



Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

Memorandum

September 11, 2025

TO: Interested Persons

FROM: Amanda King, Principal Research Analyst, 303-866-4332

SUBJECT: Colorado General Assembly Special Sessions

Overview

The Colorado General Assembly meets annually in regular session for up to 120 days. However, the Colorado Constitution allows the Colorado General Assembly to meet outside of the 120-day regular legislative session to conduct legislative business in a special legislative session (special session). This memorandum provides information about special sessions, including their length and frequency, how they can be called, and information on each special session since statehood. The Office of Legislative Legal Services [memorandum concerning Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Special Legislative Sessions](#) provides additional information about special sessions.

Frequency and Length of Special Sessions

The first special session in Colorado was called in 1894. As of August 2025, there have been 52 special sessions. Prior to 1952, the Colorado General Assembly met only in odd-numbered years. Therefore, in even-numbered years before 1952, a special session had to be called for the General Assembly to meet. There is not a limit on the number of special sessions that can be called during a legislative interim. However, no more than two special sessions have ever been called in the same year.

There are no constitutional limitations on the length of a special session. However, since it takes a minimum of three days to pass a bill in Colorado, a special session must last at least three days if the General Assembly adopts any legislation. As of August 2025, the longest special session was held in 1910 and lasted 71 days, and the shortest special session lasted two days in 2017.



How a Special Session is Called

Either the Governor or the General Assembly can call a special session. For the Governor to convene a special session, he or she must issue a proclamation, commonly referred to as “the call,” that states the date upon which the General Assembly will convene and the subject areas it may consider.¹ For the General Assembly to call themselves into a special session, at least two-thirds of the members from each chamber must submit a written request to the presiding officer of the chamber.² The General Assembly has never called itself into special session.

Information Specific to Each Special Session

Table 1 provides a list of Colorado’s special sessions since statehood, including the major topics discussed and the number of days the special session lasted. Topics listed in this table include major policy areas under the Governor’s call, but may not be a comprehensive list of the subjects address in the special session.

Table 1
Special Sessions of the Colorado General Assembly since Statehood

Year	Governor	Major Topics	# of Days
2025	Governor Polis	Budget shortfalls and other Fiscal Matters, Health Care, Food Security, and Artificial Intelligence	6
2024	Governor Polis	Property Taxes	4
2023	Governor Polis	Property Taxes, Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer Program, and TABOR Refunds	4
2020	Governor Polis	Covid-19 Pandemic Emergency	3
2017	Governor Hickenlooper	Retail Marijuana Sales Taxes	2
2012	Governor Hickenlooper	Civil Unions, Driving Under the Influence of Drugs, Special Mobile Machinery Fleets, Unemployment Insurance Program, and Water Projects	3
2006	Governor Owens	Common Law Marriage, Immigration Reform, and Supreme Court Timeline Related to Ballot Initiatives	5
2002	Governor Owens	Capital Punishment Sentencing and Response to Wildfires and Drought	4
2001 (1 st)	Governor Owens	Growth Management	12
2001 (2 nd)	Governor Owens	Growth Management and Redistricting	20
1998	Governor Romer	TABOR	3
1997	Governor Romer	TABOR	3
1993	Governor Romer	Summer of Violence	5
1991 (1 st)	Governor Romer	United Airlines Tax Credit	6
1991 (2 nd)	Governor Romer	Reapportionment and School Finance	60

¹Colo. Const. art. IV, § 9.

²Colo. Const. art. V, § 7.



Year	Governor	Major Topics	# of Days
1989	Governor Romer	Corrections and Transportation Needs	11
1988	Governor Romer	Corrections and FY1987-88 Budget Matters	3
1986	Governor Lamm	FY1985-86 Budget Matters	27
1985	Governor Lamm	Governmental Immunity Act and State Self-Insurance Program	3
1978 (1 st)	Governor Lamm	Effective Date of Bill Concerning Sentencing Laws	3
1978 (2 nd)	Governor Lamm	Grasshopper Infestation	3
1976	Governor Lamm	Corrections and Detention Programs and Facilities	4
1966	Governor Love	Creation of a Land Commission	3
1965	Governor Love	Taxes and U.S. Presidential Succession	3
1964 (1 st)	Governor Love	Congressional Reapportionment	5
1964 (2 nd)	Governor Love	Legislative Reapportionment	8
1961	Governor McNichols	Error in Bill Affecting Tax Structures and State Appropriations	3
1958	Governor McNichols	Grasshopper Infestation and Unemployment Compensation Benefits	7
1956	Governor Johnson	Construction of Continental Divide Toll Tunnel, Legislative Reapportionment, and Unemployment Compensation	7
1954	Governor Thornton	Soil Erosion and State Income Tax	7
1953	Governor Thornton	Colorado School of Mines, Errors in Bills Affecting Tax Structures, and State Public School Fund	3
1951	Governor Thornton	Public School Finance	5
1950	Governor Johnson	Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, Fire, and Korean War	6
1948	Governor Knous	Salary Increases for Elected State and County Officials	4
1945	Governor Vivian	Aviation, Federal Highway Act of 1944, and State Appropriations	16
1944 (1 st)	Governor Vivian	Election Laws	8
1944 (2 nd)	Governor Vivian	Absentee Voting for Members of the Armed Forces and Property Rights of Aliens	6
1939	Governor Carr	Conduct of State Civil Service Commission	15
1936 (1 st)	Governor Johnson	Create the State Welfare Department	10
1936 (2 nd)	Governor Johnson	Laws to Conform with the federal Social Security Act and State Liquor Control Board	4
1935	Governor Johnson	Impeachment of the Secretary of State	15
1933 (1 st)	Governor Johnson	Emergency Relief Administration and Prohibition Repeal	17
1933-34 (2 nd)	Governor Johnson	Irrigation Districts and National Industrial Recovery Act	50
1922	Governor Shoup	Organization of Water Conservancy Districts and Construction of Tunnels Through Mountain Ranges	12
1919	Governor Shoup	Automobile Thefts, National Guard Payments, and Suffrage	12
1917	Governor Gunter	World War I	18
1914	Governor Ammons	Labor Disputes and Prohibition of Alcohol and Firearm Sales During Riots	13



Year	Governor	Major Topics	# of Days
1910	Governor Shafroth	Banking, Election Laws, Public Service Commission, and State Railroad Commission	71
1903	Governor Peabody	Pay Expenses of State Government	6
1902	Governor Orman	Pay Expenses of State Government and Public Revenues	54
1897	Governor Adams	Pay Expenses of State Government	3
1894	Governor Waite	Elections, Initiatives and Referendums, Labor Laws, and Mining	52

Source: Legislative Council Staff.