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Legislative Update: Feb. 16, 2011



Governor's Budget Delivers Direct Blow to K-12

Gov. John Hickenlooper made his first appearance before the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) yesterday afternoon and like CASB, we're sure he wished it were under different circumstances. But, nonetheless, he appeared before the JBC to unveil his [budget proposal for the 2011-12 fiscal year](#), a proposal that bridges over a \$1 billion budget shortfall, and unfortunately, one in which K-12 takes a major blow.

Given the \$1 billion budget gap and the fact that K-12 comprises approximately 43 percent of the current state budget, we knew the cut to K-12 would be substantial, and indeed it is. Gov. Hickenlooper's proposal cuts K-12 by \$332 million¹. Be mindful that per pupil funding varies from district to district. The Colorado Department of Education has created a [spreadsheet](#) showing the impacts of the proposed cuts on each district.

To look at it another way, the Governor's proposal will bring the school finance "budget stabilization factor," the negative factor written into the 2009-10 School Finance Act, to \$836 million below full funding for Total Program (\$836 million is the total cut from 2009-10 to 2011-12). This results in a cumulative cut of \$1,046 per pupil, which is over 14 percent.

In addition to the \$332 million cut, the Governor's proposal will also require school districts to pay interest on cash flow loans – loans that are currently interest free for school districts. It is estimated that the interest payments will total \$1.6 million.

It is important to remember that the Governor's budget proposal is a starting point, and the General Assembly will now take this proposal and craft the state's 2011-12 budget, as well as the 2011 School Finance Act. By time the legislature adjourns in May, the actual state budget and the impacts on K-12 will certainly be different from what we are looking at today. However, the Governor's proposal gives school districts a good planning estimate on the magnitude of cuts for the 2011-12 school year. This year's budget and School Finance Act will be an ongoing saga, so watch for regular updates from CASB and know that we are in the thick of the fight, working hard to mitigate these cuts to the extent possible.

¹Compared to Gov. Ritter's budget proposal submitted in November 2010, the cut to K-12 is \$375 million because Ritter's budget proposed an increase of \$43 million to K-12.

We want to hear from you!

As you read BillBoard and legislative updates this session and have conversations within your board, we want to know what you are thinking or if you have questions regarding legislation. The more we hear from local boards regarding the impact of legislation on school districts, the better we can represent you at the Capitol. So don't be shy, call (303-832-1000) or e-mail [Julie](#) or [Jane](#). You can also join us any Thursday at noon for a brown bag legislative discussion at the CASB office, 1200 Grant St. After lunch, walk with us to the Capitol. We'll show you the ropes, and you can watch the Senate Education Committee in action. It's always good for school board members to have a presence at the Capitol. It reminds our legislators that school board members are paying attention to life under the golden dome.

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