



2015 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

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DENVER — Thursday, Jan. 15, 2015 — Gov. John Hickenlooper today delivered his annual State of the State address. The governor's remarks focused on the economy, education, transportation and fiscal responsibility.

Here is the text of the speech as prepared:

Good morning.

I am grateful and **honored** to be in this Chamber again with so many distinguished Coloradans.

I see a lot of familiar faces and some new ones.

Some of you were in hard-fought campaigns. A few of you even endured a prolonged period of vote counting.

I can only imagine what that must have been like.

Speaking of hard fought campaigns, we thank the Broncos for another exciting season. And we congratulate Tommy Caldwell of Estes Park, who just reached the top of El Capitan.

To all of you newly elected representatives, congratulations and welcome.

I am confident that Colorado will benefit from your fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

To all of you re-elected members, thank you for your continued service to our state.

During the last four years, Colorado's General Assembly bucked the trend in Washington, as we avoided gridlock by walking the talk of bipartisanship.

Collaboration has been the not-so secret sauce of our state's success.

Congratulations to Senate President Bill Cadman and Majority Leader Mark Scheffel; and Minority Leader Morgan Carroll and Assistant Minority Leader Rollie Heath.

Congratulations as well to Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, Majority Leader Crisanta Duran; House Minority Leader Brian DelGrosso and Assistant Minority Leader Libby Szabo.

With the support of her caucus, Representative Duran, makes history as the first Latina Majority Leader.

I want to convey my gratitude to Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia, whose support and perspective has been invaluable to me and the state.

Let us also express our solidarity with America's oldest ally, represented today by Jeffrey Richards, the Honorary Consul of France.

We are grateful for the partnership we have with the tribes of Colorado and today we are honored to have with us Manuel Heart, the Chair of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.

Only about a month ago, members of the Northern Cheyenne and the Northern Arapaho Tribes gathered on the West Steps of the Capitol to commemorate a sad chapter in our state's history: the 150th anniversary of the Sand Creek Massacre.

With unanimous support from Colorado's four living governors, and on behalf of the good people of this state, I formally apologized for the atrocity that our government and its agents visited upon their ancestors.

I am of the mind that we must acknowledge when things have gone wrong in the hope that we will get more things right.

Healing begins with an apology, empathy and kindness.

During our inaugural festivities we challenged Coloradans to engage in 10,000 random acts of kindness which we can track with the simple hashtag "state of kind".

As we move forward this session, I'm confident that spirit will continue here.

I want to thank my cabinet and senior staff, along with all of our state employees, and special thanks to Major General Edwards and the Colorado National Guard, whose members, always stand ready to help Colorado in emergency.

We have mourned the loss of several Colorado-based service men and women this past year, and we have them and their families in our hearts.

We welcome newly elected Attorney General Cynthia Coffman and Secretary of State Wayne Williams, and re-elected Treasurer Walker Stapleton.

That's Walker R. Stapleton.

The esteemed members of our Colorado State Supreme Court are with us this morning. Our thanks to all of you.

United States Congressmen Jared Polis and Ed Perlmutter are here. Can't say I blame them. I'd much rather be here than in Washington D.C. as well.

We are also fortunate to have with us, former U.S. Senator and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, who has been one of our greatest public servants, not just for Colorado but for our country, and Denver Mayor Michael Hancock, who is doing a phenomenal job.

Just as many of you do, I took the main stairwell to the second floor this morning, and along the way walked by the murals of the first-floor rotunda.

I have walked by those murals many times, and I confess that I don't always stop to appreciate them. But in the days that have led up to the start of this session, I have considered them quite a bit.

The murals were completed in 1940 by Colorado painter Allen True, and the words written by Colorado poet Thomas Hornsby Ferril.

According to an eyewitness account, True and Ferril solidified their partnership and came up with the theme for the murals during a long, raucous night, involving drinking...

