

Mesa County Launches Ballot Verifier, Giving Voters Unprecedented Access to Ballots

by Jen Schumann, Contributing Writer, Rocky Mountain Voice

Mesa County launched a first-of-its-kind ballot transparency tool last month, allowing residents to view redacted ballot images and corresponding cast vote records online—without filing a CORA request. Supporters say it could reshape public trust in elections. Others say it doesn’t go far enough.

But one thing is certain: Mesa County is at the heart of a national battle over election integrity, and the Ballot Verifier came to fruition out of demand — and the innovation of an election stats company that wanted to answer to it.

Mesa County Clerk and Recorder Bobbie Gross said the tool was made possible by an initial \$30,000

investment to develop the system and redaction process. “I believe \$20,000 every year to keep it going,” she said. “But they’ll do as many elections as we want.”

The software allows the public to follow the entire path of a ballot—from image to vote.

This article is Part 1 of a three-part series on the Ballot Verifier: Mesa’s launch, Ada County’s pilot and the debate over election transparency laws.

Making public records truly public

Gross said one of her top priorities was removing barriers to election data. “It’s all there,” she said, referring to the Ballot Verifier’s online ballot and vote image library. “They can download these, they

can conduct their own citizen hand count if they would like to.”

In the past, residents who wanted to view ballots often had to file a CORA request, pay a steep fee and wait for redactions. “I’ve seen quotes for \$20,000. That’s a lot of money... for an individual to come up with to get access to this record.” Now, she said, that burden is gone. “This will provide most of all the requests that I’ve seen.”

How Mesa County built the Ballot Verifier

The idea, intent and troubleshooting to make it a reality has been in the works for over a year-and-a-half. “We started going through those ballot images in November of 2023,” Gross said. “We thought we could do this in-house as time allowed.”

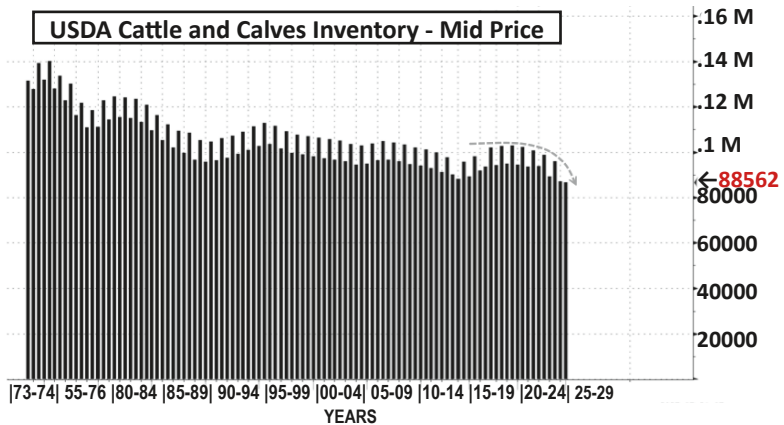
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But the process quickly proved more time-consuming than expected. “We were like, yeah, we can probably do this in-house... but it was taking a lot longer than we anticipated. We had our election judges come in and help us... but that was getting us only a little closer to what we wanted.”

The real challenge, she said, wasn’t gathering the ballot images—it was redacting them. “This is our bottleneck—it’s getting the ballot images up because of the redaction part.”

That’s when Gross reached out to Civera. “We said, this is what we want to do. This is really what

“Herds Gutted”: Historically Low U.S. Cattle Inventory Drives Beef Prices to New Highs



by Tyler Durden, ZeroHedge.com

America’s declining cattle herd is nothing short of alarming, and some ranchers call it a “**national security threat**” to the nation’s food supply chain. This continues to be a major theme **fueling record-high cattle prices** on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and **beef prices at the local supermarket**. Elevated interest rates and soaring input costs under the Biden-Harris regime for years have made it increasingly **difficult to maintain or rebuild herds**—challenges that are expected to persist early in President Trump’s second term.

Ranchers have faced a slew of macroeconomic headwinds in maintaining or restocking their herds, as rising interest expenses on cattle and elevated input costs since 2022 have squeezed margins and eroded incentives to rebuild.

Compounding the challenge are drought conditions and “green” degrowth climate policies, which have added further pressure on producers.

At the start of the year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s annual Cattle Inventory report revealed that the **nation’s cattle supply had fallen to a 73-year low, totaling about 86.6 million head**.

At the supermarket, USDA data from the end of March showed the **average price for a pound of ground beef reached yet another record high of \$5.79**.

Given the **current cattle cycle** marked by low inventory and high prices, many questions linger about when ranchers and

Michael Foster Ranger Hall of Fame

COL (R) Michael Foster Named 2025 Ranger Hall of Fame Inductee

—WESTCLIFFE, Colorado

Following a distinguished Army career, local Army Ranger COL (R) Michael Foster has been selected for the 2025 Ranger Hall of Fame. Formed in 1992, the Ranger Hall of Fame (HOF) serves the exclusive purpose of honoring and preserving the contributions of America’s most extraordinary Rangers. Members of the Ranger HOF include noble warriors like Ranger and Medal of Honor recipient COL Ralph Puckett, General Stanley McChrystal, and General Colin Powell as well as honorary inductee President Abraham Lincoln. Westcliffe’s COL Michael Foster will join their ranks with his induction into the storied Ranger Hall of Fame on Wednesday, June 25, 2025.

“This honor reflects years of sacrifice, hard work, and an unwavering commitment to the Ranger Creed. [Hall of Fame] inductees represent the very best of the Ranger spirit, exemplifying unparalleled leadership, dedication, and valor throughout their careers.” stated a post from the US Army Airborne Ranger Brigade. When asked how



COL Michael Foster. Purple Heart and Outgoing Change of Command Ceremony, 1st Ranger Battalion, July 2012, Savannah, Georgia.

Photo Courtesy of the Foster family

his selection impacted him, COL Foster stated, “Outside of Reggie and our girls, the privilege of serving in the Regiment has been the most profound impact of my life and an honor that is hard to put into words.”

Colonel Michael Foster was nominated for the Ranger Hall of Fame due to his extraordinary Ranger service during numerous assignments in both the 75th Ranger Regiment and the Joint Special Operations Command in peacetime and combat.

Colonel Foster’s first assignment with the Rangers was as a Ranger Rifle Platoon Leader in 1993. He served at every rank from Lieutenant to Colonel in the

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Call upon Him while He is near.
Isaiah 55: 6 KJV

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These were the principles that guided our founding fathers and which we believe are still relevant. These are the principles that will guide our reporting and be the basis of all our views.

We will not be constrained by the illogical, misleading and inaccurate thinking and use of "political correctness" but by truth, facts, logic and common sense.

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Regiment and admirably led Rangers assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment over the next nineteen years culminating with command of the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

Ranger Foster held a variety of Ranger leadership positions to include Ranger Rifle Platoon Leader, Ranger Rifle Company Commander, Joint Interagency Task Force Director (JIATF) Director (JSOC) and Ranger Battalion Commander with over 70 months deployed to combat in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Colonel Foster deployed numerous times to Operation Uphold Democracy, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Resolute Support, and Operation Atlantic Resolve.

COL (R) Foster served from the front in every capacity, personally participating in over 150 raids and commanding more than two thousand others. His efforts are also indicated by his countless awards including seven Bronze Stars, the Purple Heart and Ranger unit awards; Presidential Unit Citation with OLC, Valorous Unit Award with OLC, Joint Meritorious Unit Award and the Army Superior Unit Award. These unit awards highlight the Ranger Battalion's combat overmatch of the enemy under Foster's leadership.

When asked about Michael's Purple Heart, his wife Reggie said, "I never thought it would be me answering the middle of the night phone call to learn my Ranger husband had been wounded while on a mission. I am so very proud of Michael and his Rangers. They were brought together for a time when things needed to be done, and they did it exceptionally well. Each gave 100 percent and then some. I am grateful for every single moment we were able to serve Rangers and their families. Michael shuns personal accolades and I am just so proud and excited for this one!!"



Top: Michael and Reggie Foster
Bottom: Michael with his daughters



COL Foster commanded the first Ranger Battalion to be awarded the Presidential Unit Citation since World War II. In addition to his stellar Ranger service, Colonel Foster also lived the Abrams Charter with additional leadership in the 82nd Airborne Division as a Rifle Company Commander and Battalion Commander and as the Brigade Commander, 173d Airborne Brigade in Vincenza, Italy. Except for the Infantry Officer Advanced Course, CGSC, and the War College, COL Foster served continuously on airborne status for over 22 years as an Infantry Officer and qualified for his Master Wings three times over.

COL Foster built a multi-national and multi-agency alliance that included more than 65 different member organizations at its height. His work in establishing procedures, forcing cooperation and maximizing operational-intelligence fusion created what is viewed by many as the most productive and beneficial JIATF in the Global War on Terrorism. His work with JIATF-Main, showed its value and led it to be moved from Fort Bragg to Washington, DC and renamed the JIATF-NCR (National Capital Region) where it still exists and operates today, nearly 20 years later.

Since retiring, COL (R) Foster remains active in the commercial and private sector. He serves and supports several Ranger and Veterans organizations. Post retirement he was the Director of six of the National Outdoor Leadership Schools fifteen global campuses. He is requested for keynote addresses and conducts leadership training for organizations like the New Jersey State Police, FBI and Fortune 500 companies.

Ranger Foster supports his wife, Reggie, and their three daughters in their community activities. Reggie serves on several local boards with Michael's support. You will see him in the top row of the CCHS bleachers cheering on his Bobcat daughters, Marin and Sierra. Foster's oldest daughter, Marlee, a CCHS graduate, is attending Abilene Christian University.



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A First In Fremont and Surrounding Counties: GO KIDZ Indoor Playground and Fun Kingdom for Kids

by Fred Hernandez

GO KIDZ, the first and only indoor playground in four counties: Fremont, Custer, Chaffee and Park, is having its grand opening this weekend, May 3 and 4, in the City of Florence. The beautiful facility for kids of all ages is a state of the art totally indoors playground that is guaranteed to fascinate both children and adults alike. Every detail has been considered in the planning, engineering and installation of this fun factory.

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This happy hive for children of all ages elevates the City of Florence to the playland capital of southwestern Colorado. Open all week long from Monday to Sunday starting at 10 a.m. until 7 p.m., every day becomes a play day. The price of admission for a child up to seventeen years old is \$19.90 plus tax and includes one adult FREE. The price is good for three hours of unlimited use of all the attractions in the building. For infants up to 9 months old admission is \$5 plus tax with a paid sibling otherwise regular admission fee will apply.

Punch Cards can be purchased for discounted multiple visits with no expiration date. To keep the play place clean at all times no shoes or footwear are allowed inside the building and must be checked in at the entrance. GO KIDZ management makes available Grip Socks for everyone while on the premises. These are available at only \$3 each and can be reused multiple times as long as these are not damaged or obviously unclean.

