



STATE LEGISLATURE TEMPORARILY ADJOURNED

Due to the COVID-19 public health crisis, the General Assembly temporarily adjourned the 2020 session on March 14, pursuant to HJR20-1007. The date for reconvening remains unclear and the state capitol building is closed to the public.

The Colorado State House and Senate were scheduled to convene a limited session on Monday, March 30 at 10:00 am for second reading of selected bills. After determining that neither chamber had a quorum, both the House and the Senate adjourned. The House planned to reconvene on Thursday April 2 at 10:00 am. The Senate did not specify a date for reconvening. It was hoped that in the meantime, the Colorado supreme court would clarify the legal parameters for reconvening the remainder of the session—specifically whether the session can be put on hold in case of an emergency or whether the 120 days in the session must be consecutive, and time spent in temporary adjournment would essentially be lost.

The anticipated ruling was issued on April 1, with the court determining that the days in the legislative calendar do not have run consecutively in the case of an emergency. As a result of the ruling, when the General Assembly reconvenes, there will be 53 days left in the session. It is not yet known when it will be safe enough to resume regular business, though the Executive Committee of the Legislative Council will meet to discuss the session schedule on Wednesday, April 8, and some legislators have speculated the legislature might reconvene in mid-May. As of March 14, there were more than 350 bills awaiting final resolution, including the FY 2020-21 state budget.

Upon returning, legislators will be forced to work within the constraints of a new economic reality. COVID-19 has taken an immediate and significant toll on our economy. Unemployment claims are reaching record highs and more Coloradoans need support services in a way that was not contemplated at the start of the session. Legislative Council staff and staff from the Office of State Planning and Budgeting who briefed the Joint Budget Committee on March 16 on the March revenue forecast emphasized that there is no money to support any new programs. This calls into question the feasibility of pending legislation that has any costs associated with it and a re-examination of funding allocations will be required.

Much work remains to be done. The course of the COVID-19 crisis will determine when that work can resume.