And--I kid you not ...knife throwing... Knife throwing

And Ferril sketched out what became their theme on a greasy paper bag left after they'd polished off some cheeseburgers.

The painter and the poet chose the perfect unifying theme for Colorado—water.

The first panel is a poem by Ferril. It starts off, "Here is a land where life is written in water."

An apt way to begin, as in the next eight panels True depicts the story of Colorado. Our past, present and future—and how it all flows from water.

True begins where he should, depicting one of the first natives of Colorado, an American Indian at work.

Throughout the next seven panels, we see a pioneer and his family pushing West into Colorado; speculators mining the gold rush; early farmers planting crops; a construction crew laying our urban foundation; industrial laborers toiling at a power facility.

It is something of poetry itself that these murals encircle our rotunda, as the topic of water flows around many of the decisions we make in this building.

Seventy to eighty percent of Colorado's water falls on the mostly agricultural communities west of the Continental Divide; while 90 percent of our population is on the east, in the more urban Front Range.

Colorado is a semi-arid state. Even when our snow pack is substantial and the state has what looks like a water surplus, a drought always looms. Water in Colorado is always in finite supply.

The long boiling disagreements over water have been well-documented.

Historically, folks West of the Divide took the position that not one more drop of water would be diverted to the Front Range. And East of the Divide would respond with: We'll see you in court.

But just last month, after the largest civic engagement process in state history, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, at long last, achieved what many believed was impossible:

It brought together the disparate stakeholders from around the state and drafted Colorado's first-ever statewide Water Plan.

Representatives of urban areas recognized that locally sourced dairy and food is vital to all of Colorado; while the agricultural areas realized that they could not simply allow urban areas to dry up.

The Colorado Water Plan represents a paradigm shift of cooperation and collaboration, and goes a long way to ensure we strategically allocate this precious resource to maximize our entire state's ability to grow and flourish.

I draw our attention to those murals, and the Water Plan, because in them, it seems, there are valuable lessons.

Lessons—not only about how we manage our water—but also how we can best manage all of our resources.

We are in a unique time, when the decisions we make now will have an especially profound impact on whether our state grows stronger, or stagnates.

Members of the General Assembly, today, I am pleased to say that—despite the considerable challenges Colorado has faced—the state of our state is strong.

According to almost every national ranking, Colorado is now one of the top states for business climate and job growth.

Colorado's economic success is the result of the risk-taking and investment of Colorado's private sector, the creativity of our innovators, and the hard work of the people throughout this state.

Our economic blueprint has been rooted in doing everything possible to promote collaboration with business on the state, county and local levels.

River Rim Teardrops is one example. Dolores County residents Tim and Peg Rossiter are avid campers. A few years ago, to pursue their passion, they bought a cargo trailer and turned it into a camper shaped like a teardrop, and they discovered a business.

With some marketing guidance and help from the Southwest Colorado Small Business Development Center, Tim and Peg launched River Rim Teardrops.

Their company motto is: "We build them the old way because the old ones are still around." That's the sort of sound, sturdy motto that rings true to Coloradans.

As the murals True and Ferril created remind us, our state was founded by pioneers who packed wagons and dared to head into unmapped territory; and with their trailers, Tim and Peg remind us that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and vital to the DNA of Colorado.

Tim and Peg are here with us today. Please join me in asking them to stand, and congratulate them.

In addition to building products the old fashioned way, Colorado benefits mightily from our high-tech innovators. According to one recent count, five of the top metropolitan areas in the country for tech start-ups are located in Colorado.

It's not surprising, considering Colorado has long been among the top states in the nation when it comes to Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing. Colorado's aerospace industry employs over 25,000 employees. Good jobs with good wages.

Just last month, NASA took a giant step forward for mankind when it launched the Orion spacecraft toward Mars on its first voyage and it travelled farther into space than any spacecraft designed for astronauts in 40 years.

While Orion took flight from Cape Canaveral, much of the engineering took flight right here in Colorado with Lockheed Martin and United Launch Alliance.

