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Lawmakers Ease into 2013 Legislative Session

Welcome to our first issue of BillBoard, CASB's semi-monthly newsletter covering legislative and advocacy issues. Things are back in full swing on Capitol Hill as the 69th General Assembly convened on Jan. 9. As is the custom, the new legislative session started off with pomp and ceremony, as well as leadership speeches.

Although bills were introduced, none have been heard yet in either education committee. The past couple of weeks have mostly consisted of orientation sessions and briefings to help bring new legislators up to speed and provide a refresher to veteran lawmakers, while also highlighting how they can work efficiently and effectively throughout the session.

During the education committee meetings, lawmakers heard briefings from the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Higher Education and learned more about education goals, standards and highlights of education reform bills from the past five years. The relatively low-key week has been a great opportunity for freshmen legislators to get comfortable in their seats before they have to start debating and voting on bills.

Meanwhile, CASB's advocacy team has been busy getting acquainted with new legislators – especially those who serve on the education committees – as well



Join state education leaders and finance experts to hear their perspectives on school finance reform and education legislation, while learning how to advocate effectively on behalf of your

as visiting the governor's office to discuss our concerns with school finance and working with bill sponsors to help develop language. Additionally, Jane Urschel met with Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grant officials to discuss CASB's resolution urging the General Assembly to maintain current funding levels and increase the program statutory capacity.

students. To learn more, visit the [winter conference webpage](#).

This weekend at its annual retreat, CASB's Board of Directors will discuss key issues and strategies for the advocacy team to keep front and center during the legislative session. The board also will adopt its 2013 legislative priorities, which are guided by the framework created by the resolutions adopted by the CASB Delegate Assembly.

State of the State – Climbing Mountains Together

Gov. John Hickenlooper took center stage on Jan. 10 for his State of the State address. He spoke about Colorado's "beginnings of a reserve fund" after its largest drop ever in funding two years ago. He noted efforts to restore funding for education, although he acknowledged it's not enough to make up for the \$1 billion shortfall.

Additionally, he highlighted his continued focus on jobs and making Colorado the "best state for entrepreneurs and businesses," while touching on the "mountains" we must climb together, including health care, gun control, drilling technology, the state's water plan, Amendment 64, the Colorado State Personnel System Amendment and an overhaul of the state's mental health system.

During the education-focused portion of his speech, Hickenlooper discussed the Race to the Top Fund to help make Colorado's kids prepared for the future, as well as TBD Colorado and the state's efforts "to build the best educator pipeline in the country."

He said the state must have a school finance formula that offers "equity to all districts and opportunity to all kids" and we must commit to not only reform, but also results. Hickenlooper also noted Colorado's "unsustainable fiscal course," the "fiscal knot" created by TABOR, the Gallagher Amendment and Amendment 23, and future efforts to rewrite the School Finance Act.

While some have said a divided chamber has helped Hickenlooper over the past two years, he said the real "blessing" is the enduring relationships that have formed in both parties. Despite disagreements, those relationships transcend political affiliation and are focused on common values and common good.

He added, "More than anything, we look to the future – our eyes on the far horizon – and we climb mountains together."



CASB's "[Regional Days at the Capitol](#)" offer a chance to see the House and Senate in action and attend education committee meetings. This is a great opportunity for school board members to connect with education leaders to help ensure they are kept informed about the issues that are most important to our schools.

CASB's Legislative Breakfast

We had a great turnout of both old legislative friends and new faces at our annual legislative breakfast on Jan. 10. The gathering accomplished exactly what we had hoped: Introduce CASB to some of the freshmen legislators, while reminding the seasoned legislators about the role we play in advocating for school boards.

During her welcome, Jane gave an overview of our advocacy team and what CASB does (and doesn't do), while Ken DeLay explained how we differ from other interest groups. He noted that we have to work with everyone - Republicans, Democrats and Independents – while representing the interests of local school boards.

CASB makes it easy for you to keep track of education bills through our master bill list via [Colorado Capitol Watch](#). Visit the list to learn more about education-related legislation, including the date each bill was introduced and CASB's position.

Stay tuned for future issues of BillBoard featuring Jane's legislative video recap: [Under the Gold Dome: Look Back, Look Ahead, Look Out!](#)

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