

COLORADO STATE SENATE

MAJORITY OFFICE



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Zenzinger makes headway on her key 'E' priorities: elders, education, and economic development



DENVER -- With only three working days remaining in the Colorado legislative session, Sen. Rachel Zenzinger, D-Arvida, continued to advocate for her three "E" priorities today: education, elders, and economic development with the following three bills:

- House Bill 14-1373, addressing property tax exemptions for seniors and disabled veterans;
- Senate Bill 14-221, reducing mandatory academic testing; and
- House Bill 14-1085, addressing adult literacy and workforce development.

The Senate gave second-reading approval of HB 14-1373, sponsored by Zenzinger, which will allow two key groups -- seniors displaced by natural disasters and surviving spouses of disabled veterans -- to maintain their Homestead Property Tax Exemption.

Under current law, the tax exemption requires that seniors live in their houses for 10 years in order to be eligible, but this bill waives that requirement when seniors are forced to move because of a natural disaster.

Also, veterans with 100 percent disability are currently eligible for the exemption; but the exemption is only tied to the veterans and not their spouses. HB 14-1373 eliminates that restriction, making surviving spouses of the disabled veterans eligible for the exemption.

"This bill lends a helping hand to some of our most vulnerable and deserving populations -- survivors of floods and wildfires, and the widows and widowers of disabled veterans," said Sen. Zenzinger. "I'm proud that we were able to pull together and move this bill forward in a bipartisan manner."

In addition to advocating for seniors and disabled veterans' families, Sen. Zenzinger led two education bills through the Senate today, one that significantly promotes economic development. The Senate approved her following two bills on second reading, moving them forward to a third and final reading in the Senate next week.

Statewide Social Studies Test Administration (SB 14-221)

Sponsors: Sen. Rachel Zenzinger and Sen. Andy Kerr

With the goal of allowing teachers and students to focus on learning, rather than continual assessments, this bill delays administration of the social studies assessment in high school by one year, and it allows the department to administer the assessment in each public school at least once every 3 years. The bill specifies that school districts can opt-in to testing at any time. The bill is projected to save the state \$335,000.

Adult Literacy Programs (HB 14-1085)

Sponsor: Sen. Rachel Zenzinger

About 25 percent of Coloradans without high school degrees face poverty, and many can't find work because they lack basic literacy or math skills. HB 14-1085 establishes an adult education and literacy grant program, allowing more folks to acquire these necessary skills. To apply for funding, an education facility must participate in a workforce development partnership that will help adults in the education and literacy programs find employment. The programs currently can serve only about 14,000 Coloradans each year. The bill was endorsed by Colorado Competitive Council (C3) and Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry (CACI).

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ABOUT SEN ZENZINGER: Sen. Rachel Zenzinger serves Colorado Senate District 19, which spans most of Arvada and the Jefferson County portion of Westminster. She was appointed to her seat and sworn into office on Dec. 13, 2013. She serves on the Senate Education Committee and Senate Local Government Committee, and she is a Senate advisor to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. Her professional background is in education, and she was coordinator of the Regis University Master of Arts in Education program. She spent four years working for Catholic Charities of Denver. For more information about Sen. Zenzinger, please go to www.RachelForColorado.com or call her at 303-866-4840.