A note on the door of the Colorado Senate on March 11, 2020, asking visitors to send emails to lawmakers instead of passing them business cards or notes. “I’m not a health expert,” said Senate Minority Leader Chris Holbert, a Parker Republican. “But if large groups of people congregating in a confined area increases the chance of spreading it, it kind of seems like something we ought to avoid.” (Jesse Paul, The Colorado Sun)

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Colorado legislature delays its return date until late May to allow more time to balance budget

The General Assembly was originally set to resume the 2020 legislative session on May 18 after taking a months-long pause because of the new coronavirus

MAY 9, 2020 6:44PM MDT

Jesse Paul
The Colorado legislature has pushed back the date it will resume lawmaking until late May.

The General Assembly was set to resume the 2020 legislative session on May 18 after taking a months-long pause because of the new coronavirus. But on Saturday, Democratic leadership in the House and Senate announced that the reopening will now be on May 26.

When lawmakers return to the Capitol they will have a full plate, including balancing a state budget that has been dramatically reduced by the economic effects of the pandemic. They will also try to pass policies to help Coloradans better get through coronavirus.

“With so much at risk and our desired return date fast approaching, we determined that it would benefit all Coloradans if we gave our budgetary and legislative process a bit more breathing room,” Senate President Leroy Garcia, a Pueblo Democrat, said in a written statement. “Though facing our dire fiscal situation has been a painful task, we are committed to protecting our most critical institutions and vulnerable populations as best as we possibly can. We look forward to continuing to fight for our communities in the Capitol when we all return.”

Lawmakers must pass a budget before July, when the next fiscal year begins.

House Speaker KC Becker, D-Boulder, said the extra time will also allow the legislature to better prepare safety procedures for its return.
“As businesses across Colorado also begin the process of reopening, this extension allows the General Assembly additional time to double check our safety protocols, continue conversations on appropriate legislation and seek more information about any Congressional action that may be coming in the weeks ahead,” Becker said in a written statement. “We are hopeful that Congress may provide additional and badly needed aid to help us avoid budget cuts that will devastate our communities.”

Becker, in an interview with The Colorado Sun on Saturday night, said after a two-month break it takes time to get going again. She likened the General Assembly to a car that hasn’t been run for several weeks.

“It’s actually going to take a little time to tune it up to get it back into shape,” she said. “It doesn’t just turn over.”

Republicans were critical of the delay.

“Senate Republicans have heard from constituents across the state who have rightly demanded that their voice be heard and that balance be restored in our state government,” said Senate Minority Leader Chris Holbert, a Parker Republican, said in a written statement. “We have reassured those constituents that Democrats, who hold majority control of both legislative chambers, planned to return on May 18. Now, with no advance notice, we learn that Democrat leadership has decided to keep the voice of our constituents silenced until May 26.”

Sen. Paul Lundeen, a Monument Republican, said the list of issues needing legislative action are growing. “To delay the essential business of the General
Assembly magnifies the difficulty of returning safely to normal,” he said in a written statement.

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TRANSPORTATION

Airlines flying empty planes to small Colorado airports plead for OK to cut service

Colorado's mountain tourist destinations are siding with airlines on temporary cutbacks, but they're fearful long-term loss of service. The airlines are making the ask despite pocketing federal coronavirus relief funds.

Jason Blevins

MAY 11, 2020 4:25AM MDT
BUSINESS

Colorado’s rural pharmacies wrestle against big business to remain community cornerstones

1,230 rural pharmacies have closed since 2003, including 45 in Colorado. Some blame benefit management companies that reimburse for medications at less than they cost to buy.

Mark Jaffe

MAY 11, 2020 4:20AM MDT
POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Colorado is the only state without a rainy day fund. Now the coronavirus means it will pay the price.

Colorado budget reserve fund is now larger than it was in previous years, but leaders knew it wouldn’t be enough to weather a storm.

John Frank

MAY 11, 2020 3:35AM MDT