



Vol. 13 , Issue 4 Only \$1 “Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Romans 13:12 Friday, July 18, 2025

2025  
CUSTER  
COUNTY  
FAIR  
SCHEDULE

REMAINING

ALL events are held in the Show Arena unless otherwise stated  
Gates open at 7 am and close at 10 pm each day

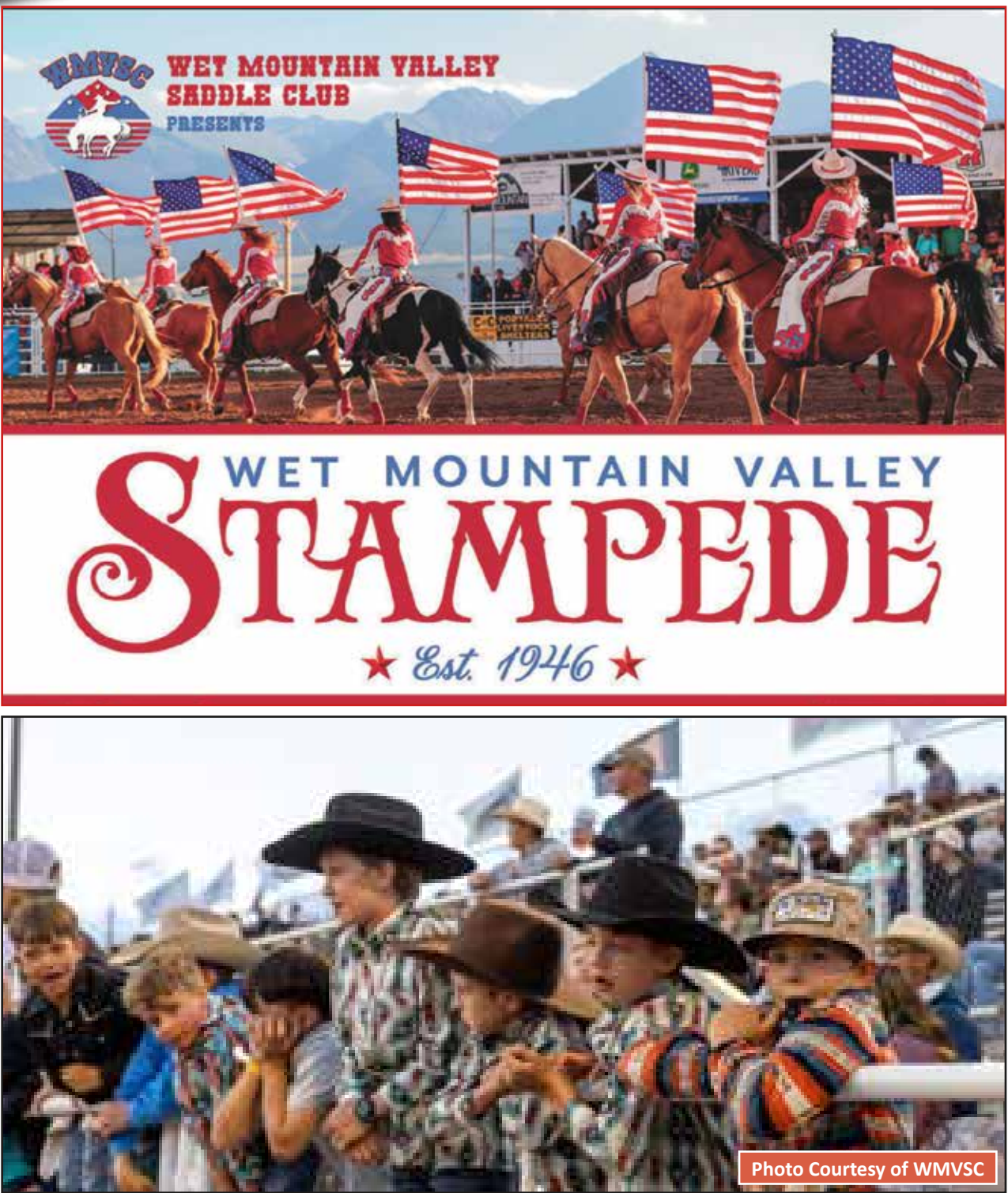
\*There will be a 15 minute break between the end of an event and the start of the following event, but events will not start before the stated time

Thursday, July 17, 2025  
9:00 am - 11:00 am: 4-H and FFA sheep show  
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm: 4-H and FFA goat show  
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm: Westcliffe Stampede Ranch Rodeo

Friday, July 18, 2025  
8:00 am - 9:00 am: Custer County Cattle Women beef breakfast  
9:00 am - 11:00 am: 4-H and FFA beef show  
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm: Livestock master showmanship  
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm: PRCA Westcliffe Stampede Rodeo

Saturday, July 19, 2025  
9:00 am Rodeo Slack  
11:00 am - 12:00 pm: Sangre de Cristo Cowboy Church steak dinner  
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm: Awards and buckle ceremony  
1:00 pm - 4:30 pm: 4-H and FFA livestock auction  
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm: PRCA Westcliffe Stampede Rodeo

Sunday, July 20, 2025  
1:00 pm - 3:30 pm: Mandatory after fair clean up - All 4-H and FFA members  
3:30 pm - 4:30 pm: Check out for general 4-H and FCS projects - Exhibit hall  
4:30 pm - 5:30 pm: Check out for open class projects



2025 DEDICATEE - IN LOVING MEMORY

Shantell (Shan) Cynthia Squire, age 29, passed away on January 14, 2025. She was born in Canon City, Colorado on October 7, 1995. She was a student of Custer County High School. She furthered her education by studying forensic anthropology, public health, and history.

