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Lawmakers focus strongly on small business relief

By Jeanne Davant

Colorado legislators ended the 2021 session having passed a near-record 502 bills, many of them directed toward repairing the COVID-19 pandemic's damage to small businesses.

"This session was pretty great, with a lot of small business wins," said Lindsey Vigoda, Colorado director of The Small Business Majority, an organization that advocates for and seeks to empower small businesses.

"Legislators are finally understanding that small businesses are the crux of a community, and they need to be written into every single policy," Vigoda said.

The Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC also found much to like about the session, starting with "everyone's favorite bill — cocktails to go," said Rachel Beck, the chamber's vice president, government affairs. Legislators extended for four years the provision that allows alcoholic beverage take-out and delivery, which is providing

much-needed revenue for the beleaguered restaurant industry.

With estimates of three to five years before restaurants fully recover, "our mantra this session was, whatever restaurants want, restaurants get," Beck said.

Not all of the 49 bills the chamber engaged with or monitored earned its support, however, and the chamber took the extraordinary step this year of urging Gov. Jared Polis to veto one of them — HB21-1266, titled Environmental

Justice Disproportionate Impacted Communities.

That bill, which creates an environmental justice action task force to develop an environmental justice strategy and plan, was significantly altered at the last minute before it was passed, without involving the industries that it impacted, such as oil and gas and electric utilities, the chamber stated in a June 16 letter to Polis.

The bill "gives the Air Quality Control

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FOCUS MILITARY

Local military personnel may encounter additional obstacles to finding housing.

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