



2020 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

A tale of two sessions

When the Colorado General Assembly convened for its first day on January 8, 2020, no one would have predicted the way the session would end. The coronavirus pandemic has led to profound changes in many aspects of our common life, and our body politic is no exception. The state budget outlook was pretty good in January, but with the economic shock of the pandemic, legislators were forced to find over \$3 billion in cuts by April. Many bills with spending attached were suddenly no longer viable.

Through it all, however, our advocacy priorities remained constant: seeking bipartisan and non-partisan solutions to meet the needs of our neighbors experiencing poverty and hunger. Of the ten bills that we actively supported this session, eight of them passed. Two more bills did not make it to a final vote. Overall, this session moved Colorado into a position to address not just the major systemic crises of the pandemic, but the deep desire of God's people for anti-racist structural changes in our society. Justice reform, housing, and economic security were at the forefront of our work this year. This sheet offers a summary of the legislation for which we advocated in the 2020 session.

Criminal Justice & Civic Reform

The most significant legislative achievement of our pre-pandemic advocacy was the passage of **Senate Bill 100** (Sens. Gonzales and Tate) to repeal the death penalty in Colorado. As a church body centered on Christ's radical and redeeming love, we have long been opposed to the death penalty in our social theology, and as an advocacy office we are grateful that this bill will end capital punishment in our state. There were many organizations who stood in support, including many representing the broad



Bills we supported

Total: 10

Passed: 8

Defeated: 2

State funds saved

\$294,000 per capital case in decreased justice system costs, plus more in local government savings

State funds leveraged

\$94.1 million in corporate tax loophole closures to support K-12 education

\$2.33 million for statewide police reform measures

\$250,000 to provide access to paid sick leave

\$40,000 for regulatory oversight to prevent housing discrimination (FY 21 and 22)

Federal funds leveraged

\$8.424 million from the federal TANF block grant to provide cash support to low-income families

\$500,000 in CARES Act funds to support local food pantries

Figures are for fiscal year 2021 except where noted

spectrum of faith communities in Colorado. The Governor subsequently commuted the sentences of the three people currently on death row, so no further executions will take place.

In the second session, **Senate Bill 217** (Sens. Garcia and Fields) was the major focal point of much of the energy in policing reform. The bill mandates the use of body-worn cameras and the collection of data on use of lethal force while outlawing chokeholds. Most significantly, it ends qualified immunity as a defense to legal action for the infringement of a person's civil rights.

We supported an effort to provide multilingual ballots across Colorado through **House Bill 1081** (Rep. Caraveo), but the pandemic fiscal crisis ended the opportunity to pass the bill this year.

Housing & Homelessness

We supported **House Bill 1009** (Rep. Jackson), which will suppress the records of eviction proceedings for people who are not evicted. When such a case goes on record, even if the tenant is not removed, it can significantly hinder future housing prospects. The bill will ensure that people are not penalized for merely having a filing on their record.

In the second session, we supported the passage of **House Bill 1332** (Reps. Jackson and Herod) to prohibit discrimination in housing based on source of income. This prevents landlords from screening out applicants who are paying with valid vouchers, waivers, and other forms of public assistance.

Economic Security

We supported **Senate Bill 29** (Sens. Fields and Moreno) to provide monies directly to low-income families from the federal TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) block grant. The bill provides a one-time cash payment of \$500 to each of the near 17,000 households in Colorado receiving basic cash assistance.



After the pandemic hit Colorado, the need for paid sick leave became even more acutely clear. **Senate Bill 205** (Sens. Fenberg and Bridges) will deliver this needed benefit to thousands of workers. Employers must provide one hour of sick leave for every 30 hours worked, up to 48 hours per year.

Facing an estimated \$3.3 billion shortfall next year, legislators unfortunately had to make cuts in K-12 education. **House Bill 1420** (Reps. Gray and Sirota) will close a corporate tax loophole to add \$94.1 million back to the budget. Originally, we supported **House Bill 1203**, an effort by the same sponsors to use the loophole money to fund the state Earned Income Tax Credit, but that proposal was scuttled by the pandemic.

Finally, we supported an effort to introduce legislation on paid family and medical leave insurance, but it was not able to be introduced before the pandemic recess. Sponsors chose to pursue a ballot initiative instead, which we support also

Hunger Relief

We supported the successful passage of **House Bill 1422** (Reps. Esgar and Cutter) to use CARES Act funds to create the Food Pantry Assistance Grant Program, which will support local food pantries with Colorado agricultural products.

God of justice and mercy, help us to live with faithfulness into all the opportunities you give us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen!

Thank you for your support and for joining us in advocacy!