

## "Takin' It To The House"

### *A Calendar And Commentary From The Golden Dome*

*From: Representative Jim Wilson – HD 60*

*April 1, 2018*



Just before the clock struck midnight last Wednesday, the House finished up debating the infamous "Long Bill" (the state budget bill). The House received the 595 page bill on Monday, discussed it in separate caucuses on Tuesday morning, submitted any amendments by 5:00 PM on Tuesday, discussed the 95 submitted amendments in caucuses on Wednesday morning and took to the floor for the marathon debate Wednesday afternoon. All approved amendments (over 30 of them), orbital bills (additional bills from

the Joint Budget Committee) and the Long Bill itself were approved on 3<sup>rd</sup> reading Thursday morning. The package has now gone to the Senate where the process will be repeated this week. And, please keep in mind, the Senate can strip off all the amendments and redo the whole thing.

I am sure some of you are asking yourselves, "How can the Representatives study all 595 pages in that short of time?" The answer? We cannot – we can only evaluate the sections of the budget that have caught our attention during the SMART Act hearings and the figure-setting sessions of the JBC. However, each ranking representative on committees of reference was tasked with studying the department budget that pertained to her/his committee. For example, as the Ranking Republican on the Education Committee, I submitted a detailed summary of the relevant items in the Department of Education's budget in the Long Bill to all the House Republicans. That detail, coupled with the analysis of our JBC member Representative Bob Rankin, created a basic level of knowledge for each member.

When the smoke cleared Wednesday night, most of the basic components of the proposed budget remained intact. The total budget remains north of \$30 Billion, there will be \$1.29 Billion in new revenue budgeted to be spent, Transportation has \$495M earmarked for transportation bonding, Education would receive \$265+M for inflation, another \$150 Million is scheduled to reduce the Budget Stabilization Factor, \$8 Million for teacher shortage and \$7 Million earmarked for school safety. PERA is still slated for \$225 Million – 60% going toward educators and 40% going toward state employees.

Two major floor battles ensued during the Long Bill debate. One battle was over the transportation allocation. The D's wanted to carve up the

Transportation allocation to include "multi-modal" (which would include buses, RTD, light rail, bicycle lanes, etc.). The R's argued that the citizens of Colorado want roads, bridges and potholes repaired across the state instead of multi-model projects in the urban areas. The D's have the majority in the House, so guess which approach won?

The other major floor battle was over school safety, and I was ground zero in the cross-fire. Going into the Long Bill debate, \$7M had been set aside for school safety (as noted above). The D's did not offer any increase to that figure in their amendments. Multiple amendments were brought forward by the R's to set aside additional funding for school safety – only one did not shift dollars around or cut other allocations. Amendment #79 was the one... that was my amendment.

Long story short – the amendment was based on the premise, that out of the \$1.29B in new revenue (as noted above), at least \$35M (less than 3% of the total) could be found to go toward school safety without cutting into other funds. The focus of the amendment was on 3 aspects of school safety: 1) site security, 2) local control of the dollars, and 3) local leveraging of funds to maximize utilization. My presentation of Amendment #79 was laid over twice, but the third time was the charm. *By working with the Speaker and the Asst. Majority Leader, I was able to get Amendment #79 passed. In my opinion, \$35M is not nearly enough to address Colorado's school safety challenges, but it was 5 times the amount originally earmarked!*

Update on some of my bills: SB 18-143 -- Parks & Wildlife Measures To Increase Revenue passed out of House Ag. And is headed to House Finance; HB 18-128 -- Disclosure Of Prescription Costs At Pharmacies (giving the consumer the option of paying the insurance price or the cash price – whichever is less) passed out of the House Health, Insurance & Environment Committee and is headed to the House floor; and the School Finance Bill (on which I will be partnering with Rep. Petterson -- the Education Committee Chair) will be filed this week. K-12 and Higher Ed. Funding make up roughly 1/3 of the entire state budget.

There are always several surprises as the session winds down, so stay tuned. If you have questions, my office number in the Capitol is 303-866-2747, or you can e-mail me at: [wilsonforhd60@gmail.com](mailto:wilsonforhd60@gmail.com) or [james.wilson.house@state.co.us](mailto:james.wilson.house@state.co.us) . You can also use these contacts to schedule a visit to the Capitol.

Yours for HD 60,

Representative Jim Wilson