To galvanize innovators and attract more technology-based start-ups to Colorado, we started the Colorado Innovation Network and launched the annual COIN summit, now entering its fourth year.

Two years ago, Chris Klein and Franz Garsombke, the founders of a company called, Rachio, won the \$50,000 award for the most innovative start-up idea.

Chris and Franz invented a smart-sprinkler, the Iro, which automatically adjusts for changes in weather.

While presenting at the COIN Summit, Chris and Franz did just the sort of thing we had hoped for: they networked and met Noel Ginsburg, the CEO of Colorado's Intertech Plastics. Noel worked with Rachio to help bring the Iro to production.

Rachio's smart sprinklers are now in 1000 Home Depots and launching into Best Buys and Apple Stores.

Please join me in asking Chris, Franz and Noel to stand so that we can congratulate them on sprinkling our semi-arid state with their success.

Our economic development strategy is to recruit, retain, and grow talent better than any state in the country, and to vigilantly seize opportunities to help Colorado businesses hatch and grow.

During the last few years, we have successfully lured major companies like Cool Planet Energy Systems, Hitachi, Ardent Mills and Arrow Electronics.

Just last month, we persuaded Panasonic to locate a major hub in this state with a gain of 300 jobs.

We've successfully kept our companies here at home and helped them grow — companies like Charles Schwab, Lockheed Martin and Woodward, all of which added thousands more jobs.

Your support for our Rural Economic Development Grants program, our Main Street improvement initiative, and the promise of broadband expansion from last sessions' telecommunications reform law ...

... are all important steps to ensure that Colorado's economic recovery reaches all four corners of our state.

We will not only continue those programs -- we will do more.

We've spent four years implementing the Colorado Blueprint, the state's bottom-up strategy to economic recovery, focused on key industries and regional development.

In the coming months, our Office of Economic Development and International Trade will be launching Colorado Blueprint 2.0.

The team will again be visiting all 14 regions of the state soliciting a vision for economic development starting with the counties where employment is most lagging. Counties like Otero, Costilla, San Miguel, and Huerfano.

The office will also launch a pilot program designed to attract the creative class of “free agents”, independent contractors, to live and work in identified communities.

Data suggests that this creative class of free agents comprises up to 30 percent of the U.S workforce and include a wide spectrum of occupations including science, engineering, education, computer programming, and arts and media.

Through non-profit partnerships, the program would provide subsidized space, with high speed internet and access to health-care coverage. Bundling these services and providing a co-working environment will aid in the recruitment of this talent pool and foster economic growth.

This innovative idea came to us from Colorado College President Dick Celeste, and Colorado Springs Mayor Steve Bach, and Mayor Bach is here with us today. This further demonstrates that no one party has all the good ideas.

Our challenge is to make sure economic prosperity reaches every household in all 64 counties.

Despite our statewide economic resurgence, many out-of-work Coloradans are fighting to earn their way into the middle-class.

Almost 50,000 of our fellow Coloradans have been out of work for six-months or more.

Having been among the long-term unemployed myself, I know that many of our long-term unemployed are eager to have a chance re-define themselves and to succeed.

We have launched an initiative that pulls together state resources from several departments, with the single-minded objective to assist long-term unemployed workers find work.

People like Wendy Stedman.

Last year, Wendy walked into a Colorado Workforce Center in Centennial and enrolled in the Dislocated Worker Program. A veteran who served this country honorably, she had lost her job working in I.T. and communications systems.

Wendy’s workforce specialist provided her with resume and interview skills coaching. Together, they determined she would be more marketable with some specialized training.

Wendy was approved to attend Microsoft Project certification classes, and her previous employer re-hired her as a Technical Project Manager.

Please join me in asking Wendy to stand so that we can congratulate her on her new job and thank her for strengthening Colorado’s economy.

The investments we make in our workforce development programs benefit not only the long-term unemployed but also employers and the entire state.

