

Opening Day of the 71st General Assembly

This morning the House and Senate convened to commence the 71st General Assembly. Three new legislators ascended into top leadership positions – President Kevin Grantham, Speaker Crisanta Duran, and House Minority Leader Patrick Neville while House Minority Leader Lucia Guzman began her second session as Minority Leader in the Senate. All four leaders graciously welcomed the twenty-eight new freshman legislators and most importantly clearly outlined their priorities for the 2017 session.

President Kevin Grantham received a warm welcome and congratulations from out-going President Bill Cadman. Confidently taking over the gavel, President Grantham launched into the preamble of Colorado’s constitution and made that his guide through the rest of his speech. He highlighted the bipartisan work of the last two years that resulted in over 700 bills being passed and sent to the Governor with support of members from both parties and chambers. He expressed a commitment to provide relief from burdensome taxes, regulations, and overall increased government transparency. He promised to explore more opportunities for parental school choice in education while also providing increased equity in school funding. President Grantham made it clear that he will protect that taxpayer “from the heavy hand of government reaching into their pockets for more money without their direct permission.”

President Grantham expressed a strong desire to find a bipartisan solution to address the growing problem of deteriorating transportation infrastructure throughout the state. With needs exceeding \$9 billion including \$3.5 billion shovel ready projects, President Grantham is committed to working with leadership in all four caucuses to “arrive at a solution that we can present to the voters of Colorado – solutions that will hold faith with the taxpayers of Colorado and their desire for accountability for their dollars.” He also highlighted another bipartisan effort underway to find solutions for Colorado’s current construction litigation laws so more Coloradan’s can realize the dream of homeownership. He spent the part of his speech outlining is caucuses first six bills:

- SB 001 – Creates a grace period for small business owners to cure minor operational or administrative oversights before incurring a fine.
- SB 002 – Repeals the DORA scheduling ability and creates a standardized time table for rules review every three years.
- SB 003 – Repealing Connect for Health Colorado (Colorado’s health care exchange).
- SB 004 – Allows Medicaid recipients to receive treatment from health care providers that are not covered within the Medicaid network.
- SB 005 – Empowers schools to develop a program that educates school employees on responsible use of a concealed carry permit to promote school safety.
- SB 006 – Creates concealed carry permits for active duty service members under the age of 21.

Speaker Duran, the first Latina Speaker of the House, echoed many of the same sentiments as President Grantham. She also committed to a bipartisan solution to find a permanent revenue stream for infrastructure funding in the state of Colorado. Speaker Duran expressed her desire to continue promoting and pursuing affordable housing in Colorado with one avenue being changes in the current construction defects law. She spoke about her view that government shouldn't just work for those at the top and the bottom but in the middle as well. She highlighted the success of two years' worth of workforce development packages to develop a pipeline of workers for the advanced industries and technology sector and said she intended to build that pipeline further through teaching thousands of Colorado students 21st century skills in computer science and digital literacy. Speaker Duran spoke out against divisive language against women and minorities and cautioned against any normalization of such rhetoric.

House Minority Leader Patrick Neville prioritized peeling back government regulation targeting Colorado's small businesses as a top priority. He spoke about the growing Colorado budget and that the Colorado General Assembly needs to reprioritize their spending instead of pump new revenue into the picture. He whole heartedly agreed that infrastructure funding must be a top focus of the 2017 legislative session and committed to being part of that solution. Minority Leader Neville applauded the legislature for their bipartisan bill to tackle construction defects reform which has plagued the legislature for so many years now. Similar to President Grantham, he spoke in support of school choice and the need for school funding to follow students through their education path. Minority Leader Neville wrapped up his speech promising to "defend life and push more individuals rights" including the second amendment and freedom of religion.

Senate Minority Leader Lucia Guzman took a different direction in her speech this morning. She reflected all of the progress Colorado made over the last six years from passing civil unions to decreasing unemployment from 8.9% to 3.2%. She also acknowledged a need to address Colorado's infrastructure needs but she implored the General Assembly to once again reclassify the hospital provider fee. Minority Leader Guzman spoke at length about Colorado's need to pursue renewable energy and defend their public lands. She said she will continue to protect the vulnerable and plans to focus on tackling Colorado's opioid addiction as well.

All four leaders left their audience with the perception that bipartisanship is a reality in Colorado and both sides, although not always aligned, will pursue the best policies for Colorado. It was made clear that all four caucuses strive to find a solution to infrastructure funding and construction defects. Plus, with over a hundred bills likely to be introduced in the first 24 hours, the state will have a very good idea of what issues that legislature will spend the most time and energy on for the next 120 days.

President Kevin Grantham's Speech Text:

http://www.coloradosenaterepublicans.com/president_grantham_opening_remarks

Senate Minority Leader Lucia Guzman Speech Text:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/denver/news/2017/01/11/text-opening-day-speech-guzman.html?s=print>

Speaker Crisanta Duran's Speech Text: <http://cohousedems.com/index.php/2017-opening-day-speech/>

House Minority Leader Patrick Neville Speech Text:
<http://www.bizjournals.com/denver/news/2017/01/11/opening-day-speech-by-colorado-house-minority.html>