Shantell was the first granddaughter and first niece to the Rick and Yvonne Squire family. In her lifetime, Shantell was always willing to lend a helping hand, whether it was cooking a meal or planning a menu, building or helping anyone with a project, keeping history alive being the Curator at the Silver Cliff Museum.

Shantell couldn't get enough reading and watching documentaries on any subject. Halie often referred to her as "The bottomless pit of useless information." She also enjoyed cooking and trying all kinds of food. A self-taught Master Chef. Travel was one of her loves although she didn't get to do it often. Shan also loved taking pictures of beautiful scenery, whether it be driving down the road or right off the front porch. One of her favorite ways to help friends and family was babysitting and watching little ones, but her greatest joy was spending time and playing with her niece, Paisley.

Shantell is survived by her Mother, Ileen Squire, Biological Father Dustin Brown, Dad, Jay Lemons; her Younger Sister, Halie and Clayton Riddle; Niece, Paisley Riddle; Grandparents, Rick and Yvonne Squire; Aunt Robin and Uncle Mike Gaide; Aunt Karalee and Uncle Scott Rowley; Cousins Conner Rowley and Cash Rowley; and numerous family members.

She supported the rodeo in many ways, volunteering and being voluntold, coming home from college to work gates, doing computer work, set up and clean up for fundraisers. She and her wittiness will be greatly missed.

Independence Day Parade Pt 2 Photo Feature pages 12-13

Mt. Valley School Fundraiser page 24

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PATRIOT ALERT! They Called us Hateful page 18



Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment. John 7:24 ESV

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of Conservative  
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We believe that freedom is a gift from God and not granted to us by politicians or governments. Freedom demands responsible behavior of all citizens and must be consistent with the truths expressed in the great moral and governing guides as The Ten Commandments, The Declaration of Independence, The U.S. Constitution and The Bill of Rights.

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.

The Sangre de Cristo Sentinel (USPS 11280) is an independent newspaper, published weekly by The Mountain Publishing Company, Inc. P.O. Box 179, Westcliffe, CO 81252.  
POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to The Mountain Publishing Company, Inc. P.O. Box 179, Westcliffe, CO 81252

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Closed Mon, Thurs &  
Weekends

Subscription Rates:

\$49 yearly for 81252 zip code  
\$59 yearly elsewhere  
\$29 yearly for Digital Edition

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Guest Editorial

Mamdani Terrifies the Democrats

by Glenn K. Beaton,  
The Aspen Beat,  
Commentary

After losing to the one guy they were certain they could beat, Democrats are making a show of puzzling over how to win elections.

It’s not really much of a puzzle. They simply need to get on the right side of some easy 80/20 issues. Like illegal immigration. Like men competing in women’s sports. Like catching and punishing criminals. Like the First Amendment. Like disclaiming Marxism.

Why can’t the Democrats see this?

Well, they can. Democrats are just pretending they can’t because they don’t want to alienate . . . Democrats.

Do the math. If only 20% of voters are on the liberal side of an issue, and essentially all of those 20% are Democrats, and registered Democrats comprise about 37% of the voters (the other 63% being Republicans and Independents), that means that, among Democrats, about 54% are on the 20 side of those 80/20 issues. (54% of the 37% of voters who are registered Democrats equals about 20% of the total voters.)

Most Democrat politicians can do this math. And so, they understand that getting on the winning side of these 80/20 issues would cost them over half of registered Democrats – the kind that vote, donate money, speak out, and get CNN spots.

Even the Democrats who can’t do this math (here’s looking at you, AOC) can sense it from their interactions with their base, which is about the only kind of interactions they have with the public.

One solution is for Democrats to trick their base into believing they are still on the 20 side of these 80/20 issues while actually migrating to the 80 side in order to get some of the 80 side voters.

But it’s hard for politicians to trick their base. That’s because the base tends to be passionate and aware. Moderates, on the other hand, are easier to trick. Moderates are moderates because they aren’t paying much attention.

So, what do you do if you’re a Democrat?

You trick the people who can be tricked – the moderates. You put on an insincere, hand-wringing act pretending that you’re considering

switching to the 80 side on the 80/20 issues, all while winking and nodding to your hard-left base to tell them you’re really not.

But now the jig is up. Zohran Kwame Mamdani (if you’re a Republican, you couldn’t wish for a better name for him) has put the Democrats on the spot.

He wants government-owned grocery stores because he thinks (or just believes) they’ll be less expensive and more equitable. He wants government control over rent and real estate prices. He wants government-paid public transportation. He wants government child care. He wants, well, you get the picture.

He has lots of wants, and he wants those wants to be satisfied by the government.

Except the police. His only want from the police is that they cease to exist.

He let slip – nah, he bragged – that the government should seize control over “the means of production.” It’s not clear where he learned that phrase, but it was in fact coined by Karl Marx.

He’s an actual, registered socialist.

And he’s not a European-style one. He’s more like a Cuban-style one or Venezuelan-style one or Soviet Union-style one.

Democrats, who have crept toward socialism, slouched toward socialism, and sometimes flown toward socialism like bats into hell over the last 25 years since Bill Clinton left office, are mortified. Not because Mamdani favors socialism – they all do – but because he says it out loud.