Targeted workforce development and a strong education system are keys to supporting a strong middle class.

Our current budget request for K-12 education includes a \$480 million increase, of which the state is contributing 70 percent.

In recent years, we worked together to save extra money in the State Education Fund.

Moving forward, our budget proposal, includes an additional \$200 million from the State Education Fund intended as a one-time increase for school districts to allocate as their elected boards decide.

With or without this proposal, as we look beyond this year, the ability of the State General Fund to protect the negative factor from rising even higher is uncertain.

Beyond questions of funding, we need to confront the truth about whether Colorado's kids are getting the education they need to compete and succeed in the job market.

But how do we know if we are getting the job done unless we accurately measure individual student growth?

We look forward to the final recommendations of the 1202 Task Force. But already the outlines of a consensus are taking shape.

Easing the testing demands on 12th graders in social studies and science; and streamlining tests in early years and finding flexibility with approaches to social studies might be among the right answers.

There is no doubt, however, that maintaining consistent assessments in English and math through high school is fundamental.

We look forward to working with all of you as we tackle this challenging issue.

Colorado must also become the best state in the country to recruit, retain and grow great teachers. Licensure reforms, career ladders and a fair evaluation system are critical.

These efforts should not be designed to punish teachers, but rather, to reward and inspire the good ones to become even better.

Our goal should be to ensure that every Colorado child has equal access to a great education. That means taking a hard look at funding equity, strategies to turn around struggling schools, promoting innovation and supporting charter schools.

An education after high school was once a sure path into the middle class, but today, the price tag remains a stumbling block for too many of our fellow Coloradans.

Chief among our priorities is reducing the cost of higher education for students and their families. Our Colorado Commission on Higher Education has set a goal that 66% of 25-34 year olds hold a post-high school credential by 2025.

But that's a long way away, and we should target 55 percent by 2020.

In our proposed budget, we have asked for \$107 million additional in General Fund resources for the higher education.

One of the returns on this investment is a cap in the undergraduate tuition growth at no more than 6.0 percent, making college and thereby a pathway to a well-paying job and the middle class more accessible to more Coloradans.

A portion of this request would also provide stabilization funds as the system moves to a new formula.

It is a fast changing world, and we must have a system of higher education that is built to keep pace.

We are doing what we can as a state to educate and graduate a homegrown workforce. But, we know that its not enough, and our ability to continue funding higher ed at this level may not last much longer.

We must continue to identify and develop creative solutions.

The goal of our new Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative is to launch a network of state-matched scholarship funds across the state.

We have already allocated \$34 million to the project, and I hope the General Assembly will join me by allocating another \$30 million.

The Colorado Quarterly Forum has already promised \$1 million over the next ten years -- the first of what will be many contributions to this partnership with philanthropic and business partners.

One of the more fertile fields of employment in Colorado, has been our energy industry.

Colorado has pursued an “all of the above” energy strategy, helping our country approach energy independence.

Throughout my first term, we worked hard on the difficult conflicts that arise when the rightful expectation for a peaceful lifestyle in our homes and neighborhoods runs up against our need for energy, and the property rights that allow mineral owners to develop that energy.

We crafted rules to increase setbacks, reduce noise, light and dust impacts, protect groundwater, slash emissions and disclose industry chemicals. We increased penalties for rulebreakers, toughened spill reporting, added oversight staff, and strengthened local collaboration.

And we’re going to keep working at cultivating a robust energy industry and a healthy environment.

As part of a compromise to keep economically-devastating initiatives off the ballot, we have worked with the Keystone Center and brought long-polarized interests to the same table.

After four meetings of this task force, people have stepped from their entrenched positions, come together, broken bread –or at least boxed lunches–and are talking to one another. As a matter of fact, they are meeting right now.

I look forward to the recommendations of this task force, and pledge to work with you and other stakeholders in developing our energy resources, protecting property rights and our natural environment and public health.