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Here's how to reach us: Telephone number 719-372-1647. On Facebook GO KiDZ Playground; by email gokidzplayground@gmail.com; Visit our website at www.gokidzcolorado.com (sign the waiver online before visiting)

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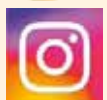
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Press Release

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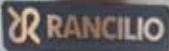
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MESA COUNTY
from page 1

we want to do and this is our bottleneck,” she recalled. “So they said, ‘We’re going to work with you.’”

Gross said they began working with Civera in spring 2024 and secured funding by June. From there, the buildout and testing began.

“We had to make sure the information was correct, verifiable and built the way we wanted. We had to test all of our elections... and look at every detail.”

What the Ballot Verifier
actually does

Now that it’s launched, she said, the software not only allows users to view ballot images but see exactly how they were interpreted.

“This is as open as elections can get. You’re able to click on a ballot image and see exactly what it was interpreted as. And if something was adjudicated, you’re able to see that side-by-side.”

She added, “You don’t have to trust just what we tell you. You can go look at it yourself.”

Gross said she welcomes citizen-led audits and emphasized that each ballot image includes a visible identifier that matches the filename of the digital ballot image, allowing any member of

the public to trace a ballot image to its corresponding paper ballot if formally reviewed by election officials.

Support from Mesa County
Commissioners

“The Ballot Verifier provides the voters with additional tools and resources to ensure their vote is counted.” Fletcher added, “Mesa County has added more layers of transparency and we are using a third-party company to team with Mesa County to provide these steps.”

Commissioner Bobbie Daniel said the tool builds on previous transparency efforts and removes barriers for everyday citizens. “We have supported funding initiatives that ensure public confidence in our elections, including putting ballots online for every Mesa County Clerk election since the 2021 school board race.” Daniel added, “Supporting funding for the Ballot Verifier is a natural extension of that commitment.”

Daniel emphasized that the Ballot Verifier eliminates the need for costly CORA requests, allowing all voters to see how ballots were marked and counted. “We are eliminating the need for individuals to submit costly CORA requests and providing immediate access to ballots and how they were interpreted by election judges.”

She added, “This opens up the election verification process to every citizen, regardless of their financial means.”

Commissioner Cody Davis agreed, echoing Daniel’s assessment.

Mesa County Clerk Bobbie Gross giving a demonstration of the Ballot Verifier at the April 8 Mesa County GOP meeting.

Mesa County voters respond

Ahead of the launch, the Clerk and Recorder’s Office conducted a public outreach campaign to promote the Ballot Verifier, using social media, the county website, direct emails and a YouTube video.

Gross also extended personal invitations to several civic and political groups—including the League of Women Voters, Restore the Balance and both major political parties—to visit the Clerk’s office and learn about the system firsthand. She said only Republican residents responded with interest to learn more.

On April 8th, Gross gave a formal presentation on the Ballot Verifier at the Mesa County GOP meeting. The event drew praise, questions and commentary from attendees who welcomed the chance to explore the software directly.

Several attendees praised the effort while asking questions.

Melinda Guthrie, a Mesa County Republican who has been active

in local elections since 2003, said the tool could help restore voter confidence. “It’ll help people feel confident in their vote.” She added, “We still have people who say, ‘My vote won’t count.’ But now they can see for themselves. That’s the value.”

When asked whether the \$20,000 annual cost was worth it, she said, “Yeah. For a county this size? I do. I think that’s a decent price.” She continued, “The ballots are connected to the images that are counted... It’s worth it.”

Jim Hargis, a Mesa County resident of 11 years, said the Ballot Verifier addresses a long-standing concern. “From the time it is sent with mail, received here, posted—you know, everything’s gotta be accountable for. The numbers have to match.”

He described the software as similar to a third-party audit, like what he saw happen in Maricopa County. “It’s almost the same kind of audit or similar audit to what they did in Maricopa County by an independent person.”

Hargis added that this tool pushes back on the idea that voting isn’t worthwhile. “It reverses the whole idea that it’s not worth voting. Every single vote is accounted for.”

He emphasized that while it’s not the final step in accountability, it is a foundational one. “Now what’s

left to do is for the state to allow us to verify the ballot send-out,” he said.

A start, not the finish

County leaders say they hope the Ballot Verifier will be a step in the right direction. Mesa County’s new tool may not answer every question—but it’s a significant move toward rebuilding trust.

“Ultimately, these are the people’s records. It didn’t feel good to me to not be able to release them.” Gross added, “I think it’s worth the investment to have people trust the elections and to be able to audit them.”

<https://www.mesacounty.us/departments-and-services/clerk-and-recorder/elections/voter-information-elections/mesa-county>

This article is Part 1 of a three-part series.

- **Part 2:** How Idaho’s Ballot Verifier turned critics into fans
- **Part 3:** Colorado law limits voters from verifying their own ballots

(Editor/GG: We will run Parts 2 and 3 next week. This is a great idea.)

Please see: <https://rockymountaininvoice.com/2025/04/mesa-county-launches-ballot-verifier-giving-voters-unprecedented-access-to-ballots/>

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Recurring Events

Mondays
10 a.m. Pickle Ball Silver Cliff Mem.Park (SCMP)
More info: lizbrannen@gmail.com
6 -7:30 p.m. Men’s Bible Meeting at First Baptist Church.
6 p.m. Alcoholics Anonymous (CLSD) 12 Step study, at St. Luke’s, 3rd & Rosita, Westcliffe. Martha at 719-371-1853.

1st Monday of the Month
10 - 11 a.m. Women’s Veteran Coffee Social
West Custer County Library Community Rm.,
209 Main St. Westcliffe
5 p.m. Post 170 Auxiliary mo. mtg (year-round) Cliffe Lanes
2nd and 4th Monday
6 – 7 p.m. Narcotics Anonymous
Community United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall.
Children Welcome. colobamanana@yahoo.com

Tuesdays
9 a.m. Women’s Bible Studay at First Baptist Church
12 noon – 1 p.m. Alcoholics Anonymous (CLDS)
“As Bill Sees It” St. Luke’s, 3rd & Rosita in W/C.
Call Martha at 719-371-1853.

1st Tuesday of the Month
9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Old Schoolhouse Quilters Comfort Quilters @Valley Bible
6:00 p.m. American Legion Post 170 monthly meeting at Cliff Lanes meeting room.

4-6 p.m. Christian Music on KLZR 91.7 FM
2nd Tuesday of the Month
9 a.m. Old Schoolhouse Quilters Guild Mtg @Valley Bible

3rd Tuesday of the Month
Liberty Rocks TUESDAY CANCELLED FOR MAY
Wednesdays
8-9 a.m. Veterans Coffee Social, Veterans and Caregivers welcome. West Custer County Library Community Rm., 209 Main St. Westcliffe
9:30 – 11 a.m. Line Dancers meet at United Methodist Church, 204 S 6th St. Call Debbie Underwood at (432) 553-7483.

9:45-11:30 a.m. The Posse Ladies Bible Study @Sangre de Cristo Fellowship, 120 Jerry Dr. Westcliffe. Holly 703-338-4100 or Rene at 719-371-7076
10 a.m. Pickle Ball (SCMP) info: lizbrannen@gmail.com
6 p.m. Alcoholics Anonymous (CLSD) Big Book Study at St. Luke’s, 3rd & Rosita, Westcliffe. Martha at 719-371-1853.

6 p.m. Prayer Group Meeting. First Baptist Church of Westcliffe. Call 719-783-2498.
First Thursday of the Month
9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Comfort Quilters, FBC (log bldg next to the church) 417 S. 6th St. Contact Delores at 719-371-1451.

2nd Thursday of the Month
6 p.m. Custer County Republican Central Committee meeting. Ranchers Roost. The public is welcome See www.CusterGOP.com or Facebook page at https://m.facebook.com/custergop
3rd Thursday of the Month
2 p.m. Round Mt Water District Meeting.

Fridays
10 a.m. Pickle Ball Silver Cliff Memorial Park
More info: lizbrannen@gmail.com
1 - 4 p.m.- Mah Jongg at the Senior Center
6 p.m. Alcoholics Anonymous Open Discussion, St. Luke’s, 3rd & Rosita. Call Martha 719-371- 1853

2nd Friday of the Month
8 a.m. Mens’ Prayer Breakfast at First Baptist Church
Saturdays
10 a.m. Wet Mountain Al-Anon Family Group meets at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. Call Dee (719) 404-1851 or Jean (719) 371-1229.

3rd Saturday of Month
8 a.m. Valley Bible Fellowship Men’s Breakfast Open to all Men of the Community, 116 Hermit Lane, Silver Cliff
Questions, **Mike @ 719-650-0362**
1 p.m. VFW meeting at Cliff Lanes Conference Room, Post Commander Burt Daniels 719-783-3050



BOCC: Tons of Policies, Silver Cliff Gets Some Free Land, Round Mountain Donation Confusion

by George Gramlich,
News and Commentary

The April 24, 2025 Custer County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) regular meeting was held at the All Aboard Westcliffe meeting room and started at 9 a.m. All three Commissioners were present: Chair Bill Canda and members Lucas Epp and Paul Vogelsong.

Not too much in Commissioner Items. Epp said the ARPA and LATCF yearly grant fund reports were done and submitted. Canda said the Commissioners had a “good” meeting with our local dems. *(The local Polis, Biden, AOC, Pelosi loving Custer County democrat party asked our Commissioners to show up at a “round table” so they could question them about what is going to happen to Happy Valley when the fed and state grant money disappears, and the children will be starving.)*

In New Business, Accounts Payable was up first. Epp gave the run down. *(Epp does good with this. He reviews, during his presentation, all AP items over \$5k. Very informative. Of note, interim County Attorney Dan Slater got a \$6.8k check and they finally paid for the infamous Rolls Royce level chipper with a \$98k check.)* The total AP for the last two weeks was \$372k.

Next was a proposal to approve a proclamation for Family Crisis Services to proclaim April Sexual Assault Awareness month. Family Crisis Services does a lot of good stuff including safe houses for abuse victims, therapy and counseling. Last year they served 274 clients. The proclamation was approved.

The Mayor of the Town of Silver Cliff, Buck Wenzel was next at the royal table. He said the County and Silver Cliff had an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) regarding a piece of land the county owns but Silver Cliff uses and maintains. It has signs on it and it is a trail head. Buck wanted the BOCC to deed the piece over to Silver Cliff to make things simpler. This was approved.

Human Services was next with nine policies that the state requires and the County hadn’t adopted them. This was supposed to have been done in 2022 but it wasn’t. The Commissioners approved all the policies.

Next up was Human Resources Director, Bob Smith, with the newly revised Records Retention Policy for the County. Bob has sent it around to the various department heads for review and made some changes based on that input. The Commissioners approved it.

The final New Business Agenda Item was about setting up a procedure so people could donate money to help the Round Mountain Water and Sanitation District pay for the construction of their new waste treatment system. (Remember the County donated \$40k recently.) Canda led the discussion. He wanted to set up an account item at the Treasurer’s Office to take the donations which would allow the donations to be tax deductible. It was asked why can’t Round Mountain do it and Canda said that under their statutory regulations, they were not allowed to do that. County Attorney Slater said that was wrong and Round Mountain, like a bunch of other local entities, by statute can accept donations and have them be tax deductible. This went on for a bit. Finally, Canda said he would go over and talk to Round Mountain to find out one way or the other.