By saying it out loud, Mamdani smokes out those fellow Democrats. They have to either agree or disagree. They can no longer pretend moderation in order to garner votes from unengaged moderates while winking and nodding to their hard-left base.

Mamdani is forcing socialist Democrats into the thing that socialists abhor most – honesty.

He’s currently the favorite to be elected. The result will be a disaster for New York City. But it will also be a disaster for the Democrats. I’m willing to accept both disasters if it’s a package deal.

Please see: <https://glennkbeaton.substack.com>

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# Kirkpatrick Bank Appoints Kelly Kline as Senior Vice President of Commercial Lending

Press Release

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO. (July 10, 2025) – Kirkpatrick Bank is pleased to announce the appointment of Kelly Kline as Senior Vice President of Commercial Lending.

“Please join me in welcoming Kelly Kline to Kirkpatrick Bank as a Senior VP of Commercial Lending,” said Mike Steppenbacker, Colorado Market President at Kirkpatrick Bank. “I have personally worked with Kelly for the past five years and can confidently say that he is going to be a great addition to our lending team. Plus, he’s a great guy.”

Kline brings extensive commercial banking experience and a proven track record of success to his new role at Kirkpatrick Bank. As a results-driven sales professional, he has demonstrated expertise in negotiations, turnarounds, and new account acquisitions. His specialties include strategic relationship management, customer service, and product knowledge while providing transformational sales leadership in highly competitive markets.

In his most recent position, Kline led Business Development and Relationship Management for commercial lending across the Castle Rock, Parker, and Denver Metro markets. During his tenure, he successfully developed and reviewed over \$2 billion in new credit requests in just over four years, resulting in \$182 million in new loans for the Corporate Banking team while establishing a strong market presence. Throughout his career, Kline has worked



for several prominent financial institutions, leveraging his extensive experience and deep community connections to build a robust customer portfolio.

“Kelly brings significant experience to this role and has prioritized connecting with the community, which has enabled him to build a loyal customer following,” added Steppenbacker.

Kline is known for his tenacious approach to building new businesses, securing customer loyalty, and forging strong relationships with external business partners. His appointment reinforces Kirkpatrick Bank’s commitment to expanding its commercial lending capabilities and strengthening its presence in the Colorado market.

# Oak Creek Grade Volunteer Fire Department Thanks CF&E



Rick Corage of CF&E and his son fill up a newly installed firefighting cistern.   
 Courtesy Photo OCGVFD

The Oak Creek Grade Volunteer Fire Department (OCGVFD) says thanks to CF&E from Silver Cliff for the donation of water for fighting fires in the rural area off Oak Creek Grade. Rick Corage and his son delivered 1,700 gallons of firefighting water to a newly installed cistern and totes. The water will be used for wildland fires in the area if needed. The cistern was installed through a grant offered by the Fremont Conservation District earlier this year. OCGVFD is encouraging residents to be fire wise and prepared for a fire event.

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JULY

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6:30PM RANCH RODEO ONE-NIGHT COMPETITION

FRI 10:00PM JULY 18<sup>TH</sup> CONCERT WITH DUEY & UNBROKEN



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JULY 18<sup>TH</sup>

6:00PM PRCA/WPRA RODEO 10:00PM CONCERT



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JULY 19<sup>TH</sup>

6:00PM PRCA/WPRA RODEO 10:00PM CONCERT

SAT 10:00PM JULY 19<sup>TH</sup> CONCERT WITH BRYAN MARTIN



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BORED PHOTOS BY LORI CHRISTOPHER & MICHAEL PINTAR • GRAPHIC DESIGN BY JB STUDIO, INC.

# The Mortar Men of Custer

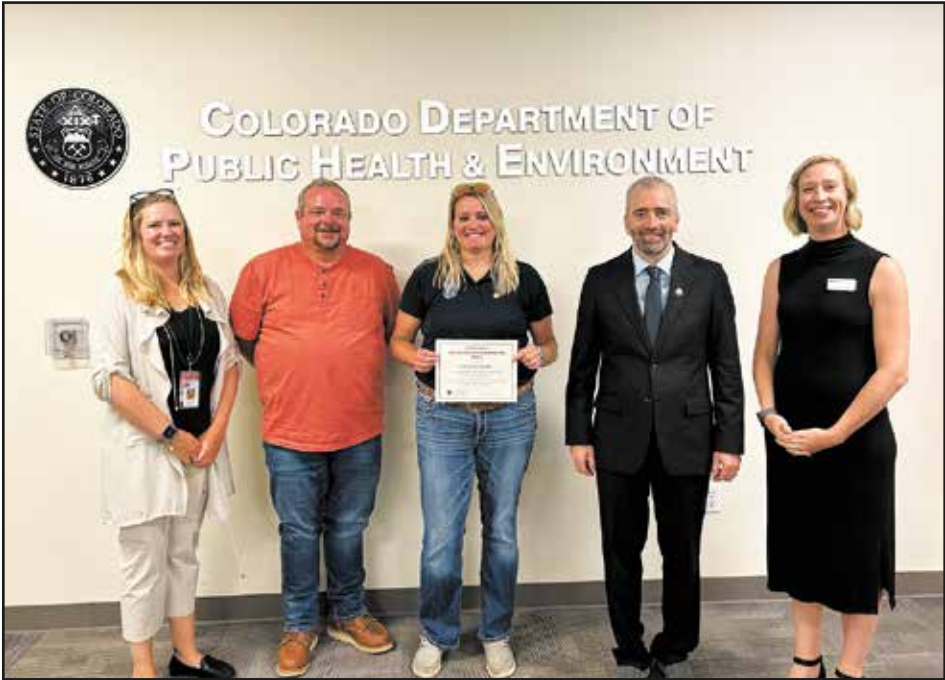


Mortar Men Josh Martin and Steve Rorick set up the afternoon of Independence Day. (Not pictured, Brian Clince.) Thank you to all who helped and donated. A special thanks to Siefert's Trucking for their massive donation to the Mortar Men Fireworks Show! These road warriors didn't just haul freight—they hauled this whole operation closer to launch day!