We remain committed to being the #1 healthiest state in nation.

Our plan to get there is the “State of Health,” developed collaboratively by multiple Departments, with broad input from the health care community.

Already, the rate of prescription drug abuse, a chronic issue in Colorado, has come down by more than 15 percent.

We are resetting the Medicaid cost curve in this state through efforts like our Accountable Care Collaborative. Medicaid cost per capita is flat, and trending down.

We are one of the top five most successful states in reducing our number of uninsured citizens.

But we need to do more.

For decades, Colorado has had one of the highest teen suicide rates in the country.

We recently launched the first ever statewide mental health crisis system, including a statewide hotline, mobile crisis workers, stabilization centers and respite services to help address this issue.

We welcome a discussion in this chamber to sustain our momentum on preventative mental health treatment. We need to give schools the resources to identify and support kids at risk for serious mental health issues, before they lead to suicide or violence.

We don't want to lose one more life to this kind of tragedy.

When it comes to supporting healthy communities we have been thankful for the partnership with the General Assembly as we have addressed serious societal challenges.

In this next session, we continue our attention on child welfare. A recent audit recommended new funding to address workload issues for case workers.

We have requested \$6.6 million General Fund for 130 new caseworkers. This is the first step our Department of Human Services plans to take to right size our caseworker capacity to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

Our budget includes a \$4 million General Fund increase in State funding for Senior Services along with \$2 million to provide a 1.7 percent cost of living adjustment to Old Age Pension recipients.

In the last two years, we requested and received funding to eliminate the existing waitlists for Supported Living Services.

This year, we are requesting funding to eliminate the wait list for children with Autism.

Colorado cannot become the healthiest state for people if it is not the healthiest state for our natural environment. Part of educating our kids also means getting them outside for their physical and emotional health.

Mike King, the executive director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, will build on the progress we have already begun with Great Outdoors Colorado, and will engage our federal and local open space partners to craft a statewide recreational trail system.

From Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge to the South Platte River, from Rocky Flats to Rocky Mountain National Park, is one example of the type of world-class trail system we can create.

We want to make sure we get more Colorado cyclists out there.

We have asked Ken Gart, our volunteer bike czar, to assist us in launching a Bike Health initiative that will take on a number of large challenges, such as create a publicly available data source to track existing bicycle trails, routes and cyclist feedback; seek funding for new construction for bicycle infrastructure; and create a plan to connect bike routes across communities and around the tallest mountains in Colorado.

Ken is here with us today and we want to thank him for agreeing to serve in this position and let him know he has our full support.

We ask for your participation and support in identifying a new generation of recreational crown jewels, expanding opportunities for people to hunt, fish, hike and explore the extraordinary natural beauty that only Colorado can offer.

We need to challenge partners like Great Outdoors Colorado, Nature Conservancy and Trust for Public Lands, our federal partners and many others, to help us assemble the most critical open spaces before it is too late.

Katharine Lee Bates was inspired to write “America the Beautiful” atop Pikes Peak. And so, it seems fitting to call this initiative, “Colorado the Beautiful.”

Managing our diverse landscape and natural resources is a top priority in our state. In Colorado, we know how to protect and preserve threatened or endangered species while at the same time protecting grazing and multi-use rights.

Conservation plans are very state specific with much stakeholder collaboration needed to strike the right balance. We will continue to strengthen our partnerships with local governments, and state and federal agencies, along with other stakeholders to find the best solutions for Colorado.

We know that visitors already flock to Colorado to enjoy all that this magnificent state offers.

However, we are missing opportunities to market Colorado and leaving dollars on the table.

In our current budget proposal we are asking for funds to hire a Chief Marketing Officer to strategically promote Colorado and to help us achieve the biggest marketing bang for the buck.

Not all of the PR lately about Colorado has been about our sunshine.

Our new marijuana industry must continue to confront both public health and public safety concerns.

