

Concerning Parking for People with Certain Disabilities

LLS 18-0945 Yelana Love (x2295)

I'm working on a new disability parking bill for next legislative session, and I'd like to touch base with you about it. 4 states already have enacted similar legislation, and this bill is modeled after those state laws.

The quick summary is this bill would create a new type of disability placard for people with a very limited, specific set of disabilities. Colorado, like the majority of states, has current state law providing free meter access for people with disabilities. However, Colorado Statute isn't as clear as law in other states. One clause in Colorado Statute points to Federal law for the definition of "reasonably accessible," but that Federal Regulations don't address parking meters. While current statute requires parking enforcement or law enforcement to decide if someone qualifies, this bill would require a medical professional to authorize this new placard.

There are 3 intended beneficiaries of the new law:

- **Municipalities**. Some municipalities require those with mobility to disabilities, and others provide free parking. That confusion is likely a result of ambiguous Colorado Statute. This bill would clarify who has meter exemptions and who doesn't, thereby providing municipalities clearer control over their parking enforcement.

Based on Open Records requests from states already utilizing this legislation, fewer than 10% of those who currently qualify for disability placards would qualify for this new placard. For those municipalities that currently grant free parking to anyone with a placard, they would have the opportunity to collect meter revenue from 90%+ of those with placards. Extrapolating from other states, it is estimated that Colorado would have approximately 21,000 of these new placards statewide, the vast majority being in Denver and Colorado Springs.

- **Businesses**. Parking meters are designed to encourage people to park only for as long as they need. Allowing exceptions to that rule (regardless the reason why the exception exists) makes the limited parking around businesses even more scarce. Allowing municipalities to charge meter fees will return meters to their intended purpose, thereby increasing flow and allowing businesses to sell to more customers.
- **People with Disabilities**. The nationwide, number one reason people fraudulently obtain a disability placard is for free parking. Colorado has 588,000 placards and plates issued for 5.6 million residents – more than 10%. Limiting the benefit of free parking will eliminate the top reason why people fraudulently use a placard, therefore providing increased access to parking for those with disabilities. After all, disability parking spaces are a fixed resource, so the more people who park in them, the scarcer parking is.

Chris Hinds
chris@chrishinds.com
303-717-9174