No fireworks. Of note, however, Chair Canda is letting people, one person in particular, interrupt the Commissioners discussion of items instead of waiting for the Public Comment interlude at the end of each Commissioner discussion. Very disruptive and rude.

Christian Science

9:30 a.m. Worship

8 Basick Place, Westcliffe

Church of Christ

9:30 a.m. Bible Study

10:30 a.m. Worship

818 Ohio Street, Silver Cliff

719/783-4601

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

240 Ridgeline Dr, Westcliffe

Pres: 719/214-4589

Cody Park Community Church

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

10:30 a.m. Worship

Tues. 8:30 a.m., Prayer Mtg.

Wedn. 7 p.m. Bible Study

0157 County Rd. 27A

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Community United Methodist Church

8 a.m. & 10 a.m. Worship

202 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe

719/783-2511

Cotopaxi Community Church

9:45 a.m. Sunday School

11 a.m. Worship

6 p.m. Wedn. Bible Study

Pastor Steve Holcomb@gmail.com

20326 Hwy. 50, Cotopaxi

First Baptist Church of Westcliffe

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

10:30 a.m. Fellowship

10:45 a.m. Worship

4:30 p.m. Wedn. AWANAS

410 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe

Pastor Josh Olsteen

719/783-2498

High Country Mennonite Church

9:30 a.m. Worship

10:45 a.m. Sunday School

103 N. Adams St, Westcliffe

719/783-9045

Huerfano Community Bible Church

10:30 a.m. Sunday Worship

7 p.m.: Thursday Bible Study

603 Leon Street, Walsenburg

(719) 251-9053

Hope Lutheran Church

2 p.m. Worship

3:15 p.m. Bible Study

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Diocese of Pueblo

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10 a.m. (2nd Tuesday of month) Mass

10 a.m. Wednesday Mass

5:30 p.m. Thursday Mass

109 S. 5th Street, Westcliffe

719/783-3507

Our Lady of Mt. Zion Catholic Church

11 a.m. Mass, 2nd & 3rd Sunday of month

210 S. 2nd St, Westcliffe

719/783-2491

Praise Community Church

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Praise & Worship 10:45 a.m.

215 N Pikes Peak Ave. , Florence

719/784-1184

St. Luke’s Episcopal Church

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11:30 a.m. Fellowship

8:30 a.m. Prayer Service, Thursdays

3rd & Rosita Streets, Westcliffe

719/783-2477

St. Patrick’s Anglican Church

11 a.m. Worship

403 S. 2nd S., Westcliffe

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Diocese of Pueblo

Saturday Mass 4 p.m.

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Sangre de Cristo Cowboy Church

Pastor: Mike Shields

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11 a.m. Worship

Last Sunday of Month: Potluck at Noon

sangredecristocowboychurch.com

also on Facebook

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719/232-5372

Sangre de Cristo Fellowship

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9:30 a.m. Service

120 Jerry Drive, Westcliffe

719/783-0903

Sangre de Cristo Seminary Chapel

10 a.m. Worship

6160 County Rd. 130, Westcliffe

719/ 371-1822

Valley Bible Fellowship

9 a.m. Meet & Greet

116 Hermit Lane, Silver Cliff

719/581-7572

Wetmore Baptist Church

9:45 a.m. Sunday School

10:45 a.m. Worship

6 p.m. Worship

Junction of Hwy 96 & 67, Wetmore

719/371-1230

Wetmore Community Church

9 a.m. Sunday School

10 a.m. Worship

699 County Rd. 395, Wetmore

719/784-0596

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1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV



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May 2 & 3, Friday 5:30- 8:30 p.m.
Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Women's Conference at First Baptist Church
Lunch on Saturday- Conference is FREE

May 9 & 10, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
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Wednesday May 7th, 5 to 7 p.m.
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by Mr. Bowdish, Culinary Arts Teacher
Custer County Schools

I am reminded every day of how awesome these 10th, 11th, and 12th graders at CCHS are. The first year of teaching the Culinary Fundamentals class here has been an honor for me and the students are proving to be great ambassadors. When we look back at how much we have done with scratch cooking, knife skills, cleaning as they go, teamwork, and taking on all challenges they never fail to inspire me to challenge them with more. The classroom has proven to be up to the challenge and we look forward to growing the program with more classes for next year. Several students are interested in this as a career path and that is great. Our approach to this year has always been that cooking is a life skill. I hope that all of these first year students go out and encourage others to take the class and that they just “Keep On Cooking!”

(Photo Feature in weeks to come!)

Custer County Schools Photo

KIDS

Friday, May 2, 2025

Mayday

We have just celebrated May Day which is May 1st. Many places have parades and picnics on this day. However, today we will research Mayday, the International Distress Call. While many have heard of this call, not everyone knows the meaning or where it originated from. That is what we will find out today.

Why did we need a new distress call when we already had SOS? In 1908 SOS was adapted as the International Distress Call and was used by navy captains regularly and it replaced various codes used by many different countries. On ships they communicated through telegraph using Morse Code. There was no mistaking SOS on a telegraph (three dots, three dashes, three dots). However, airline pilots using SOS could be mistaken for another consonant like F and in an emergency, you don’t need to be saying S as in Sam, O, S as in Sam. All that to say, another distress signal was needed. The need for a signal arose after WWI, that is when air traffic between Britain and mainland Europe dramatically increased.

In the early 1920’s Frederick Stanley Mockford, officer-in-charge of radio at Croydon Airport, England, had been asked to think of a word that would indicate distress and would easily be understood by all pilots and ground staff in an emergency. Since the Croydon Airport received a lot of traffic from France, he considered a French phrase and landed on m’aider, which means help me. There were nuances in language that meant a universally understood signal was the best choice. Because of that, “m’aider” became “mayday” and was adopted as the standard signal for distress in 1927. When making a Mayday call the operator must repeat the word three times, Mayday, Mayday, Mayday. “Mayday” is the signal that there’s an urgent and life-threatening situation in progress. Making a false distress call is a criminal offense in many countries, punishable by a fine, restitution and possible imprisonment.

One more interesting fact: “Mayday” is the signal that there’s an urgent and life-threatening situation in progress. However, operators can also fall back on, “pan-pan,” which means you have an urgent situation that’s not immediately putting lives at risk – for instance, your boat ran out of fuel and you need assistance.

by Audrey Slater. Sources: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/wordplay/mayday-meaning-origin>, <https://science.howstuffworks.com/transport/flight/modern/mayday.htm>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayday>, <https://www.boat-exam.com/blog/why-mayday-is-used-as-an-emergency-call/>

Sangre de Cristo Sentinel • Westcliffe, Colorado

CORNER

Custer County School District C-1 MENU for the WEEK of May5 thru May 8, 2025

	Breakfast	Lunch
	Cereal Oatmeal Mixed Fruit Yogurt, Milk	Turkey and cheese Wrap Chips Vegetables Fruit, Choice of Milk
Tuesday	Scrambled eggs Sausage Yogurt Fruit, Choice of Milk	White Chili Carrots and Celery Crackers Fruit, Choice of Milk
Wednesday	Cinnamon Rolls Yogurt Fruit Choice of Milk	Patty Melt Lettuce Tomato Pickle Oven Fries Fruit, Choice of Milk
Thursday	Biscuits and Gravy Fruit Choice	Nuggets, Mashed Potatoes Veggie salad Fruit, Choice of Milk

ELEMENTARY - MAIN DISH, GRAIN PRODUCT, VEGETABLE, FRUIT & MILK. MIDDLE & HIGH - MAIN DISH (OR SALAD BAR), GRAIN PRODUCT, VEGETABLE, FRUIT & MILK This institution is an equal employer.

Booster Club Bobcat Corner



**Come out and support your
Custer County Bobcats!**
All games and dates are subject to change without notice.

Friday, May 2:
8 am HS Track @ Cañon City Blossom

Come support the Bobcats Concession Stand at every Home game!

Bobcats Scoreboard!

Thursday, April 24:
HS Baseball vs Elbert: 14-8, loss

Friday, April 25:
HS Track Celebrations from Rye Thunderbolt Invitational:
24 teams in attendance:
🐾 **Grant Rusk:** 2nd in high jump, 2nd in long jump, 3rd in triple
🐾 **Miranda Benoit:** 2nd in the 1600m, 5th in the 800
🐾 **Liz Ergo:** 2nd in the 300 m hurdles, 5th in the 100m hurdles,
🐾 **Ivy Carichner:** 3rd in triple jump
🐾 **Levi Carichner:** 3rd in the 100m,
🐾 **Mason Stover:** 3rd in the 1600, 7th in the 800m
🐾 **Hayden Hampton:** 4th 200m
4th Place - Girls 4x400- **Miranda, Lily, Reagan, Hayden**
Chris Mullett: 5th in the Shot Put, 9th in discus
7th Place - Girls 4x200- **Lily, Ivy, Layna, Piper**
Piper Cunningham: 8th in the 800m
Reagan Shank: 8th in long jump, 9th in the 100m
Layna Jones: 8th in Triple jump
7 PR's
HS Baseball vs La Veta: 1st Game: 15-0, loss; 2nd Game: 22-13, loss

Saturday, April 26:
HS Track Celebrations from District 2 Invitational @ Harrison:
18 teams in attendance
🐾 **Hayden Hampton:** 2nd in the 400m; 3rd in Triple Jump, 11th in the 100m
🐾 **Grant Rusk:** 2nd in Triple Jump, 3rd in High Jump, 3rd in Long Jump
🐾 **Mason Stover:** 3rd in the 3200m
Miranda Benoit: 4th in the 1600m, 7th in the 800m
Levi Carichner: 7th in the 100m
Chris Mullett: 7th in Discus, 8th in Shot Put
Layna Jones: 10th in Triple Jump
Ivy Carichner: 11th in Triple Jump
Robert Bachman: 11th in the 200m, 15th in the 100m
Reagan Shank: 14th in Long Jump
Doc McCoy: 13th in Discus, 15th in Shot Put
8 PR's!
🐾 **HS Baseball @ HOME vs Hinkley: 17-7, WIN!** 🐾

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make
a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation.
Psalm 95:1

Tony's Players of the Week



Taylor Bradford
Baseball MVP

Taylor Bradford went 5-5 against Hinkley on Saturday.

2 singles,
1 double
1 triple
1 "out of the park" home run!!

"A cycle" (single, double, triple, and a home run in one game) is very hard to do at any level!!

On defense, Taylor plays several different positions including; pitcher, catcher, and second basemen.

Photos courtesy of Mariah Bradford

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER



Hayden Hampton
HS Track and Field MVP

This week-- we select Hayden Hampton as our athlete of the week. She is one of the most all around hard working athletes not just on the court or on the field but in the classroom as well. She continuously shows her dedication and commitment to any program she is involved in. She pushes herself and her teammates to be better

every single day. She is such a positive role model and we are so lucky to have her. This weekend she truly gave it her all during her 400m run and passed out at the finish. She came back at the very next meet two days later and got a personal record in the 200m that put her in 7th in state. Talk about persevering through adversity! We are proud of you Hayden!!