At this time last year, we faced the question of whether it was possible to have a legitimate recreational marijuana industry.

To date, evidence shows that our regulatory system is beginning to work.

We have worked from scratch, with health officials, industry, law enforcement, concerned parents and regulators, and the General Assembly, to develop robust regulations that allow the industry to develop and prosper in a safe and legitimate way.

Both the Brookings and the Cato Institutes have commended our work.

But we know challenges remain.

One of the ongoing public safety concerns is that the marijuana industry operates largely in cash, without traditional forms of banking. Cash only businesses invite corruption, just look at the history of Prohibition.

We will continue to push the federal government to allow banking for this industry.

Another public safety issue we are committed to addressing is drunk driving.

While we must continue to focus our efforts on anti-drunk driving measures like intervention, rehabilitation, and active enforcement -- adequate punishment is also needed.

Colorado is one of only four states that does not have a felony DUI law.

We will work with you on a felony DUI law that brings justice to drivers who repeatedly drink and drive.

Another way to make our State safer is to address infrastructure.

Within the next twenty years Colorado is projected to see our 5.1 million population increase by another 3 million people.

While the Colorado Department of Transportation reconnected the flood-damaged roads and bridges in record time, CDOT also widened the lanes of the Veterans Tunnel Project on-time and under budget—the first I-70 mountain expansion in the 50 years since it was built.

That expansion should just be the beginning.

We are committed to finding solutions that add capacity on I-25 and I-70.

We need to think creatively about how we fund both I-25 and I-70. We cannot wait for the federal government to solve the transportation funding problems in Colorado.

We must take action whether it be new funding sources or funding partnerships.

It is up to us to build our roads to the future.

The last panel of the water-themed murals Allen True and Thomas Ferril created depicts a small group of people gazing into a horizon where a future—filled with innovation and possibilities—is under construction.

That future begins today.

Our collective plans for next year are important. We will make solid and meaningful decisions on education, health care, public safety, and transportation.

But we are facing the mathematical and inevitable conclusion of a system of tax and spending rules that evolved over decades.

One change we can make to encourage fiscal responsibility, and to help us direct our resources to where they are most needed most, is to empower voters to make more informed decisions of the fiscal implications of proposed ballot measures.

We believe that the General Assembly should pass legislation that would provide Coloradans with a fiscal impact statement on the effect of proposed amendments to the State Constitution in order to make the most thoughtful decisions. We will all benefit from that.

And then there's the heart of the fiscal thicket that I mentioned in my Inaugural Address.

Under TABOR, rebates are required even as we see legitimate needs all over the state going unmet.

Amendment 23 demands more new money than we can possibly expect to have two years from now.

If we do nothing, if we pretend the future will take care of itself, and we're back here in two years facing what was clearly an avoidable crisis, history will show that we failed future generations of Coloradans.

There is a legitimate debate of whether government should be a bit bigger or a bit smaller. But that misses the point. Regardless of size, government must work.

Some people want to get rid of TABOR, some want to get rid of Amendment 23, others want to get rid of Gallagher. There is no shortage of thorns in this fiscal thicket.

And while we will continue to strategically prune, our state budget can only endure so much cutting.

Just as stakeholders across this state succeeded in a drafting a strategy for a state water plan, we should be coming together, dealing with the facts of what we know, and take a hard look at what is the most strategic way to allocate our resources; and ask ourselves: What will be of maximum benefit for all Coloradans?

That last mural of Allen True's panels, with the group of people looking toward a horizon with a future taking shape, has some wonderful words from the poet, Ferril, that we would be well served to keep in mind:

"Beyond the sundown is tomorrow's wisdom; today is going to be long, long ago."

Now is when we must come together to address these issues. We don't need to throw knives, just the political courage to face the facts, and do some real math.

We can paint our own panel for the mural, one that will benefit generations of Coloradans to come.

Thank you very much, and God bless the state of Colorado.