



Capitol Focus

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Capitol Focus is a weekly activities summary of the Colorado Legislature for CAHSA members, provided by staff of the Colorado Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. Contact Laura Landwirth, executive director, at cahsa@cahsa.org.



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What's new at the Capitol?

What is the Governor up to?

Who are my legislators?

Last week on March 31st HB 1053, "Concerning Community Long-Term Care Savings," was heard in the Senate Health & Human Services Committee. I use the term "heard" very loosely as it was unusual with respect to how the bill passed out of the committee. CAHSA members Vennita Jenkins (The Granville Assisted Living Center) and Heather Logan (Seniors' Resource Center) patiently waited with me for over four hours to testify in support of the bill. Several colleagues from organizations who support the bill were also present, including Jeanette Hensley, State Director on Aging, and representatives from AARP, DRCOG, and the Alzheimer's Association Rocky Mountain Chapter.

We knew it was a bad sign when the Senate didn't adjourn from the floor until 11:30 am, which was about one and a half to two hours later than expected. Senator Betty Boyd, chair of the Senate HHS Committee, called the hearing to order at 12:00 noon, which is when the hearing usually ends for the lunch break. HB 1053 was the second of three bills on the schedule. Sen. Boyd advised that she intended to hear all three bills in an hour and a half so that we could adjourn by 1:30 pm. This was necessary as another hearing was scheduled to start in the same hearing room at 1:30.

The first bill took approximately 45 minutes. At that point it was announced that they would reverse the order of the next two bills, which meant that HB 1053 would be last. Just before 1:30 the committee finished the second bill. Senator Boyd received permission to use the hearing room for an extra 10 minutes if those signed up to testify would agree to keep their comments to 1 minute or less. As you can imagine, we were willing to testify in 30 seconds if it meant assuring the bill would be heard that day. The last thing we wanted was to come back on another day and start the waiting again.

Senator Boyd started to address the committee to introduce the bill and Senator Shawn Mitchell made a motion to move the bill to Senate floor. Senator Boyd advised that was a proper motion; however, she had two amendments and the bill needed to go to the Appropriations Committee. Senator Boyd summarized each amendment in record time and each was adopted with no objections. At that point committee member Senator David Schultheis noted that seven individuals had dutifully waited to testify in support of the bill and asked that we stand and be acknowledged, since the committee's actions had eliminated any opportunity for public input on the bill. Next, a roll call vote was taken and the bill passed out of HHS committee and now is waiting action in the Senate Appropriations Committee. It took about 10 minutes for the entire process.

CAHSA lobbyist Fofi Mendez advised that in all of her years working at the state Capitol she has only seen this "super motion" done twice before. While it was a long and somewhat frustrating day for those of us who waited patiently for our turn to testify, we were at least happy that the bill passed out of the committee. On that same day the House passed the state budget bill referred to as the "Long Bill." This week has been the Senate's turn to debate the budget bill. We will have more to report on budget related actions in next week's issue.