Photo by Jennifer Russ Photography

After Prom Thank You

The students of CCHS would like to thank the following community members and businesses for making the 2025 After Prom a tremendous success!

Thank You After Prom Sponsors and Donors!



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(\$200 or more in donation/merchandise)

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| Blue Skies Painting | Rusk Ranches and All-Safe Storage |
| Chappy's Bar and Grill | Salty Pine Floral and Boutique |
| City of Silver Cliff | Sentinel/ Mountain Publishing |
| Colorado Forestry Excavation (CFE) | Solar Solutions |
| Conoco Country Store | St. Luke's Episcopal Mission |
| Custer County Commissioners | Tony's Mountain Pizza |
| Custer County Republican Committee | Valley Bible Fellowship |
| Fremont County Public Health | Westcliffe Meats |
| Midwest ECM Repair | Wet Mountain Valley Rotary |
| Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church | |

Gold Sponsors

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|---|------------------------------------|
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| Custer County Cattlewomen's Association | Senior Center |
| Cliff Lanes | Watson Land Company |
| Custer County Sheriff and Deputies | Wet Mountain Valley Fire Auxiliary |
| Custer County Supply Co. | Wet Mountain Tribune |
| Dark Skies Suites | Wild Flour Donuts |
| High Peaks Animal Hospital | |

Special Thanks

Jennifer Russ for great photos! Melinda and Dave at Cliff Lanes!
CCHS Staff who helped and Chaperoned the Night! Aundrea McCormick, Joy Parrish, Thom Peck, Brian Bills, Tara Simmons, Heath Higgins, Ryan Donovan and Clayton Stallones!

And shout out to Custer County Sheriff's Department and the Posse for providing supervision for After Prom Activities!

After Prom Committee Members

Lea Grundy, Tara Simmons, Pepper Stafford, Wendy Rusk,
Troy and Anita Bomgardner

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Please see ad & story on page 3 for details!

ng of Go Kidz! in Florence!



Sentinel Photos by Fred Hernandez; Layout by Katherine Brenchley



Fremont County Traffic Stop Yields Van Full of Ammo

by Ben Markus,
Colorado Public Radio

A month ago, Fremont County detectives made what seemed like a routine stop — a van, registered in Mexico, had failed to dim its high beams, among other traffic infractions.

But what they found in the van turned a run-of-the-mill traffic ticket into a federal case: 180,000 rounds of ammunition ready for use in assault rifles.

The two men in the van were from Mexico, according to a criminal complaint filed in U.S. District Court earlier this month. They had valid B-2 tourist visas and were charged under a rarely used statute: “Unlawful Possession of Ammunition by Alien Admitted Under a Nonimmigrant Visa.”

After making the stop, the Fremont County deputies contacted an officer with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. That agency then took Caesar Ramon Martinez Solis, 41, and Humberto Ivan Amador Gavira, 24, into custody in an immigration detention facility. They were also cited for the traffic violations, including transporting hazardous materials

without a permit, according to the federal complaint, but *CPR News* could not find state-level charges against either man related to the traffic stop.

In interviews with investigators, the men said that they entered the U.S. last month and purchased the ammunition at an unidentified gun store in Salt Lake City. They told investigators that the bullets were destined for Pueblo, Colorado.

Amador Gavira (listed as Amador-Gavira in state records) was pulled over in Adams County in December and cited by Brighton Police for driving without a license and insurance. The charges were dismissed by the Adams County District Attorney.

Last Tuesday, both men appeared in Federal court in Denver, where their attorneys argued against detention, in part because they have no criminal history. The judge disagreed, saying that their lack of connections to Colorado made them a flight risk and ordered them detained while the criminal case plays out. No other hearings are scheduled.

Both men were in the U.S. on B-2 visas, which are designated

for tourism, to visit family or for medical treatments. The visas were issued to the men in 2023 and 2022, and were valid to be used for up to 10 years to pass in and out of the U.S. The criminal complaint doesn’t explain how they obtained the visas.

smuggling charges connected to Mexico in recent weeks, though.

Last month in Arizona, border agents found 8,000 rounds of ammunition hidden in the trunk of a Mexican national driving back across the border to Mexico. She admitted, according to the

federal complaint, saw boxes of “high caliber ammunition” in the back seat and passenger seat of the car. Ricardo Paez-Quinones told the troopers that he bought the ammunition in Utah for target practice with his girlfriend, though he later admitted that he didn’t own a firearm. Troopers also found a small amount of cocaine in the vehicle.

A day after the arrest, ICE agents found that Paez-Quinones had no legal status to be in the U.S., having been removed from the country in 2012 and 2014.

The U.S. Attorney’s office in Colorado said in a press release that the case is now part of Operation Take Back America, which aims “to repel the invasion of illegal immigration, achieve the total elimination of cartels and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), and protect our communities from the perpetrators of violent crime.”

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Please see: <https://www.cpr.org/2025/04/21/fremont-county-ammo-filled-van-mexico-pueblo/>



March 26, 2025 – Fremont County Sheriff’s Office searched a vehicle in Cañon City during a traffic stop and found what they estimated to be approximately 150 boxes of .308 ammunition, and approximately 30 boxes of 7.62 ammunition. Each box was labeled as containing 1,000 rounds.

Photo from US Attorney Office of Colorado

The federal charge, “Unlawful Possession of Ammunition by Alien Admitted Under a Non-immigrant Visa,” is rarely used. *CPR News* could find only nine other cases in the U.S., with the last being in 2021. There have been a number of gun-related

criminal complaint, that she was paid to buy the ammo in the U.S. and then drop it at a location in Mexico.

In Wyoming last month, state troopers pulled over a vehicle for speeding and, according to the

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Colorado State News

Homelessness Up by 90% Since 2020 in Colorado

by Deek Draplin,
The Center Square

Colorado has seen the fourth highest percentage increase in homelessness in the U.S. since 2020, according to a new report.

The report, by the free-enterprise Common Sense Institute, also called into question most of the state’s “housing first” approach, saying it “may not be the best approach to addressing this challenge.”

Colorado’s homeless population increased by 90% since 2020, ranking behind only Vermont (212%), Illinois (148%) and Rhode Island (121%). According to the report, the state’s 3.14 homeless per 1,000 residents ranks ninth nationally.

In the combined Denver-Boulder-Aurora area, \$405 million in local, state, federal and nonprofit funding was spent in 2023 to combat homelessness, CSI noted.

Denver had a record-high 9,977 unhoused individuals in 2024, according to point-in-time counts. Of those, 2,233 individuals participated in Denver’s “housing first” All in Mile High Program, which cost \$69,413 per person and an additional \$16 million on those who became unsheltered after leaving the program, the report said.



“This report makes clear that homelessness is growing fastest in cities most reliant on housing- first strategies,” said Dustin Zvonek, CSI’s research fellow on homelessness and a former Aurora City Council member. “We need to step back and look at the broader data — ask what’s working, what’s not, and focus on implementing policies that deliver measurable, sustained improvements.”

The think tank also contrasted Denver’s “housing first” approach with El Paso County’s (Colorado Springs) and Aurora’s “work first” approach. In El Paso County, the point-in-time count for last year was 1,146 homeless individuals, 12% less than the prior year.

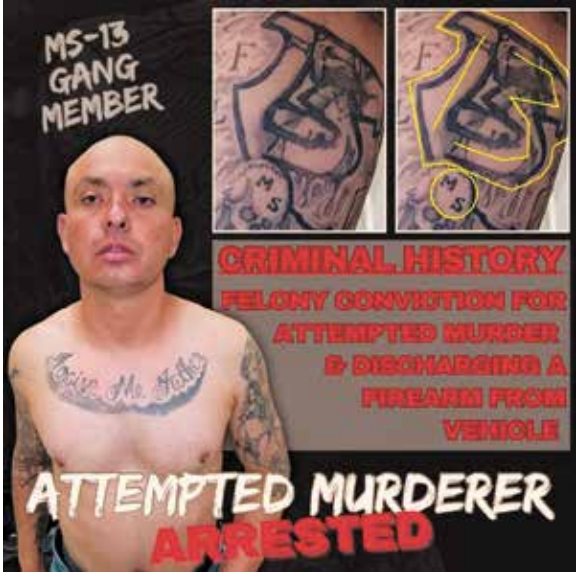
“Communities like Colorado Springs are showing real results with work-first models grounded in accountability and recovery,” Zvonek added. “It’s time to apply those lessons where the crisis is growing most rapidly.”

Other cities that take a “housing first” approach include Los Angeles, which saw a 39% increase in homeless individuals since 2020; San Francisco (9% increase) and Portland, OR (70% increase).

“Housing first policies have not reduced the number of homeless individuals in many of the cities practicing them, though they have moved many people from unsheltered spaces to sheltered spaces,” CSI’s report concluded. “Because results have not been demonstrated, federal agencies and other public leaders must loosen funding so that it can be used to support approaches that prioritize self-sufficiency.”

Please see: https://www.thecentersquare.com/colorado/article_1913333f-cecd-4dc1-b7d5-63636faa2217.html

Border Patrol Arrest of the Week



US Border Patrol Press Release

April 18, 2025

Verified account

ATTEMPTED MURDERER APPREHENDED-

4/16- An aggravated felon claiming to be a Mexican national named Carlos Manuel Lopez, was apprehended after crossing the Rio Grande in Fort Hancock, TX. Thanks to our biometrics database, we confirmed his true identity to be Jose Deras-Valle, a citizen of El Salvador with a violent criminal record.

This MS-13 gang member was convicted in Hialeah, FL, for premeditated attempted murder and discharging a firearm from a vehicle. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison. He now faces prosecution for felony illegal re-entry (8USC1326).

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Fugitive Arrested in Cañon City After Foot Pursuit

On April 23, 2025, at approximately 6:30 a.m., Deputies from the Fremont County Sheriff's Office attempted to contact 37-year-old Robert E. Tomsic, who was wanted on multiple felony warrants. Initial information indicated that Tomsic was in the area of Central and Robbie Lane in Cañon City.

Through investigative efforts, a residence was identified and surveilled by Detectives. Later in the afternoon, Deputies obtained search warrants for the residence and attempted to contact Tomsic. He exited the residence via a window and led Deputies on a foot chase throughout the neighborhood, where he was eventually captured without incident.

Tomsic was booked into the Fremont County Jail on the following multiple charges: Obstruction, Resisting Arrest, 2nd Degree Criminal Trespass Failure to Appear - Violation of Bond conditions (Archuleta County) Possession Sch 1/2, Driving under Restraint (Archuleta County) Aggravated Motor Vehicle Theft, Felony Eluding (La Plata County) The Fremont County Sheriff's Office would like to extend its gratitude to the Cañon City Police Department for their assistance in safeguarding Mountain View and Harrison Schools during this operation. We also appreciate the



cooperation of our community members whose neighborhood was impacted by the actions of this wanted fugitive. All persons are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Event Date April 23, 2025 6:30 p.m. Created April 23rd, 2025.