Photos by Jimmy McMahon and Britt.



# Custer County EMS Receives Award



Custer County EMS has been selected as the first recipient of the Award for EMS Excellence in Quality Care and Data Reporting by the Colorado Department of Public Health. (CDPHE) The award letter acknowledged impressive achievements in the following areas:

- 1. NEMSQA Safety-02: Non-Emergent Transport with No Lights and Sirens**  
Your team achieved an outstanding 96% in ensuring that EMS transports originating from 911 requests were completed without the use of lights and sirens when clinically appropriate.
- 2. NEMSQA Stroke-01: Stroke Assessment During EMS Response**  
Custer County EMS has achieved a perfect score of 100% in conducting stroke assessments during EMS responses to suspected stroke cases.
- 3. NEMSQA Trauma-08: Documentation of Critical Trauma Assessment**  
Your documentation rates in trauma care are exemplary. You achieved 100% documentation for adult patients on critical trauma indicators (GCS, systolic blood pressure, and respiratory rate), and 97% for pediatric patients.

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# Local Mountain News & Notices

## BOCC: Seal Chipper Needed, Useful Public Service Contract, Road Maintenance Request

by George Gramlich,  
News and Commentary

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

In Commissioner Items Epp had a finance briefing with the department heads. This meeting will be quarterly going forward. He also attended several agricultural meetings re the potential grant for a dedicated ag market. Epp stated that he had talked to our tourism people and lodging across the state is down. (Hence our Lodging Tax revenue is lower.) Canda opined about whether the County should raise its Lodging Tax.

First up in New Business was Wet Mountain Fire District’s request for a setback variance for a new fuel tank they want to put in. This went on for a bit on exactly how to do it procedurally. Eventually it was decided that they needed a survey done to confirm

the property lines and they can go forward and ask for a variance via Planning & Zoning.

Next up was the Rotary Club with a request for an alcohol sales permit for their upcoming soiree Rocking the Ranch Weekend at the Beckwith Ranch, Saturday, August 2nd. This was ok’d.

Bob Smith, our Human Resources Director was the next supplicant concerning a potential “ Useful Public Services Contract”, the County’s program that monitors the public service sentences given by our courts. The current 11th Judicial District Clerk Justine Wilson currently handles that as a part time job being paid \$9k a year by the County. She is retiring so the County needs a replacement. It turns out the County only receives around \$2k from the people fulfilling these public service sentences. It was brought up that all the surrounding counties use a company called “Intervention” to do this on a per county contract basis. Bob has been in contact with these people and will be meeting them the next day to get pricing, etc.

Road & Bridge’s request concerning getting a used road chip sealer was next. They had sold their old one to a local contractor and now want to buy it back and get it refurbished by a company in Idaho. It will cost about \$15k to buy it back and around \$40k to \$45k to have it rebuilt. (A new machine costs over \$1 million.) The Commissioners asked R&B to get firm numbers from the rebuild company.

Terry Scaggs, a resident of the Mountain Springs Country Estate subdivision off of Oak Creek Grade was next requesting the County assume maintenance of their two roads which total about 2.2 miles. Terry had the subdivision map which showed that the subdivision had deeded those roads to the County when it was originally set up. The County has never maintained the roads. After a big discussion, it was decided that Terry would review the road with Road & Bridge and then the County could make a decision.

In Additional Items, Epp said the County is maintaining roads it shouldn’t be and that has to be reviewed. And that was that.

## Custer County Conservation District Lunch Learn about High Tunnels

Press Release  
Custer County Conservation District

High Tunnels are the subject of the July “Lunch and Learn” sponsored by the Custer County Conservation District. July’s lunch and learn will be held on the site of a newly installed high tunnel with the goal of demonstrating the benefits and

function of the High Tunnel in Custer County.

The owners have graciously offered to share tips on how to garden with the high tunnel as well as construction and operation details. NRCS personnel will be on hand to discuss the requirements for obtaining technical assistance and grants related

to small acreage activities including High Tunnels. The owners are also sponsoring lunch for those interested in learning.

Date: July 29, 2025  
Time: 11 AM to 1:30 PM  
Location: 5319 County Rd. 130  
Westcliffe, Colorado

## Sustainable Ways-High Country Recycling Receives C3 Rebate For Glass Recycling

WESTCLIFFE – Sustainable Ways-High Country Recycling—now governed by a combined board of directors—has received a \$15,000 rebate from Colorado Circular Communities (C3), recognizing and compensating the group’s investment in recycling glass for Custer County residents and businesses.

The rebate compensates Sustainable Ways-HCR for costs involved in collecting and hauling to a recycling center in Broomfield more than 50 tons of post-consumer glass containers during 2024. HCR began its glass recycling last year after a careful search for a recycling center that processes post-consumer glass for remanufacturing. The group found

Iron Woman Logistics of Denver to deliver a roll-off container, pick it up when filled and deliver it to Glass to Glass Denver in Broomfield.

