

On the side

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Can we quote you on that?

"I was trying to catch a taxi."

Rep. Bill Cadman, R-Colorado Springs, explaining why he was late to a committee hearing. Dozens of taxi drivers were at the Capitol, not picking up passengers but to monitor a bill to regulate the rates cab companies charge their drivers.

UNDER THE DOME

Tax-rate freeze gets green light

The state legislature's legal office has concluded that Democratic Gov. Bill Ritter's proposal to freeze property-tax rates would not violate the state constitution's prohibition on raising taxes.

The opinion, released Thursday, says that the proposal "clearly does not constitute a new tax, tax-rate increase," or other change that would require voter approval.

Nonpartisan legislative analysts have estimated that freezing property-tax rates for school districts would let the districts keep at least \$64 million a year - relieving pressure on state funding for public schools.

In a prepared statement, Ritter said that "every corner of the state budget not protected by the Constitution or a federal mandate - every service provided to the people of Colorado - will suffer" unless his proposal is adopted.

Sen. Sue Windels, D-Arvara, the legislative sponsor of the proposal, said she expects to consult with other lawmakers for a couple of weeks before deciding whether to proceed.

"I need to have that conversation with my colleagues," she said. "This is the right thing to do, but some people have said, 'That's easy for you to say because you're term-limited in 2008.'"

Lower age for statehouse hopefuls

Those 21 or older could run for the state legislature under a proposal endorsed Thursday by the House.

The measure from Rep. Michael Garcia, D-Aurora, who was 26 when he was elected, requires a final two-thirds vote in the House and Senate before it would go on the November 2008 ballot.

The current age requirement is 25.

Garcia, who is among the youngest lawmakers elected to the statehouse, said an older legislator put her arm around him and offered her guidance when he first arrived in 2000.

"After a couple of weeks, it was very clear I should have been the one putting my arm around her, asking, 'If you need any help, let me know,'" he said.

Fake addresses for victims gains

Legislation that would let victims of domestic violence or stalking use fake addresses, with their real addresses known only to the secretary of state's office, passed a House committee Thursday.

The House State Affairs Committee voted 11-0 for the measure, House Bill 1350.

More energy-efficient buildings

A bill that would require all state buildings to be more energy efficient passed a House committee.

Senate Bill 51 from Rep. Claire Levy, D-Boulder, and Rep. Rob Witwer, R-Jefferson County, requires state buildings to use construction practices that reduce energy consumption.

Energy-efficiency measures could include new fluorescent bulbs, insulation and wall board made from recycled products, nontoxic paints and toilets that use less water.

The measure would exempt some historical buildings.

The House Transportation Committee passed the bill unanimously. It already has passed the Senate.

Panel OKs school sex-ed bill

The Senate Education Committee passed a bill that would require school districts to include science-based information in sex-education courses.

House Bill 1292 would require public schools to teach kids the latest about AIDS, hepatitis C and the link between the human papilloma virus and cervical cancer.

But the legislation says schools should emphasize abstinence, including from oral sex, and it says districts should involve parents in curriculum planning.

The bill, from Sen. Sue Windels, D-Arvada, and Rep. Nancy Todd, D-Aurora, passed on a 4-3 partisan vote.

The measure already has passed the House.