Sourced via CRIMEWATCH®: <https://crimewatch.net/us/co/fremont/sheriff/180579/events/fugitive-arrested-after-foot-pursuit>

Largest Methamphetamine Bust Ever by Salida Police

Drug Bust in Salida
April 22, 2025

For the last couple of weeks, the Salida Police Department has been investigating a drug distribution case in the Salida area. As the case progressed, it became necessary to contact the DEA as we learned that local shipments were crossing state lines. After conferring with the DEA and working with the 11th JD District Attorney's Office, we were able to obtain search warrants for multiple addresses and vehicles in Salida.

In the early morning hours of April 22, 2025, SPD officers contacted a target vehicle thought to be bringing in the known shipment of drugs into Salida from out of state. After detaining the occupants, the vehicle was searched and approximately two pounds of methamphetamine, various pills, \$7,769 in cash, and a firearm were recovered.

The occupants of the vehicle were Christopher Moreno, 40, of Salida and Angel Moreno, 28, of Salida. Christopher Moreno was charged with Unlawful Distribution of a Controlled Substance, A Drug Felony 1, Possession of a Schedule I or II Narcotic a Drug Felony 4, and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, A petty offense. His bond was set at \$50,000 cash. Angel Moreno was charged with Unlawful Distribution of a Controlled Substance, A Drug Felony 1, Possession of a Schedule I or II Narcotic a Drug Felony 4. His bond was set at \$50,000 Cash.

Following the first two arrests, Officers then served an Arrest Warrant and Search



Christopher Moreno, Angel Moreno, Florentino Sillas-Rosales, Miguel Rosales-Casteneda

Chaffee County Sheriff's Office

Warrant of another property in Salida. At the second location, Florentino Sillas-Rosales, 32, of Salida was arrested for Unlawful Distribution of a Controlled Substance, a Drug Felony 2. His bond was set at \$20,000 Cash.

While searching the residence, an occupant named Miguel Rosales-Casteneda, 37, of Salida, was also arrested on a warrant from the Colorado State Patrol for Fugitive of Justice. His bond was set at \$1,000 Cash.

These arrests are great news to the community and credit is owed to the Salida Police Detectives [who] worked tirelessly on the case, in order to take these drugs off our streets. The estimated street value of the drugs is approximately \$40K to \$50 K. This case resulted in the largest amount of Methamphetamine ever seized in Salida. We are confident these arrests will make a difference and make our community safer.

Chief Russell Johnson,
Salida Police Department

Local American Legion

2024 – TAL Westcliffe Post 170 Year in Review

Press Release

THANK-YOU Silver Cliff, Westcliffe and all of Custer County for your generous support of The American Legion Family. If you were wondering what happens to the money you donate to TAL Westcliffe Post 170, their Auxiliary Unit 170 or S.A.L. Sq 170, here is a list of our accomplishments in Custer County May 2024 through May 2025.

Our Legion 170 Family supports our **4 Pillars of the American Legion** – Veterans Assistance & Rehabilitation (VA&R), Children & Youth, Americanism, and our National Security.

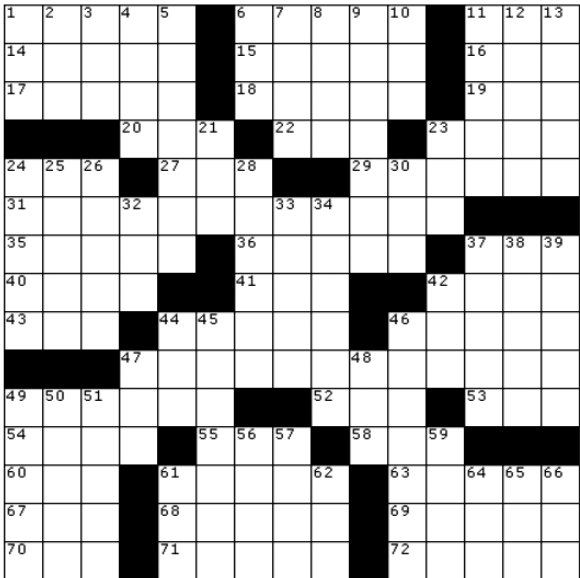
Thanks to your generous support we were able to:

1. Assist 52 Custer County Veterans and/or their families with over \$50,000 for home and vehicle repairs, generators, wood, solar supplies, heaters, new ramps for veterans’ homes, electrical repairs, family death support, several food and fuel cards, and that’s just a sample of the assists.
2. We offer a free opportunity for Boys & Girls State to the CCHS Junior class each year - an experience of a lifetime.
3. Award one \$2,000 scholarship to a graduating senior of CCHS.

4. Maintain and display over 50 “Main Street Flags” for nine patriotic holidays including the large flag at the West end of Main St.
5. Sponsor and support our local Cub and Boy Scout Troops.
6. Continue active “Buddy Checks” of Veterans, all in support of “BE THE ONE” program.
7. Support the County’s Veterans’ Trust Fund with ‘seed’ money to keep the program running, and maintain and allocate the Post VA&R funds.
8. Proudly maintain and carry the American and Service Flags in local parades.
9. Perform full Military Honors for four Veterans’ funerals including a 3-rifle volley, playing taps, and folding and presenting a flag to the family.
10. Remember our “Fallen” Veterans with an official Memorial Day Observance on Memorial Day.
11. Organize/Host the Independence Day Parade on July 4th; Co-host (with the VFW) a Veterans July 4th picnic.
12. Remember our POWs/MIAs in a service at the large flagpole at the West end of Main St. on POW/MIA Recognition Day, the 3rd Friday each September.
13. Recognize ALL Veterans with a banquet on Veterans’ Day (Nov 11th). We THANK Valley Bible Fellowship for their grace and generosity.
14. Participate in the National Wreaths across America event by kicking off the event with a local ceremony, then to our five local cemeteries to lay wreaths on the gravesites of over 350 Veterans.
15. Host a free Christmas dinner for 50+ CC Veterans and families with a gift bag for everyone, funded by our Poppy Program.

So, the next time we’re passing a boot, handing out Poppies, hosting an event (i.e. the Blues, Brews, & BBQ, Chili Cook-Off etc.), seating and serving you at Willie’s for “Tip-A-Vet”, fundraisers for Wreaths across America, or any other fundraiser that may come your way – just know that the money you donate directly supports Veterans and their families in Custer County. If you are an honorably discharged Veteran and are interested in joining our Post, contact Jeff Parcels, 719-240-9811, bodine6401@gmail.com, Auxiliary interests contact Tricia Schoenfelder, brittricia@aol.com, 720-447-6079, and SAL interests contact Michael Tyler, mtyler08@hotmail.com, 719-371-5221.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

- 1 Steep
6 The devil
11 Forbid
14 Expenditure
15 Ascot
16 Past
17 Canned chili brand
18 Tribulation
19 Bill
20 Eat
22 Shade tree

DOWN

- 23 Mop
24 Before (prefix)
27 Serving of corn
29 Gets up
31 Event celebrated on Easter
35 Formal greeting made by bending the knees- Minus first letter
36 On earth __, good will toward men
37 speed unit
40 Fees

- 41 Grows acorns
42 Card game
43 Vane direction
44 Concise
46 National capital
47 Fred Astaire movie
49 Cavalry swords
52 Title of respect
53 Oolong
54 Drag
55 Samuel's mentor
58 Tribe of Israel
60 White-tailed sea eagle
61 Positive electrode
63 Two-footed
67 __ voyage
68 Sell illegally
69 Cowboy rope
70 Whichever
71 African country
72 Elect

DOWN

- 1 Distress call
2 Hovel
3 Terminal abbr.
4 Easter __
5 Mischievous act
6 Fast plane
7 Land measurement
8 Back of a coin
9 Language of Jesus
10 Football assoc.
11 Dye with wax

- 12 Biblical Greek word for love
13 After shower attire
21 Golfer's goal
23 Ashy
24 Overly righteous
25 Old TV show
26 Sugar-free brand
28 Statement of information
30 Unhappiness
32 Ship initials
33 Terminate
34 Grabbers
37 Weight measurement
38 __ goes before destruction
39 Book after Daniel
42 Distant
44 Sticky black substance
45 Gist
46 __ of the Good Samaritan
47 Snake-like fish
48 Hog
49 Cat food brand
50 Brother of Moses
51 The Easter ____
56 Borrowed money
57 Lazily
59 Face
61 Query
62 Government agency
64 Pressure unit
65 Eastern Time
66 Female deer

Puzzle key on page 8

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LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE
NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Custer County District Court, Colorado
205 S. 6th St.
Westcliffe, CO 81252

In the Matter of the Estate of

Michael R. Colgate a/k/a Michael Roland Colgate a/k/a Michael Colgate

Deceased

Attorney for Personal Representative: Evan C. Withrow
Colorado Law Group, PLLC
121 E. Vermijo Avenue, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
Telephone: (719) 635-4200
Fax Number: (719) 635-2493
Evan@coloradolawgroup.com
Atty. Reg. #: 46225

Case Number: 2025PR30001
Division: 1 Courtroom: 1

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NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Estate of Michael R. Colgate, Deceased
Case Number 2025PR30001

All persons having claims against the above named estate are required to present them to the personal representative or to

District Court of Custer, County, Colorado
on or before August 18, 2025, or the claims may be forever barred

Patsy R. Colgate
17525 S Columbus Blvd
Sahuarita, AZ 85629

Published April 18, April 25, May 2 2025
Sangre de Cristo Sentinel
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This country is in a crisis. And if you're fighting to save this country, if you're fighting to take this country back, it's not going to be sunshine and patriots. It's going to be people who want to fight. --Steve Bannon

The Daily Jot

Daily reporting and analysis of current events from a biblical and prophetic perspective.

NOTE: When writing about God and Jesus, The Daily Jot means YHVH as God and Yeshua Ha Mashiach as Jesus--the actual original names and the true nature and character of them.

Tabernacle: God With Us

Where the Spirit of the Lord Dwells

In 1 Peter 2:9, the Apostle Peter states that “you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that you show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” In Exodus, the LORD instructed Moses how to build the LORD’s dwelling place, the Tabernacle, what was to be in it, even down to what the priests were to wear. For followers of Christ, our physical bodies are the LORD’s dwelling place. And like the Tabernacle, the life within our body has incredible spiritual significance. Exodus 27:20-30:19 informs us about the living breathing life of the Tabernacle. It is symbolic of what must inhabit our hearts and minds as a royal priesthood in Christ.

The LORD told Moses to have the people bring pure olive oil for the Menorah. Exodus 27:21 says that Aaron and his sons were to keep the light of the Menorah burning, “from evening to morning before ADONAI (27:21).” The light was symbolic of the Presence of God in the midst of His people. In Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus said, “You are a light for the world...when people light a lamp, they don’t cover it with a bowl but put it on a lamp stand, so that it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.” The oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit that burns within us, helping us in our service to the LORD, as we bring His Presence with us. Then, in Exodus 28:2, God instructed Moses to make the priestly garments for Aaron.

