



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

Human Rights & Community Relations

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Possible 2009 Legislation Affecting Women

It can be dangerous to speculate on what state legislation we will see next year in Colorado, especially prior to the elections. The elections determine who the players are at the legislature. November's election will also determine the rules of the game when it comes to fiscal policy. And virtually all public policy has a financial element. Nevertheless, State Departments, community coalitions, legislators, and would-be legislators are developing policy ideas. Only some will make it into proposed legislation. Below are some of the ideas being discussed.

POVERTY

Reinstate and make the **Earned Income Tax Credit** permanent, or provide other fiscal relief for low income families.

Cap the interest and fees on "pay day loans"

Fix **CBMS** problems, perhaps by transferring responsibility for the public benefits computer system to the new state Information technology department.

Create a legislative **Commission to reduce poverty**, or reinstate the Welfare Oversight Legislative Committee

HEALTH

Require a minimum number of **paid sick days**.

Create a **Behavioral Health Commission** to implement recommendations to integrate the behavioral health (mental health and substance abuse) system.

Cover certain **dental procedures for pregnant women** on the Colorado Child Health Plan.

Increase excise taxes to fund behavioral health services like **mental health** and **substance abuse treatment**.

Continuous enrollment of those children in Medicaid for 12 months, so that computer problems/ paperwork shuffles/income instability do not drop kids after a few months.

Funding for **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders** diagnostic specialty clinics and professional education

Expand the **Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening and Treatment** program to some who fall through the cracks because of age or place of diagnosis.

CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Continue to expand the number of **Colorado Pre-School slots**.

Continue to expand **full time Kindergarten**

Raise the current minimum level 135% of federal poverty level below which counties provide **low-income Child Care Assistance**. (Counties can now offer child care assistance to those making up to 309% of federal poverty level if funds permit. But counties vary widely on who qualifies for Child Care Assistance)

HIGHER EDUCATION

Increase the accessibility and affordability of **higher education** for low income and middle income students, including **low-income parents**.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Develop funding state funding source for domestic violence programs. Colorado is one of three states without state general funding for domestic violence programs.

K- 12 EDUCATION

Take more steps to close the **achievement gap** between white students and students of color.

Allow limited **parental involvement in** school academic activities during work time.

Allow in-state tuition for those who have attended for a period of years and graduated from Colorado high schools, regardless of citizenship status.

CHILD SUPPORT

Allow TANF dollars to be used to assist **non-custodial parents** who do not have children on welfare to gain and maintain employment. Currently TANF dollars can only be used to assist non-custodial parents who have children on welfare.

Disregard (don't count) a certain amount of child support paid as income for a parent on TANF. Currently, sporadic child support payments can make parents ineligible for services, disrupting efforts toward long term self-sufficiency.

Pass the child support paid by non-custodial parents to their children's family, even if the family is on TANF.

WORKPLACE

Establish a permanent **Pay Equity Commission**

Reauthorized and strengthen the **Colorado Civil Rights Division**.

Allow attorneys' fee to be awarded to the prevailing party in **employment discrimination** cases.