

Welcome to the first edition of our legislative update! Our aim is to keep the residents of Senate District 33 informed and involved in legislation at the state capitol. In this pre-session issue I'm including a preview of the legislation I will be introducing this session.

**1. Helping Community College Students Access Four-Year Colleges:**

Through my experience as a principal I know that many students in our district start their post-secondary education at a community college, but many of them never successfully complete a four-year degree due in part to the difficulty of transferring credits to a four-year institution. I am proposing a bill that creates career pathways for community college students by allowing the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) to create areas of concentration or "majors". By giving community college students the opportunity to "major" in a particular area of study, their course work will more likely be accepted in that field of study at a four-year college. This helps community college students focus their studies and their career goals earlier in their career. Community college leadership and faculty are confident this will increase the retention and transfer rates of community college students, saving students and the state both time and money. The bill also allows students to retain the flexibility to study without an area of concentration if they so choose.

**2. Supporting Great Teachers and School Leaders:**

As a career teacher and principal I know that our schools are only as good as the teachers and leaders that staff them. The greatest opportunity for improving our educational system lies in improving the quality and quantity of teachers and principals. This bill overhauls our principal and teacher evaluation systems. It not only ensures principals and teachers get fair and ongoing feedback about their performance, but also develops a definition of teacher and principal effectiveness that is linked in part to actual evidence of student growth. My bill calls for a collaborative process to include teachers and leaders in building this definition. Once we have this new system of effectiveness, we can use it to identify our highest performing teachers and principals. Every teacher or principal receiving outstanding evaluations and student growth can take on additional career ladders with access to more pay for more responsibility. By using their expertise, we can help lift the rest of the profession and contribute to the growth and learning of younger educators. We will also use this definition of effectiveness to set a fair, objective, and performance-based bar for how teachers earn and keep tenure.

**3. Helping Grow Small and Green Businesses:**

When a young business needs to grow, options for raising money are limited. One source of money is an angel investor. Angel investors are groups or individuals who provide money to businesses in their early stages of development. They do so for a return on their investment and are typically not involved in the day-to-day management of the business. Here in Colorado we have a lot of angel investors, but very few of them are actually investing in small businesses. Angel investors do not have easy access to the information or the entrepreneurs, and many small business owners don't know how to find angel investors to support their business as it gets off the ground. I strongly believe in supporting Colorado small businesses. This bill creates an open network that allows angel investors and businesses to confidentially connect with one another and creates opportunities for investment and growth.

## Get Involved...

**Transportation & Veterans  
Affairs Round Table**  
Tuesday, January 12 at 6pm

**Coffee w/ Mike**  
Thursday, January 21  
from 7:30 – 8:30am

**Citizen Policy Committees**  
email Scott at [slaband@mikejohnston.org](mailto:slaband@mikejohnston.org)

**Neighborhood Outreach Committees**  
email Alex at [asharp@mikejohnston.org](mailto:asharp@mikejohnston.org)

**4. Evaluating and Improving our Teacher and Principal Preparation Programs:**

Properly educating our teachers and principals is fundamental to assuring our students receive high-quality instruction. Colorado is already poised to gather data on the effectiveness of teachers and principals through the Educator identifier. This bill would link criteria like student growth, teacher placement, and teacher retention to the preparation program that licensed that educator. Teachers and principals will be tracked for the first three years of their placement, and the Department of Education will annually publish data on the aggregated effectiveness of their graduates. This previously unavailable information will allow us to make informed decisions on how we can better prepare our educators to help every student succeed.

**5. Reviving Neighborhoods by Reducing the Number of Abandoned Properties:**

I've heard a lot from my constituents about the negative impacts foreclosed and abandoned homes have on neighborhoods across Northeast Denver. When a lender starts foreclosure, the title for the property remains with the mortgage holder even if the home is abandoned. That means no one is responsible for maintaining the property – the homeowner is gone and the lender does not yet own it. The law currently calls for a four-month sales process, but many foreclosure sales take seven to nine months. In that time, abandoned homes can attract vandalism and crime, cause safety hazards, and decrease neighboring property values. This new bill cuts the time for the foreclosure process down to two months only in instances where it has been proven that the home is abandoned. By speeding up the process to sell abandoned homes and get them back on the market, we can prevent these homes from bringing down entire neighborhoods.

**6. Measuring School Enrollment through Average Daily Membership:**

As I know well from my experience in schools, having accurate information on the number of students enrolled in schools is essential to providing them a quality education. Currently, schools in Colorado gather enrollment data on a single day, October 1. Given the high mobility of many students and families and changing enrollment at schools, this data quickly becomes outdated and is no longer an accurate tool for allocating resources. This bill allows for a feasibility study for a new system in which enrollment is measured by the average number of days that each student is enrolled in school during the school year. If found to be warranted, this average daily enrollment model would provide our school districts a significantly improved ability to distribute the appropriate resources to the appropriate students.

If you have any questions or comments about any of the bills explained above, please contact your local NOC member or our office. If you would like to get involved in our Neighborhood Outreach Committees please contact Alexander Sharp at [asharp@mikejohnston.org](mailto:asharp@mikejohnston.org)

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