The garments consisted of the breastplate, ritual vest, robe, tunic, a turban and a sash. The breastplate was where the urim and tumim were placed to determine God’s will on certain matters. This was symbolic that the priest represented the people before God, as he had the “means for making decisions for the people of Israel over his heart...(Exodus 28:30).” The ritual vest contained 12 gem stones signifying the 12 tribes of Israel being carried upon the high priest’s shoulders. The turban had a gold plate inscribed, “Set apart for ADONAI.” All of the garments were symbolic of being set apart for God’s work and were significant to the work of the priests. This is a picture of Jesus as our “Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14),” who would bring about God’s plan of atonement and redemption through true holiness and perfection.

God commanded the people to make a brazen altar upon which the burnt offerings and sacrifices were presented to the Lord. The brazen altar was the first thing one encountered after entering the courtyard of the Tabernacle, making the point that we cannot approach the Holy Presence of the LORD without atonement for sin. This speaks of the cross where the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice was made. Hebrews 10:14 tells us, “For by a single offering He has brought to the goal for all time those who are being set apart for God and made holy.” Our lives are like the Tabernacle, and eventually the Temple. God’s name is not found in church buildings or objects. God’s name—His Presence is revealed in those who serve Him. When we read His Word, worship Him, and live for Him, that’s how the LORD’S name is revealed!

Bill Wilson
Dailyjot.com Printed with permission.

Supreme Court Hears

Major Parental Rights Case

over LGBT Reading

by Jonathan Turley,
JonathanTurley.Org

The Supreme Court hears oral arguments on a major parental rights case in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, a challenge to Montgomery County (Md.) requiring their children to participate in instruction that includes LGBTQ+ themes. It is a case that could produce sweeping changes across the country as parents object to the use of public schools to advance social and political agendas. These books are being required for children 3-10 years old. The parents have the stronger argument in my view. A ruling in their favor could prove one of the most important victories for parental rights in decades.

Parents objected in Maryland in 2022 when the county approved books featuring LGBTQ+ characters for inclusion in its language-arts curriculum. The country then announced that it would not allow parents to opt to have their children excused from instruction involving the storybooks.

Various parents sued, including some citing their Muslim, Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox beliefs. They lost in the lower courts, including the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

The parents cited *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, where the Court declared that it was “recognized ‘beyond debate’ the First Amendment right of parents ‘to guide the religious future and education of their children.’” In that case, the court held that Amish parents did not have to send their children to school after the eighth grade because it conflicted with their religion.

They also argue that the Maryland policy is neither neutral nor generally applicable as required under *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah*. That could produce the greatest number of questions from the justices.

HERDS GUTTED

from page 1

producers will begin rebuilding the nation’s cattle herd. **If more replacement stock isn’t brought online soon, the industry could face a severe supply crunch**, which could drive retail prices for ground beef and other beef products significantly higher.

“The herd’s not just thinned — it’s been gutted. The lowest since 1951, and that’s not an accident. That’s a warning. Years of fake money, regulatory mischief, and globalist trade schemes have stripped the land of its stewards,” The Beef Initiative founder, Texas Slim, stated.

Slim emphasized: **“We didn’t just lose cattle — we lost legacy,**

The parents argued that the county has long allowed notice and opt-outs for material and instruction that address family life and sexuality. However, it refused to do so here.

The parents alleged religious hostility in comments made against the challengers. They raise the question of why such children cannot be allowed alternative reading options.

The Montgomery County Board of Education is arguing a narrower view of the free exercise clause and that public education requires a uniform curriculum, including recognition of our society’s diversity. They insist that allowing some to opt out would present an overwhelming burden on the schools.

A decision for the parents could significantly change public schools’ handling of such controversial materials. I have previously written about how administrators and teacher unions are destroying public education by elevating agendas over academics.

Teachers and boards are killing the institution of public education by treating children and parents more like captives than consumers. They are force-feeding social and political priorities, including passes for engaging in approved protests.

As public schools continue to produce abysmal scores, particularly for minority students, board and union officials have called for lowering or suspending proficiency standards or declared meritocracy to be a form of “white supremacy.” Gifted and talented programs are being eliminated in the name of “equity”.

Once parents have a choice, these teachers lose a virtual monopoly over many families. They are no longer a captive audience. If public unions want to maintain funding, they will have to actually improve educational results for these families.

sovereignty, and a future for our children. Rebuilding this herd isn’t just about beef. It’s about survival. National security doesn’t start with weapons — it starts with food.”

Beef Initiative @beefinitiative

“The herd’s not just thinned — it’s been gutted. The lowest since 1951, and that’s not an accident. That’s a warning. Years of fake money, regulatory mischief, and globalist trade schemes have stripped the land of its stewards. We didn’t just lose cattle — we lost legacy,

8:23 PM · Apr 18, 2025

The Beef Initiative, an agricultural think tank, advocates for a more localized, redundant, and secure food supply chain—one that delivers clean beef products to American consumers

Notably, figures like American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten have opposed the elimination of the Department of Education because it might help voucher schools and alternatives to public education.

In a podcast, Weingarten explained, “We know, for example, what Texas would do. They’ll use it for vouchers. So they won’t give [federal funding] to the kids who have it now, they’ll just give it for vouchers.”

There is reason for Weingarten and the teacher’s union being so concerned. Florida allows for school choice and has demanded greater performance from public schools. Despite attacks by Weingarten and other Democrats, Florida has been ranked as the number one state for both education and the economy.

However, public educators have continued to lower proficiency requirements and cancel gifted programs to “even the playing field.” The result has been to further hide the dismal scores and educational standards of many public school districts.

There is an irony in the position before the Supreme Court by public educators. A reversal may be a critical change in slowing the departure of families from public schools. By limiting such mandatory programs, some families may be less likely to seek alternatives to public schools. These families want to send their children to public schools while retaining their role in instilling religious values for their children. Montgomery County is forcing a choice that few parents will make against their family values.

As on earlier controversies over parental rights, Democrats will find that this is not partisan; it is primal for parents.

Please see: <https://jonathanturley.org/2025/04/22/supreme-court-hears-major-parental-rights-case-over-lgbt-readings/#more-231033>

while empowering individual ranchers. The **think tank’s mission** stands in stark contrast to the current toxic food system, which is largely dominated by the processed food industrial complex.

Connecting ranchers directly with consumers will be one of the key pillars of the **“Make America Healthy Again”** movement—an effort that **ZeroHedge will soon be supporting**. The initiative aims to **return control of the food supply chain** to mom-and-pop ranchers, provide Americans with clean beef, and promote greater transparency and accountability around food.

Please see: <https://www.zerohedge.com/commodities/herds-gutted-historically-low-us-cattle-inventory-drivers-beef-prices-new-highs>



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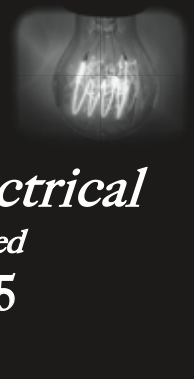
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Girls Don't Belong in the Boy Scouts

by Mark Hancock, Commentary,
The Daily Caller News Foundation

THE DAILY CALLER
NEWS FOUNDATION

“Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”
— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

For more than a century, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) stood as a pillar of moral clarity, leadership and responsibility. It was an organization that trained boys to become men of character — young men who would go on to serve their families, churches, and communities with conviction and courage.

That legacy is now at risk.

Top advisers to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and other military officials recently urged the Department of Defense to cut ties with **Scouting America**, saying the organization has “gone too woke” and they had “lost what they stand for.”

Pete Hegseth himself didn’t mince words:

“This is an institution the left didn’t control. They didn’t want to improve it. They wanted to destroy it or dilute it into something that stood for nothing... Five years ago, the Boy Scouts let in girls — which was basically the end of the Boy Scouts.”

“This is a tragedy,” he added. “Young kids won’t have the opportunity to learn these skills — but more importantly, the values. And they did it to themselves.”

Hegseth is right — and the pain in his words echoes in the hearts of countless parents, veterans, and church leaders who once trusted the Scouts to shape their sons.

The recent name change from **Boy Scouts of America** to **Scouting America** isn’t only cosmetic — it’s darkly symbolic. It marks the surrender of an institution that once knew boys and girls are different, and that boys need a space uniquely tailored to help them become men. In today’s culture, even that idea — that boys exist, and are different from girls — is too controversial to affirm.

And it goes deeper still.

Scouting America’s Citizenship in Society badge, now a requirement for Eagle Scout, is a revealing example of this drift. Rather than encouraging counselors to guide boys (and girls) toward truth and wisdom, the badge requires the adults to affirm whatever the Scout believes. Instead of guiding with wisdom, the badge directs leaders to remain silent on issues like gender identity and inclusion — not to speak from a position of truth, but to step aside and let impressionable youth “determine their own beliefs.”

This badge is not just one require-

ment among many — it embodies a new philosophy that redefines the role of a mentor.

The official counselor training materials even warn:

- “Do not share your experience as a subject matter expert.”
- “The counselor is not to interject their own opinions and beliefs but instead should consider the Scout’s experience and journey.”

In other words: Be quiet. Stay in your lane. Let them inform themselves.

That’s not leadership.

That’s abandonment.

Instead of equipping Scouts with timeless truths, they are affirming their self-determined undeveloped reality.

I cannot in good conscience remain silent while youth are taught that truth is subjective and biology is optional. And yet, to comply with the new badge requirements, silence is exactly what’s being asked of every Scout leader.

Leadership requires conviction, someone who steps in, speaks the truth and guides with wisdom. A coach does not merely “facilitate” while an athlete fumbles — he corrects, teaches, and pushes him toward excellence. A mentor is not meant to be silent — he is meant to shape with knowledge and discipline as he speaks truth with love and conviction.

Scouting America no longer trains courageous leaders. It trains passive facilitators.

And if boys in particular don’t receive clear, courageous guidance, the culture is more than willing to fill the void. The narrative they’re being handed today denies biological reality, rejects biblical manhood, and redefines morality.

The cost of silence is too high.

Boys need strong men who will show up, speak up, and stand firm. Men who aren’t afraid to say what’s true, even when it’s unpopular. Men who understand that truth isn’t something you **make up** — it’s something you **receive, live** and **pass on**.

That’s why Trail Life USA exists.

At Trail Life, we believe:

- Boys need **mentors**, not silence.
- Boys need **adventure**, not ideology.
- Boys need **truth**, not confusion.

We don’t tell men to sit down and be quiet. We call them to rise up and lead with courage, conviction, and clarity. In over 1,350 Troops serving 65,000 Trailmen across all 50 states, that’s exactly what’s happening: boys are finding mentors, fathers and sons are connecting, relationships are deepening, and legacies are being forged.

For over a century, the Boy Scouts

trained leaders. Now, tragically, they’re training followers.

Parents, pastors, and leaders — the time for silence is over. Our sons are being led into confusion when they should be guided into truth. If **Scouting America** will not train boys to become godly men, then **we must**.

Let’s raise a generation that knows who they are — because they’ve been taught by men who know and live the Truth.

