addressed in just a few scant weeks when the Colorado General Assembly convenes for their 72nd session on January 4, 2019. What we do know is that Democrats will have large majorities in both chambers. Since almost every candidate claimed that education is a high priority for them, we can certainly expect a much busier legislative session on the education front. Indeed, one of the first things that Governor-elect Polis said in his victory speech was that he had already begun working on a plan to provide full-day kindergarten for all of Colorado. Will Democrats be able to contain themselves and refrain from pushing forward legislation that in years past the Senate Republicans killed? We will soon find out.

Transportation will also be front and center. The defeat of two ballot measures — Initiative 109 and Initiative 110 — will trigger the full effects of [SB18-001 titled "Transportation Infrastructure Funding."](#) Passed by the 2018 General Assembly, SB18-001 is now the next best hope to fixing Colorado roads. A quick review of [the bill's fiscal note](#) highlights required General Fund transfers for transportation in 2019-20 and a November 2019 referred ballot measure to ask voters if the state can issue Transportation Revenue Anticipation Notes, aka TRANs bonds, in the amount of \$2.337 billion. While we are at it, let's add additional costs for health care, human services and corrections into the mix, not to mention the required backfill to education when the residential assessment rate drops due to a Gallagher adjustment. The result is a fairly unappetizing concoction of state and legislative priorities with little or no new money to pay for them. So, while there will be many new faces under the gold dome, those faces will be staring down many of the same old problems.

Amendment 73 Advances the Ball

Even though Amendment 73 received over 1.1 million votes, it came up about 200,000 votes short of meeting the 55 percent threshold required. Some key stats worth considering as the political pundits begin to evaluate its performance at the ballot:

- Amendment 73 received 46.36 percent of the 2.4 million votes; the last statewide funding effort garnered 35.54 percent of 1.4 million votes cast.
- Amendment 73 raised about \$1 million to support ballot access through the campaign; Amendment 66 had \$10 million supporting its effort.
- To meet the 55 percent vote requirement, Amendment 73 needed 1,331,102 votes to pass. The following vote counts provides some additional perspective:
 - The Polis/Primavera ticket received 1,331,736 votes.
 - The Stapleton/Sias ticket received 1,069,600 votes.
 - Prop 109 (Fix the Damn Roads) received 941,541 votes.
 - Prop 110 (transportation tax) had 978,881 votes.

Amendment 73 created an unprecedented coalition of public education supporters that has changed the education landscape by creating a new narrative about the importance and value of public education. Public education advocates are well-positioned as we look toward the next legislative session.

"One Last Thing Before I Leave"

Governor John Hickenlooper unveiled his proposed 2019-20 state budget prior to the election. The governor's budget proposal kicks off the "preseason" of JBC budget deliberations that lead up to the 2019 session. The governor will present his budget to the committee in person on November 16th.

The governor's letter to the JBC calls the 2019-20 plan "a budget proposal that harnesses our strong economic times to make strategic investments in our people and our reserves to protect Colorado's prosperity through the next downturn."

He said the budget is built around three goals: building opportunity, protecting families and expanding the middle class. The transmittal letter says 41 percent of the proposed General Fund increase is for "strategic investments." Human services and medical programs don't appear to be major priorities for new funding in the proposal.

The format of this budget is different from recent years. The current governor appears to be setting the stage for a possible presidential campaign. Quite frankly, the budget proposal set a "promotional" tone and calls out his administration's accomplishments. It sure sounds like the soon to be former Governor of Colorado has his eyes set on a higher national office.

Despite the promotional tone, Hickenlooper may not have a lot to say about the 2019-20 budget in the end. The budget process is different, and a little awkward, when one governor is about to leave office. The JBC review process will be well underway by the time the new governor is sworn in, but he and his staff will be able to file budget amendments in January for legislative consideration.

Given the short amount of time available and the lack of expertise in any new administration, the new Governor-elect Polis may not make wholesale changes in the Hickenlooper plan, but likely will propose some favorite projects. For example, this proposal doesn't address preschool and kindergarten funding, which Governor-elect Polis has already said will be a priority for his administration.

On the education front, Governor Hickenlooper proposes:

- \$6.2 billion total funds request, up 4.7 percent
- Total program funding would rise to \$247.5 million
- Per pupil funding would increase \$358 to \$8,498
- Budget stabilization (negative) factor: Would be reduced by \$77 million to \$595 million

- The request includes \$10 million earmarked for proposals by the Governor's Education Leadership Council, including:
 - programs to reduce the teacher shortage
 - provide incentives for students completing industry credentials and apprenticeships
 - \$6.5 million proposed in scholarships for teachers who commit to work in rural and underserved school districts

The complete budget request is available [HERE](#).

CASB at the Capitol

The Colorado General Assembly will start a little bit earlier than in the past. They will convene for the first time on Friday, January 4, 2019. That means you need to start planning to attend a CASB Day at the Capitol. With nearly one-third of legislators new to their position or moving from one chamber to the other, locally elected school board members must make themselves heard at the Capitol. We need to help educate our elected officials on the myriad of issues that impact Colorado public schools.

In an attempt to provide the utmost flexibility for busy schedules this year, all of the CASB Days at the Capitol will be open to members for any region of the state. That way, if weather snows you in one week, you can attend on another date.

Once again CASB will have two days set aside just for students to visit the Capitol and interact with legislators. For more information about Student Days at the Capitol, please contact Matt Cook directly at mcook@casb.org.

For more information about CASB Member Days at the Capitol, please click [HERE](#).

Hope Smiles

This will be the final School Board Advocate for 2018. We are hopeful you will be joining your fellow CASB members at the 78th Annual Convention in Colorado Springs December 6-9, 2018.

Since we don't publish in December, it seems appropriate to say a few words about the New Year. Alfred Lord Tennyson nicely captures the anticipation that a new year brings when he said:

"Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, 'It will be happier.'"

At the end of the day isn't that what we all want, just a little more happiness in our lives?

On behalf of the entire CASB staff, let us be the first to wish you a happy and healthy 2019. We look forward to all of the amazing work that our member Boards of Education will produce in the new year. Your dedication to students and to helping improve their lives is appreciated greatly.

Our colleagues at Capitol Editorial Services provided additional reporting for this edition of the School Board Advocate.

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