Glass to Glass provides “Big Blue,” as HCR calls the container that sits in the Altitude Community Fitness parking lot in Silver Cliff. But HCR pays Iron Woman to haul the container back and forth to Broomfield. Those pick ups and deliveries happen roughly each month, as Big Blue fills. There is no cost to the public – including local businesses – to dispose of their used, clean glass bottles and jars in the container, which is available day and night.

HCR has long operated under the nonprofit status of Sustainable Ways,

which is a 501(c)3 corporation. Earlier this year, the two organizations combined their governing boards to boost energy for recycling and other efforts to make our community more sustainable and efficient. The organization plans to expand its number of events and efforts as it moves forward.

High Country Recycling (HCR), formed in 2006 and staffed by volunteers, has a mission to “be a comprehensive, successful program that supports individual, business and governmental practices that reduces waste, promotes reuse and advances recycling throughout Custer County.” Learn more at [www.HighCountryRecycling.com](http://www.HighCountryRecycling.com)

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10 Hermit Lane. Silver Cliff 719-783-9666  
email: pbailey@solarsolutions.com

**Valley View Windows & Doors**  
Call Marty Byler at 719-220-4151  
or Email Will@valleyviewwindows.net  
Free Estimates, Replacements, New construction

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719-371-1221 - boneyardelectric@gmail.com  
Industrial - Residential - Commercial

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westcliffefirewood@gmail.com

Florist

**Salty Pine Floral & Boutique**  
411 Main St, Westcliffe  
719-783-9393  
www.westcliffeflowershop.com

Funeral Homes

**Holt Family Funeral Home**  
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719-275-4113  
www.holtfamilyfuneralhomes.com

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Home & Patio Furniture, Footwear, Outdoor Wear  
Mon - Sat 9am-5pm

Grocery & Health Foods

**DUTCH PANTRY & DELI**  
404 E. Main St., Silver Cliff  
719-298-6689 Call for store hours  
DELI HOURS: Mon-Friday 11 - 4 , Sat: 11- 2:30

**Lowe's Market**  
50 Main St, Westcliffe  
719-783-0550  
www.lowesmarket.com

**Sunflower Natural Foods**  
405 Main St., Westcliffe  
719-783-9266  
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Where you'll find sharp gifts & smokin' deals!

**Salida Gunshop**  
7345 W Hwy 50, Salida  
salidagunshop.com | 719-207-4285  
*please see ad on page 20 -21 for hours*

Gun Clubs

**Royal Gorge Gun Club & Lincoln Park Pawn**  
1345 Elm Ave, Cañon City 719-276-3030  
Lincolnparkpawn@hotmail.com  
1 foot to over 1 mile, 75 different powders

**Sangre Shooting Sports Club**  
P.O. Box 1554, Westcliffe  
http://sangreshooting.com

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719-539-2125  
salidastove.com

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**Piñon Plumbing, LLC**  
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Licensed & Insured · Jeff Ray 719-783-0379

**White Bros Custom Plumbing & Heating, Inc.**  
www.whitebrosplumbing.com  
P.O. Box 957, Westcliffe ~ 719-217-7202  
*Locally Owned & Family Operated*

Insurance

**State Farm Dennis Podzemny**  
1004 S 9th St, Cañon City  
719-275-1548  
https://www.canoncityinsurance.com

Landscaping

**Yardcrafters**  
Full Landscapes, Xeriscaping, Retaining Walls  
719-275-5091  
yardcrafterscolo@outlook.com

Lodging

**Darksbies Vacations**  
Enter WMV-LOCAL for 10% off vacation home rentals.  
Visit Darksbies.vacations or call  
719-783-0648



The American Legion Monthly Meeting is the 1st Tuesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. at the bowling alley.



The American Legion Auxiliary Monthly Meeting is the 1st Monday of each month at 5:00 p.m. at the Cliff Lanes meeting room.

American Legion and VFW Monthly Meetings

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Monthly Meeting is the 3rd Saturday of every month at 1 p.m. at the bowling alley.



Mitigation/ Pest Control

**Premier Pest Control LLC**  
719-371-7404 ~ ppc16@privategarden.org  
inspections, estimates, professional pest management  
residential, commercial, licensed and insured

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Wildfire Mitigation and Excavation  
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rswota@gmail.com

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Palacedrugco.com | 719-371-9402

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**White Bros Custom Plumbing & Heating, Inc.**  
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719-783-9338

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719-269-0653  
WestcliffeBroker.com

Restaurants & Dining

**DUTCH PANTRY & DELI**  
404 E. Main St., Silver Cliff  
719-298-6689 Call for store hours  
DELI HOURS: Mon-Friday 11 - 4 , Sat: 11- 2:30

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**Seifert Enterprises**  
Excavation, Septic Systems, Culverts,  
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719-783-2757 info@SBCompanies.com

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**Solar Solutions Ltd**  
Off Grid and Grid Tie  
10 Hermit Lane. Silver Cliff 719-783-9666  
email: pbailey@solarsolutions.com

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**Wet Mountain Storage**  
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www.westcliffecoloradoselfstorage.com

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larryfinneydrilling@gmail.com

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR ADVERTISERS!

Recurring Events

Mondays

**10 a.m. Pickle Ball** Silver Cliff Mem.Park (SCMP)  
More info: [lizbrannen@gmail.com](mailto:lizbrannen@gmail.com)  
**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](mailto:colobamanana@yahoo.com)

Tuesdays

**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** Meet/greet &order 5:30 p.m. Presentation 6 p.m. Location Tony’s Pizza All welcome.