Mark Hancock is the CEO of Trail Life USA, a character, leadership, and adventure organization that is both Christ-centered and boy-focused. Trail Life USA partners with churches and parents across America as the premier national character development organization for young men, which produces generations of godly and responsible husbands, fathers, and citizens. In over 1,300 churches in all 50 states, and over 65,000 members, fathers and sons are connecting, relationships are deepening, and legacies are beginning as a new generation of godly leaders rises.

The views and opinions expressed in this commentary are those of the author and do not reflect the official position of the Daily Caller News Foundation.

Please see: <https://dailycallernewsfoundation.org/2025/04/22/mark-hancock-girls-dont-belong-in-the-boy-scouts/>

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1776

The Second Amendment Corner

Liberty’s Line in the Sand

2025



“Blessed be the LORD my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle—” A Psalm of David, Psalm 144:1

GA Sheriff Issues Warning to Burglars

by Cam Edwards,
BearingArms.com

A sheriff in Georgia is praising the actions of an armed homeowner who stopped a would-be intruder from gaining access to a child’s bedroom, while also issuing a warning to other criminals in the county.

Butts County Sheriff Gary Long says a man named Abdul Aquil is in custody in connection with the break-in, and is lucky to be alive after his encounter with the armed citizen. Aquil allegedly first tried to gain entry to the home through a bedroom window with a child on the other side, but the child’s father heard the commotion and interrupted the burglar as he was crawling inside.

Long said the father of the child

“challenged the intruder and the suspect exited the window.”

According to Long, the father then went to his room and got a gun as Aquil busted the living room window, trying to get inside.

The father fired his gun, missing the suspect, but causing the suspect to run away.

Long said in a Facebook post, “The shot fired by the homeowner was UNFORTUNATELY about 8 inches too high, missing the intruder, which would have resulted in his death.”

Thankfully the errant shot didn’t hit anyone else either, but it did cause the suspect to turn tail and run away. Deputies caught up with Aquil a short distance away and took him into custody after what the sheriff’s office calls a “brief

altercation” with law enforcement, and at last report he’s cooling his heels in the Butts County Jail.

Long, meanwhile, has two messages for residents of Butts County. In that Facebook post he “strongly” encouraged citizens who can legally possess a firearm to get their hands on one and attend a gun safety class hosted by the sheriff’s office, adding that “if the homeowner last night was not a gun owner, I am afraid the outcome could have been much different.

The sheriff’s message for those in Butts County who might be thinking of engaging in a little late-night burglary, on the other hand, is a warning that they should be aware they may very well come across a homeowner who won’t miss.

“To the criminals, listen up and pay close attention, if you decide to break into a home in Butts County, make sure you are ready to meet your maker. My staff and I will spend as much time as it takes to make sure the citizens of this County are well-trained, educated and capable of making great shots to protect their family and homes. So, unless you are prepared to die, I would highly recommend you to find a home in another County to burglarize, because this is not the one.”

Aquil is currently facing a litany of charges; including burglary, home invasion, terroristic threats, first-degree cruelty to children, and second-degree criminal damage to property. If convicted, Aquil could spend the next decade or more behind bars. In fact, Georgia’s

home invasion statute has a mandatory minimum ten-year sentence, so Aquil is guaranteed to live out the next few years in custody if he’s found guilty on that charge alone.

The armed homeowner who defended his family isn’t facing any charges, and it sounds like it didn’t take investigators long to figure out that his errant shot was a justifiable use of force. Some range time might be in order, but thankfully the shot he fired didn’t need to strike its intended target to stop the threat posed by the would-be intruder.

Please see: <https://bearingarms.com/camedwards/2025/04/16/ga-sheriff-issues-warning-after-armed-citizen-stops-deranged-man-from-climbing-through-childs-window-n1228332>

License to Disarm: The Tyranny of SB25-003

by Alicia Garcia,
KimMonson.com

As a firearms educator, I have taught many students across Colorado how to protect themselves and their loved ones with firearms. I have seen lives change when people discover that they hold the power to refuse victimhood, and to love themselves enough to embrace their God given right to self-defense.

But what just happened in Colorado feels like a gut punch to all of us who believe in the right to bear arms.

On April 10, 2025, Governor Jared Polis signed into law SB25-003 — one of the most sinister, elitist, and discriminatory gun control bills America has ever seen. And he did it behind closed doors, surrounded by Moms Demand Action, without a single voice from the 2nd Amendment community present. Not one voice for freedom. Not one representative from the people this law actually affects.

That should tell you everything.

A Right You Now Have to “Qualify” For?

Under SB25-003, you will now be required to obtain a state-issued license just to purchase a semi-automatic firearm — the most commonly owned type of firearm in the country. The bill mandates 16 hours of state-approved training every five years,

includes a written test, at least 2 days of in person class time, a mysterious “licensing fee,” and a mandatory 72-hour wait after you are approved. Instructors are now forced to discuss “victim awareness and empathy,” “firearms deaths associated with mental illness,” and red flag laws.

Let’s be clear: the vast majority of gun crimes are not committed by tax paying, law-abiding Coloradans buying guns legally. SB25-003 will do nothing to stop crime — but it will stop you from protecting yourself.

Who does it hurt most?

- Single mothers who cannot find childcare or afford to miss two full days of work just to take a government-mandated course.
- Low-income families who are already struggling to get by, now hit with hidden fees and requirements just to access their rights.
- Disabled Americans who may not be able to complete traditional training but need a firearm the most or require specific types of firearms platforms to accommodate their disability.
- People in high-crime areas who want to defend themselves now — not after the state says, “you’re good enough.”

This bill is the very definition of systemic discrimination. It

weaponizes bureaucracy to deny civil rights. That is not safety. It is tyranny.

Gun Control Has Always Been About Control

Let us not pretend this is new. Gun control in America was never born from a place of public safety — it was born from fear and prejudice.

After the Civil War, states passed Black Codes that specifically targeted freed slaves and people of color, preventing them from owning firearms. These laws created literacy tests, financial barriers, and vague “character” requirements to keep them disarmed. Sound familiar?

Later, during the Jim/Juan Crow era, states required permits approved by sheriffs — who conveniently denied people of color while additionally imposing licensing processes that were difficult and highly arbitrary in nature.

Again: systemic disarmament under the guise of “law.”

SB25-003 is cut from the same cloth. It doesn’t say it is racist. It doesn’t have to. The burden it creates will disproportionately fall on communities of color, people with disabilities, women, and working-class Americans — the very people who need their rights most.

It is a 21st-century poll tax for the 2nd Amendment.

“Shall Not Be Infringed” Was Written for Moments Exactly Like This

The 2nd Amendment was not written for duck hunting or target shooting — but for self-defense, especially against the possibility of tyranny.

And make no mistake: what we are seeing in Colorado is tyranny. It is a government that believes it can decide when, how, and if you are allowed to defend your own life. It is a ruling class that uses the law as a club to beat down the average citizen and reward the elite.

Let me ask you — what happens when a woman with a violent ex-boyfriend needs to defend herself tonight? What happens when a disabled veteran cannot physically complete the training the state demands? What happens when the poorest neighborhoods, already terrorized by crime, are told to just wait, disarm, & hope the police make it on time?

The answer? They are left defenseless. And Colorado Governor Jared Polis couldn’t care less.

Why I’m Speaking Out — And Why You Should Too

This is not just policy. This is personal. I have looked women in the eye who escaped abuse. I have trained people with PTSD who are reclaiming their strength. I have helped grandmothers pick their first firearm after a break-

in. I know what freedom feels like — and I know what it looks like when it is taken away.

I am not afraid to say it: SB25-003 is evil. It is not just unconstitutional — it is immoral. It is the kind of legislation that leads to generational trauma, not peace.

We are not here to ask permission for our freedom. We are here to defend it. Loudly. Legally. Unapologetically.

The Fight Isn’t Over — It’s Just Getting Started

To everyone reading this — whether you are a gun owner, a parent, a veteran, a student, a first responder, or just someone who values liberty — we need you. This is not just about Colorado. This is a test run for America. If they can get away with this in Colorado, they will export it everywhere.

Join me. Get trained. Get informed. Support organizations, like, The 2nd Syndicate, our grassroots 2A movement. Show up. Speak out. Refuse to comply with unjust laws. And let every politician know: we are not going away.

The Founders did not write the 2nd Amendment for hunting season. They wrote it for this moment — and we are ready.

Please see: https://kimmonson.com/featured_articles/license-to-disarm-the-tyranny-of-sb25-003/

Springfield Armory Echelon 4.0C Compact 9mm: A Review

by Mike Hardesty,
ammoland.com

The universe of the polymer-framed, striker-fired 9mm contains many planets. Where would the Springfield Armory Echelon land? On one of the larger planets, think Jupiter, consists of what has come to be called the compact variation. Typically, this means a poly striker with a 4-inch barrel and 15+1 capacity. These specs can vary a bit, but it's amazing how many pistols fit this description.

I've either owned or have had plenty of experience with pistols of this category from several manufacturers and have reviewed a lot of them. I had adopted a "show-me" attitude, where if a gun wasn't what I expected or wasn't what I thought it should be, I was underwhelmed. That's been the case until recently. Until this Echelon compact came in, to be exact.

The Echelon's Big Idea

On July 12, 2023, Springfield Armory (SA) released the original, full-size Echelon. This series (as it has come to be) is different in that it uses what SA refers to as the Central Operating Group (C.O.G.), a removable unit. You might know it as the fire control unit. This is the action and "guts" of the pistol – the trigger, ejector, and serial number.

Other manufacturers, such as Sig and, most recently, Ruger, have jumped on this



bandwagon. It only makes sense. With the purchase of your Echelon and the ubiquitous Form 4473, you take home one pistol. You can now buy different-sized frames and backstraps and have them shipped right to your home. Do you like the 4-inch barrel but wish the grip was shorter? Buy the small frame. You'll be able to customize your pistol and make it the way you want it.

The modules are ready now, for \$65. You can get modules in small, medium, or large sizes in one of three colors. They include the magazine release. Also available are three different backstrap sizes for \$20. Go to <https://store.springfield-armory.com/firearm-accessories/echelon-accessories/> to see all the accessories available for the Echelons.

Other Features

The C.O.G. is not the only feature of this pistol. The pistol's design shows a lot of forethought and listening to shooters, in my opinion. Let's look at it.

Optics Cut



The slide is cut for a red dot and done in such a way that plates are not required. A system of pins are provided that allow the low placement of the sight so that co-witnessing is allowed. Speaking of sights...

Tritium Night Sights

The model I received for review has tritium night sights. I may or may not mount a red dot – these sights are great!

Grip Texture

When I first picked it up, I noticed the grip texture. This is, if I'm not mistaken, the same or something very close to what they do on the Hellcat. The grip doesn't feel overly sticky until you bear down on it. Then, it all but locks the gun into your hand. Very well done. Also, the backstraps take about 4 seconds to remove. These are the easiest backstraps I've ever seen to replace. The medium one that came on the gun works for me.

