



Eugene S. Farley, Jr. Health Policy Center
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS**

Overview of the Current Colorado State Budget and Legislative Updates

Hannah Crook, PhD – Medicaid Policy Director



2026: The 75th General Assembly, Second Regular Session

Key dates:

- 1/14: General Assembly convenes
- 3/20: Final passage of bills in the originating chamber (66th day)
- 3/30: Long Bill (budget for SFY 2026-27) introduced in the House (76th day)
- 4/17: Adoption of the conference committee report on the Long Bill (94th day)
- 4/24: Passage of school finance bills (101st day)
- 4/28: Final passage in the Senate of all House bills (105th day)
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- 5/13: Adjournment sine die (120th day)

Despite majorities, Democrats face challenges

Key challenges

- State budget crisis and impacts of H.R. 1
- Cuts to Medicaid and other state programs
- No money for new bills or programs
- Intraparty differences between progressives and moderates
- Election year and multiple state lawmakers are running for higher office
- 14 lawmakers are facing primary challenges, historically an uncommon practice

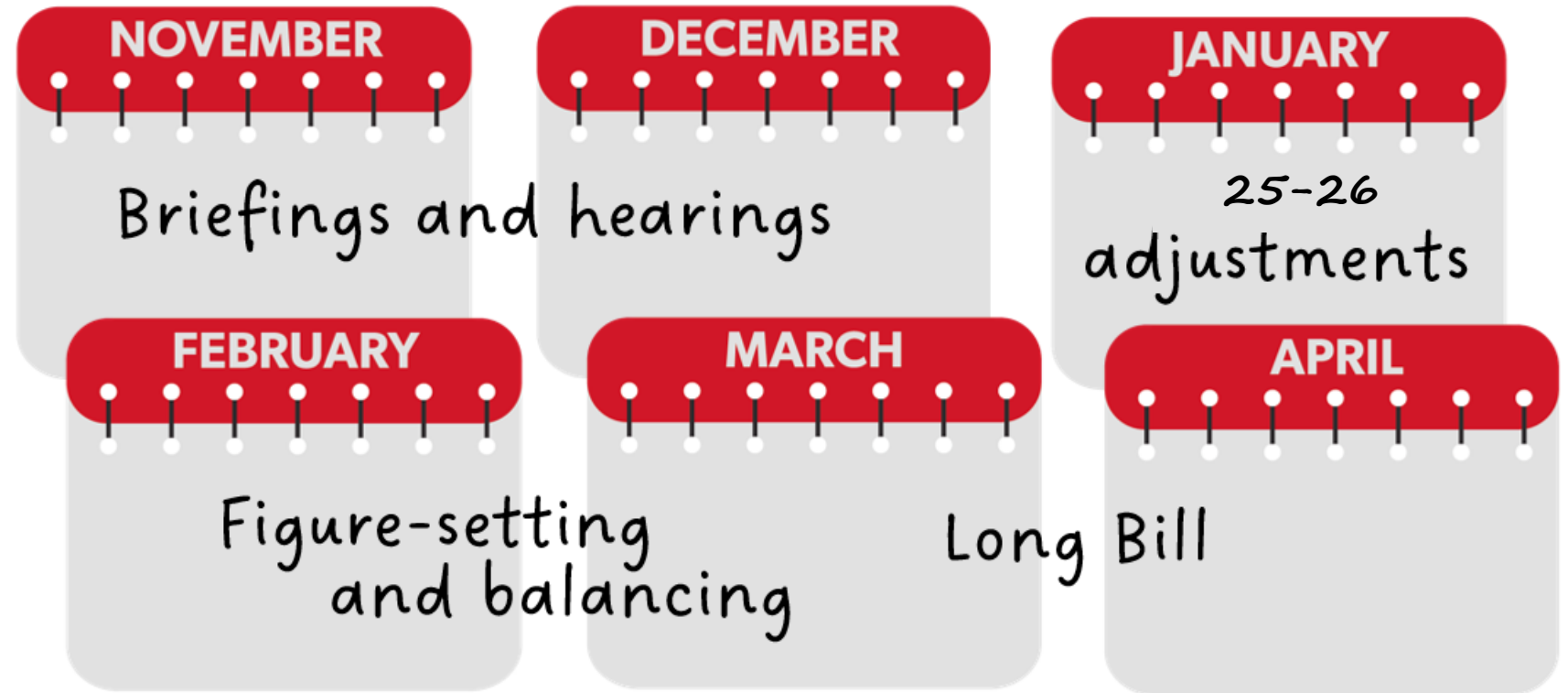
Sources:

<https://www.coloradopolitics.com/2026/01/06/primary-challenges-surge-as-colorado-lawmakers-head-into-2026-election-cycle/>
<https://coloradosun.com/2026/01/13/colorado-legislature-2026-budget-problem/>
<https://www.cpr.org/2026/01/12/upcoming-colorado-legislative-session-2026/>



Budget process for the next fiscal year

- **Governor's budget submitted by 11/1** to the JBC; balances his priorities with agency requests
- General Assembly hears input from JBC, Capital Development and Joint Technology Committees; receives state revenue and economic forecasts





NEWS: POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Colorado lawmakers return to Capitol facing \$850 million mountain of tough budget decisions

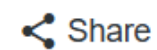
The shortfall means two major things: The General Assembly will have to make funding cuts and it also has no money available to spend on new programs. Those two realities will shape the legislature's entire 120-day lawmaking term.

“The JBC is expecting to save somewhere in the neighborhood of \$5 million to \$10 million for legislation.”



Jesse Paul and Brian Eason

4:00 AM MST on Jan 13, 2026



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Future areas of focus for Medicaid sustainability

For FY 2026-27:

- Budget increase needed to keep Medicaid offerings the same as last year: \$631 million
- Current HCPF budget increase request from Gov. Polis: \$300 million

Potential areas of focus for additional action and cuts include:

- Long-term services and supports (LTSS)
- Pediatric behavioral therapies
- Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT)
- Behavioral health services
- Utilization management for prescription drugs
- Medical education spending

Current status of the legislative session

Showing 1 - 25 of 347 bills, memorials, & resolutions

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2026 Regular Session X

- Currently, 317 bills and 30 resolutions have been introduced
- As of February 12th, no bills have been signed into law nor passed both chambers
 - 9 bills have been postponed indefinitely

Highlighted bills – Health care access & costs

Bill	Status
HB26-1139 : Use of Artificial Intelligence in Health Care	February 4, 2026 - Introduced In House - Assigned to Health & Human Services
HB26-1096 : Colorado Medicaid Access to Primary Care Services	February 3, 2026 - Introduced In House - Assigned to Health & Human Services
SB26-041 : Consumer Protections Medical Care Entities	January 27, 2026 - Introduced In Senate - Assigned to Health & Human Services
HB26-1044 : Measures to Improve Black Maternal Health Equity	January 14, 2026 - Introduced In House - Assigned to Health & Human Services
HB26-1002 : Provider Participation in Health Insurance	February 10, 2026 - Refer Amended to Appropriations



Additional and Upcoming Legislation

- **Budget Cuts**

- Lawmakers may be less likely to introduce bills with major new spending.
- Conversion of Colorado's worker's compensation provider (Pinnacol Assurance) to a member-owned mutual insurance carrier (could generate \$400 million in savings).

- **Health care costs & affordability**

- Funding the Health Insurance Affordability Enterprise (HIAE)
- Additional legislation on reducing costs for Medicare and Medicaid recipients, telehealth, vaccines, scope-of-practice, and anti-trust regulation.
- Additional regulation of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs)
- Additional transparency in the federal 340B drug pricing program

- **Continued fight over union law**

- The "Worker Protection Act" is expected to be reintroduced in 2026. Was passed by Democrats in 2025 but vetoed by Gov. Polis.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

- Further edits to SB24-205 (currently scheduled to go into effect in June 2026)

THANK YOU!



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