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.  
**9:45-11:45 a.m. The Posse Ladies Bible Study** SUMMER August 20 [@305 County Road 159](#), Holly 703-338-4100 or Rene at 719-371-7076  
**10 a.m. Pickle Ball** (SCMP) info: [lizbrannen@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.CusterGOP.com) or Facebook page at <https://m.facebook.com/custergop> **NO MEETING in JULY**

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](mailto: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



Wildfire Season and Everbridge Notification Sign-Up

Press Release  
Wet Mountain Fire Protection District and  
Custer County Sheriff’s Office

Wildfire Season Update

Wildfire season is currently active across Colorado and the western United States. Last week, Colorado Governor Jared Polis declared disaster emergencies for four wildfires in western Colorado, as well as a larger fire in Utah that is nearing the Colorado state line. These developments highlight the urgent need for preparedness among residents, especially in Custer County.

Importance of Emergency Notifications

Both Custer and Fremont counties utilize the Everbridge system for emergency reverse notifications. This system provides critical, real-time alerts regarding wildfire threats, evacuation orders, and other public safety emergencies. However, residents must **opt in** to receive these potentially life-saving notifications.

How to Register for Everbridge Alerts

**Registration Link:** <https://member.everbridge.net/355009111785665/new>

- **Who Should Register:** All residents of Custer and Fremont counties, including seasonal visitors and second property owners.
- **Why Register:** Notifications can provide timely warnings and instructions, giving families the best chance to respond quickly and safely in an emergency.

Preparedness and Evacuation Guidance

- **Always be ready to evacuate:** If you feel threatened by wildfire—whether or not an official evacuation notice has been issued—take immediate action to protect your family and animals.
- **Have a go-kit prepared:** Include essential items such as medications, important documents, clothing, food, water, and pet supplies.

- **Know your evacuation routes:** Plan multiple ways out of your neighborhood in case roads are blocked. The Custer Emergency Evacuation Map can be downloaded here: <https://custersheriff.colorado.gov/sites/custersheriff/files/2025-02/FireEvac.png>
- **Stay informed:** Monitor our Facebook page, local news, weather updates, and official county communications for the latest information.

Key Reminders

- Wildfire threats can escalate rapidly; do not wait for a formal notice if you feel unsafe.
- Registering for Everbridge alerts is a crucial step in staying informed and prepared.
- Encourage neighbors, friends, and family in the area to sign up for notifications and review their own evacuation plans.

Stay safe and vigilant this wildfire season.

## Custer Senior Center Menu

|                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Monday, July 21</b><br><b>#88 Stuffed Peppers</b><br>Chopped Spinach w/Malt Vinegar<br>Applesauce Cake<br>WW Bread w/Butter | <b>Tuesday, July 22</b><br><b>#73 Roast Chicken</b><br>Mushroom Sauce<br>Steamed Brown Rice<br>Seasoned Cauliflower Broccoli<br>Apple Pear Salad w/Almonds<br>WW Bread w/Butter | <b>Thursday, July 24</b><br><b>#99 Tuna Pasta Salad</b><br>Creamy Cucumber Salad<br>Fresh Peach<br>Orange Juice SF Gelatin w/Banana<br>Raisin Nut Cup |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Served Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays at noon. 612 Main St. , Silver Cliff Townhall (lower level)**  
*The following major food allergens are used as ingredients: Milk, Egg, Fish, Tree Nuts, Peanuts, Wheat, Soy and Sesame.*

Please call (719) 783-9508 before 9:30 a.m. for reservations  
A \$4 suggested donation per meal is appreciated, but not required. All menus subject to change.