Slide Serrations



The slide serrations are deep and spaced a bit to allow you to grab the slide with gloves or wet hands. There are also "ears" at the

ECHELON
see page 23



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L.A. Raises Sales Tax to 11% Over Stolen ‘Homeless’ Billions

L.A. Raises Sales Tax to 11% Over Stolen ‘Homeless’ Billions
by Daniel Greenfield, FrontPageMag.com

In Los Angeles County, spring is in the air and so are higher taxes. Beyond the usual punishing ritual of April 15, county residents also now face some of the highest sales taxes in the country.

Sales taxes in the area have shot up from 9.75% to as high as 11.25% to fund still more services for the ‘homeless’. The permanent sales tax increase is supposed to raise \$1 billion a year to replace the stolen billions spent by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

Families will pay even more for food so that LA’s politicians and nonprofits can steal even more.

In 2016 and 2017, LA voters approved \$4.6 billion in homeless tax hikes on themselves that included a sales tax increase and Measure HHH, a \$1.2 billion bond measure to build 10,000 housing units for the homeless, that, taken together, were supposed to end homelessness.

“We need to seize this opportunity to make good things happen,” Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas promised at a ‘victory party’ for the massive spending package. “It is very, very important that we do this work in a way that the voters of the city feel they have done something good and going forward they will be rewarded by our results.”

Ridley-Thomas, who led LA’s homeless policies, and championed HHH, was charged with bribery and corruption. After his arrest, Ridley-Thomas vowed that he would continue “addressing the homeless and housing crisis.” The charges against the close ally of Mayor Karen Bass involved a scheme in the same USC social work school that also gave Bass a free “unsolicited \$95,000 tuition award”. Ridley-Thomas was sentenced to 42 months in prison, but continues appearing at public events with Mayor Bass while appealing his conviction.

“Ridley-Thomas was at the center of L.A.’s fight against

homelessness. What happens now?” the *LA Times* wondered, quoting Va Lecia Adams Kellum, the future head of the LA Homeless Services Authority who has now been forced to resign after \$2.5 billion in unaccounted spending.

Ridley-Thomas had claimed that through Measure HHH, “we can help 45,000 men, women and children move from homelessness to stable housing in the next five years.”

“Within the next three to six months, with all the work we’ve done, we will see an improvement,” Councilman Jose Huizar promised. “And in two years ... we’ll see a significant reduction in people living in the streets.”

Huizar, one of the “architects” of Measure HHH and had co-authored the Comprehensive Strategic Plan to Combat Homelessness, was sentenced to 13 years in prison for soliciting \$1.5 million in bribes from developers including trips and prostitutes. The money included a \$600,000 bribe from a fugitive Chinese real estate developer to settle a sexual harassment lawsuit.

The number of homeless not only didn’t go down, but shot up, and despite billions of dollars, the annual shortfall was being estimated at \$270 million. Homeless housing was being approved at a cost of \$479,000 an apartment and total development cost for Measure HHH hit \$869 million.

By 2020, the average cost of apartments for the homeless was at \$531,000 and by 2022, a city audit found that one project was running to \$837,000 for each unit. An audit blamed “a lot of consultants”. After four years of this, only 228 apartments for the homeless had been built.

Los Angeles then launched a pilot program to build 8×8 aluminum sheds for the homeless for only \$130,000 each and then tent encampments for the homeless for only \$2,600 per tent each month. The homeless services complex had managed to take something the homeless were already doing for themselves and

charge as much for it as a decent apartment rental.

The 2018-2019 city budget included \$430 million in homeless spending (more than \$300 million on road maintenance) and the 2024-2025 budget is up to \$961 million in homeless spending.

The Los Angeles homeless count for 2019 was 35,550 homeless. The 2024 count found 45,252 homeless in the city. LA County’s homeless population had risen from 58,936 to 75,312 during that same period. The county’s 2024 Homeless Initiative was at nearly \$600 million in spending.

After billions raised and spent to end homelessness, the crisis was worse than ever. More money was being spent and more homeless were popping up everywhere in a vicious cycle.

But what no one could find out was where all the homeless billions were going.

An audit of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), which gets money from the city, county and the federal government, found that it couldn’t account for \$2.5 billion in spending. It also illegally refused to release information about \$800,000 in payouts over abuses at the agency.

LAHSA CEO Va Lecia Adams Kellum, a crony of Mayor Karen Bass, who was being paid \$430,000 a year, blamed the problems on COVID, and claimed that the billions spent with no paper trail or receipts were “an essential investment that contributed to achieving critical public health and service delivery outcomes.” That may have included the multi-million dollar contract she had signed with her husband’s nonprofit. A spokesperson claimed that she had only “inadvertently” signed the contract.

Critics said that LAHSA’s homeless count can’t be trusted, making it impossible to know how bad the problem that the agency’s nearly billion dollar budget was supposed to tackle really is.

Despite Mayor Bass’ protests,

Kellum resigned from LAHSA as the organization is wound down, but Gov. Newsom had previously appointed her to the Department of Housing’s ‘No Place Like Home Program Advisory Committee’ where there’s no sign that she’s being ousted.

The LA City Council mistrusts Bass so much that it’s refusing to fund her ‘homeless’ program. Most of last year’s \$1.3 billion homeless budget, including \$150 million from the ‘mansion tax’, was never spent because LA is taxing residents to fight homelessness faster than it can spend the money.

The LA County Board of Supervisors which had initiated the audit to seize control of the homeless program and its vast pot of cash from the mayor’s office are assembling a new county agency to spend it all. Measure A replaced the previous Measure H with a permanent sales tax.

And Los Angeles County residents walk into stores and are surprised that they’re suddenly being charged as much as 11% in sales tax to fund the latest plan to end homelessness.

Supervisor Jance Hahn praised LA voters for being “willing to continue to tax themselves” with Measure A to end homelessness. In reality, less than 2 million, or barely 1 in 5, of LA County residents, had voted for Measure A’s highest sales taxes in the country. And with LA elections and their notorious ballot harvesting, it’s unclear how many of those votes are even real.

Can the LA County Board of Supervisors be trusted any more than the city? Hahn and other BOS members had targeted former Sheriff Alex Villanueva after he raided the home of their former colleague Supervisor Sheila Kuehl in another nonprofit corruption investigation.

Supervisor Hahn had accused the sheriff of “using his office to go after political opponents”.

The Board of Supervisors seized power over the sheriff’s department making its members immune to any future raids. While

the Supervisors amass control over another nearly billion dollar budget that promises to end homelessness once and for all, families are struggling with their higher sales taxes on top of the already high price of food and other necessities.

Homelessness keeps rising, homeless taxes keep rising and the money disappears.

Over the last five years, California spent \$24 billion on ending homelessness. A statewide audit found that no one knew whether the money was doing anything. The California Interagency Council on Homelessness didn’t even bother to analyze any spending after 2021.

When it comes to homeless spending, \$24 billion can disappear as easily as \$2.5 billion.

Meanwhile, after the worst fires in LA history, partly caused by an underfunded fire department, Los Angeles is spending more money on ‘homelessness’ than on the fire department. The two are more related than you might think because the ‘homeless’, in reality drug-addicted mentally ill vagrants, are responsible for starting at least 17,000 fires in just one year.

Homeless fires made up a third of all LA fires last year.

Several of those proved devastating and the cause of some of the serious blazes that threatened the city and made worldwide news over the winter still remain unknown.

Mayor Bass is promising to counter that with even more homeless spending.

“We know that the cost of doing nothing is far greater,” her spokesman claimed.

And as long as LA voters continue to believe that, the endless homeless spending will continue, the homeless encampments will go on rising and the homeless fires will go on burning.

Please see: <https://www.frontpagemag.com/la-raises-sales-tax-to-11-over-stolen-homeless-billions/>



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ECHELON

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rear that stick out to help you get a good purchase on the slide.

Ambidextrous Controls

Both the magazine and slide releases are duplicated on the right side of the pistol. This lefty likes that.

Index Pads



Two index pads, for lack of a better term, are built into the frame under the front trigger guard “leg”. These allow you to get a consistent grip on the gun and provide a place for your trigger finger to rest when not in the trigger guard, and on the other side for your support thumb to sit on. Both are textured well.

Trigger Guard Undercut & Texturing

The trigger guard is undercut, which allows a higher grip. Also, there is texturing on the bottom of it for your support hand index finger to rest on. That texturing is not something I would complain about if it were missing, but it is a nice touch. Also, what



some call the beavertail is pronounced and really protects your hand.

Three-Slot Rail

You have three full slots under the muzzle to attach a light or laser to. The full size only has four.

Capacity



The full-size Echelon comes with one each of 17- and 20-round magazines for unrestricted states. This compact comes with one 15- and one 18-round mag.

Trigger

Pic trigger

The flat-faced trigger, although not the match trigger found on the XDM, is very nice. It had minimal takeup and broke at a crisp 5 lbs., 6 ounces on my Lyman gauge. The reset is very short, as well.

Take-Down

The Echelon comes apart like most all HS Product pistols sold by SA. First, clear the gun totally and remove the mag.

Lock the slide back and rotate the take-down lever down 90 degrees. Pull the slide back and let it run forward off the frame, no trigger press needed. To reassemble, reverse the process.

I was totally impressed with the internals of this pistol... there were zero extra marks or scratches and the metal parts were

You could use it as a mirror to comb your hair, if it were larger (or your head smaller!). I’ve always been amazed at how polished SA feed ramps are.

How’d It Shoot?

Pretty is as pretty does, I’ve always thought. A nice, ergonomic pistol with lots of gizmos means nothing if it won’t shoot and won’t function.

I discovered this pistol will do both, in spades.

I set some targets up at 25 yards in my backyard range and took an assortment of 9mm ammo to the bench.

I don’t think accuracy is going to be an issue. One area to explore is whether this particular pistol likes 124-grain bullets better than 115s. The few targets I shot perhaps led me to wonder.

In terms of shootability, the Echelon compact is right up there and maybe a bit ahead of several other 9mm compacts I’ve owned or had experience with. The ergonomics, sights, and trigger are excellent, and the reliability is perfect.

Final Thoughts

As I said at the top, the universe of poly-striker-compact 9s is expanding... I’ve got even more coming in from different manufacturers for review. But, to see a pistol done right... designed with shooters in mind and featuring customizable frame sizes... that’s rare.

The Echelon compact, like its larger sibling, has taken the pistol world by storm. It was G&A’s Handgun Of The Year in 2023. That says something.

If you are in the market for a compact 9mm with a slew of features that is reliable and comes with decent-capacity magazines, give the Echelon a look. They’ve really listened to shooters and the design shows it. I like mine... it stays here.

Please see: <https://www.ammoland.com/2025/04/springfield-armory-echelon-4-0c-compact-9mm-review/>



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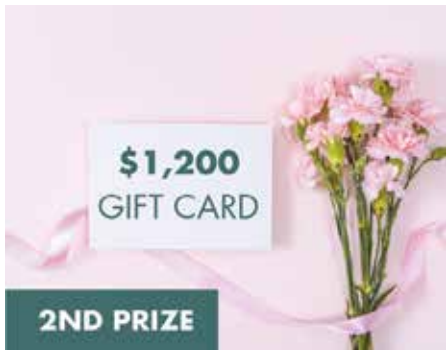
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