## Come and Worship

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>Christian Science</b><br>9:30 a.m. Worship<br>8 Bassick Place, Westcliffe<br><br><b>Church of Christ</b><br>9:30 a.m. Bible Study<br>10:30 a.m. Worship<br>818 Ohio Street, Silver Cliff<br>719/783-4601<br><br><b>Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints</b><br>240 Ridgeline Dr, Westcliffe<br>Pres: 719/214-4589<br><br><b>Cody Park Community Church</b><br>9:30 a.m. Sunday School<br>? 10:30 a.m. Worship<br>Tues. 8:30 a.m., Prayer Mtg<br>Wedn. 7 p.m. Bible Study<br>0157 County Rd. 27A<br>Cotopaxi 719/942-3526<br>(719) 942-3462<br><br><b>Community United Methodist Church</b><br>10 a.m. Worship<br>202 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe<br>719/783-2511<br><br><b>Cotopaxi Community Church</b><br>9:30 a.m. Sunday School<br>11 a.m. Worship<br>6 p.m. Wedn. Bible Study<br>PastorSteveHolcomb@gmail.com<br>20326 Hwy. 50, Cotopaxi | <b>First Baptist Church of Westcliffe</b><br>9:30 a.m. Sunday School<br>10:30 a.m. Fellowship<br>10:45 a.m. Worship<br>410 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe<br>Pastor Josh Olsteen<br>719/783-2498<br><br><b>High Country Mennonite Church</b><br>9:30 a.m. Worship<br>10:45 a.m. Sunday School<br>103 N. Adams St, Westcliffe<br>719/783-9045<br>Call Pastor Erv @ 719.429.0556<br>or Pastor Davie @ 719.371.3861<br><br><b>Huerfano Community Bible Church</b><br>10:30 a.m. Sunday Worship<br>7 p.m.: Thursday Bible Study<br>603 Leon Street, Walsenburg<br>(719) 251-9053<br><br><b>Hope Lutheran Church</b><br>2 p.m. Worship<br>3:15 p.m. Bible Study<br>3rd & Powell Streets, Westcliffe<br>Pastor Dan Kletke 719/783-2323<br>Lange Hall 719/783-2561<br><br><b>Living Stone Calvary Chapel</b><br>Saturday evenings: 5:30 p.m.<br>Sunday Mornings: 9 30 a.m. Outdoors<br>Bring a lawn chair!<br>830 Bridge St., Canon City, CO<br>Pastor Sean Meagher 719/276-0863 | <b>Our Lady of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church</b><br>Diocese of Pueblo<br>11 a.m. Sunday Mass<br>10 a.m. (2nd Tuesday of month) Mass<br>10 a.m. Wednesday Mass<br>5:30 p.m. Thursday Mass<br>109 S. 5th Street, Westcliffe<br>719/783-3507<br><br><b>Our Lady of Mt. Zion Catholic Church</b><br>11 a.m. Mass, 2nd & 3rd Sunday of month<br>210 S. 2nd St, Westcliffe<br>719/783-2491<br><br><b>Praise Community Church</b><br>Sunday School 9:30 a.m.<br>Praise & Worship 10:45 a.m.<br>215 N Pikes Peak Ave., Florence<br>719/784-1184<br><br><b>St. Luke’s Episcopal Church</b><br>10:30 a.m. Worship & Eucharist<br>11:30 a.m. Fellowship<br>8:30 a.m. Prayer Service, Thursdays<br>3rd & Rosita Streets, Westcliffe<br>719/783-2477<br><br><b>St. Patrick’s Anglican Church</b><br>11 a.m. Worship<br>403 S. 2nd S., Westcliffe<br>925/339-0175 or 719/783-2500<br><br><b>Sacred Heart Catholic Church</b><br>Diocese of Pueblo Saturday Mass 4 p.m.<br>Highway 69, Gardner<br>Bldg. Mickey. 719/746-2037 | <b>Sangre de Cristo Cowboy Church</b><br>Pastor: Mike Shields<br>10 a.m. Sunday School<br>11 a.m. Worship<br>Last Sunday of Month:<br>Potluck at Noon<br><a href="http://sangredecristocowboychurch.com">sangredecristocowboychurch.com</a><br>also on Facebook<br>60260 Hwy 69, Westcliffe<br>719/232-5372<br><br><b>Sangre de Cristo Fellowship</b><br>9 a.m. Meet & Greet<br>9:30 a.m. Service<br>120 Jerry Drive, Westcliffe<br>719/783-0903<br><br><b>Sangre de Cristo Seminary Chapel</b><br>10 a.m. Worship<br>6160 County Rd. 130, Westcliffe<br>719/371-1822<br><br><b>Valley Bible Fellowship</b><br>10 a.m. Worship<br>116 Hermit Lane, Silver Cliff<br>719/581-7572<br><br><b>Wetmore Baptist Church</b><br>9:45 a.m. Sunday School<br>10:45 a.m. Worship<br>1 p.m. Worship<br>Junction of Hwy 96 & 67, Wetmore<br>719/371-1230<br><br><b>Wetmore Community Church</b><br>9 a.m. Sunday School<br>10 a.m. Worship<br>699 County Rd. 395, Wetmore<br>719/784-0596 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Send Church updates to [sdcsentinel@gmail.com](mailto:sdcsentinel@gmail.com)  
(719) 783-3360

Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty. Job 5:17 ESV

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full  
or  
part  
time

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Quality and experience  
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**OUTDOORSMAN DAYS**  
Aug. 8 & 9, 2025  
Pathfinder Park • 6655 State Hwy 115 • Florence, CO

**FULL SCHEDULE & AGENDA**  
**FRIDAY NIGHT CHUCK WAGON DINNER**  
**SATURDAY NIGHT BANQUET TICKETS**

VISIT: COLORADOOUTDOORSMANDAYS.COM  
CALL: 719-275-4077  
OR SCAN FOR DETAILS:



Classifieds

Announcements

**Rosita Property Owners Association**  
**Annual Picnic & Meeting**  
**Sunday, July 27th**  
**at 1 p.m.**  
at the Rosita Park Pavillion.  
\$10. yearly dues and donations accepted.  
Friends, neighbors and side dishes welcomed.

For Sale

**For Sale:**  
**2001 VW Jetta Diesel**

Rare opportunity. 2001 VW Jetta Diesel. Black. ONLY 86k original miles. Stored outside for 9 years and not run. Put a new battery in it and it fired up immediately. Motor purrs. Super nice 5 speed tranny. Well cared for. Needs a glow plug and possibly a turbo mass air valve. NO Blue juice for this baby, just straight diesel. Was getting 50+ MPG highway, Insane cruising range. Call The Sentinel for details. 719 783 3360. **Price \$5k.**

**2023 Big Tex Gooseneck Flatbed**  
20 + 5, 2x7k axels.  
2 sets of chains,  
2 sets of binders.  
2 sets of straps.  
New tires including the spare.  
Title in hand. 10K.  
Call or text 209-471-5626.

Help Wanted

**Interested in joining the Farmer's Market team?**  
The board is looking for a motivated and organized Farmers Market Manager who will oversee the weekly operations of our local farmers market in Westcliffe, Colorado. This individual will serve as the primary point of contact for vendors, customers, and local stakeholders, ensuring a safe, welcoming, and well-run market. This is a part time, seasonal position with hours available during the off season. Pay is \$17.50/hr with a job description available upon request. Please submit a letter of interest to westcliffefarmersmarket@gmail.com by August 1st, 2025

Get Notices with  
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**Kitchen staff and servers** wanted for upscale bar & restaurant in Westcliffe. Experience not necessary, but must be professional, have a positive attitude and willing to work hard. Call 719-659-8743 to set up interview.

**Custer County School District is now hiring.**  
Apply online at <https://www.applitrack.com/ccbobcats/onlineapp>

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**Lori Kastendieck**  
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**FREE BOOKS**  
At the Sentinel's Lending Library:  
History, biography, war, crime, etc. Good quality.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**  
TO OUR FAVORITE  
P DAWG



Events

**July 03 -26, Sangres Art Guild ~ "Shadows and Light" Art Show, July 5th Reception 1- 4 p.m.**  
3rd Street Gallery, 59000 N. Hwy 69

**July 11 - July 19 Custer County Fair**  
Custer County Fair Grounds--Westcliffe  
See page 1 for remaining schedule

**WMV Stampede Rodeos \$\$**  
**July 17@ 6:30 p.m. Ranch Rodeo**  
**July 18@ p.m. PRCA/WPRA Rodeo**  
**10 p.m. Concert: Duey & the Unbroken**  
**July 19@ PRCA/WPRA Rodeo**  
**10 p.m. Concert: Bryan Martin**

**July 17-19 Thursday 2-6 p.m. and Friday & Saturday from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.**  
**Friends of the West Custer County Library Arts & Crafts Fair @ Lutheran Lange Hall, 312 South Third Street in Westcliffe**  
**Saturday, July 19 @ 11 a.m. to Noon**  
**Sun Observance & Star Party 8:45 - 11:45 p.m.**  
**FREE** on the Bluff in Westcliffe, Smokey Jack Observatory.

**July 26, 2 - 5 p.m.**  
**Christmas in July at Eagles Summit Ranch**

**July 26, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.**  
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—Benjamin Franklin

# Local Mountain News & Notices

## CCSD to Provide Breakfast & Lunch at No Cost for All Students

Press Release  
Custer County School District

Custer County Schools is pleased to announce its participation in the Community Eligibility Provision. We will offer no-cost breakfast and lunch to all students during the 2025-2026 school year. Research shows students who are not hungry perform better in school. By providing breakfast and lunch to all students

at no cost, we better support their learning. These breakfasts and lunches follow U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines for healthy school meals. We encourage all families to choose school meals. This increases funding for our schools and creates a strong school community around mealtimes. It also saves time and money, which families can use for what's most important to them.

## Basketball Skills Camp

Basketball Skills camp is July 22-24th from 9:30 to noon in the East Gym.

The camp is hosted by Coach Lewsader and Coach Parrish. Bring gym shoes, a water bottle, and wear practice clothes.

The camp is open to all incoming 6th through 8th grade boys and girls.

For more information, call (719) 242-7114



## New Superintendent & Secondary Principal Join CCSD

Press Release  
Custer County School District

—July 10, 2025

The Board of Education is pleased to announce two new additions to the CCSD Leadership Team. New Interim Superintendent Kyle Hebberd and new MS/HS Principal Ren Olson begin serving the District this month.

Mr. Hebberd brings 34 years of public education experience and 17 years' experience as a Colorado rural superintendent to CCSD having previously

served as superintendent in both the Swink and Walsh School Districts.

Ms. Olson recently relocated to Custer County after serving the Roaring Fork School District on Colorado's Western Slope for more than 40 years. Ms. Olson's experience includes serving as principal of a dual-language school, assistant principal, instructional coach and teacher.

Mr. Hebberd and Ms. Olson will join current Elementary School Principal Sydney Benesch to complete the CCSD Administrative Team.

## KIDS

Friday, July 18, 2025

## Ouray, Colorado

As we proceed along our vacation trips in our scenic state of Colorado, this week we will visit Ouray, Colorado. I am sure that most of you have heard of Ouray but seeing it is believing. I am hoping that reading this article will inspire you to take a day trip to see it.



Ouray, Colorado, is a historic mining town on the Million Dollar Highway in southwest Colorado. At an elevation of 7,792 feet, it sits in a natural rock amphitheater and is so beautiful that it is often called the Switzerland of America. Today, Ouray is claimed to be one of America's most beautiful mountain towns.

The Tabeguache Utes camped seasonally in the area that is now known as Ouray. Prospectors first arrived in the Ouray area in 1861, some stayed the winter of 1861-62 after finding placer gold in the canyon that would later be the site of the town of Ouray. This region developed very slowly due to the isolation and the ruggedness of the San Juan Mountains and combined with the ever-present danger of conflicts with the Ute tribes.

The Ute called the area "Uncompahgre," which was their word for "hot water springs." The town of Ouray was named after Ute Chief Ouray. Otto Mears was the pioneer road builder who built the toll road that would later become the Million Dollar Highway.

On August 28, 1875, a notice was filed for the townsite of Uncompahgre, a number of log cabins were built and in October a post office was established. By the spring of 1876, more miners made their way to the area, and the town was surveyed and formally incorporated in October 1876 as the town of Ouray. In January 1877, Ouray County was formed out of San Juan County, and Ouray became the county seat. At that time, the town had about 1,000 residents. In 1885, Otto Mears finalized his "greatest road" – the predecessor of the "Million-Dollar Highway".

Today, visitors to Ouray can enjoy a day of hiking, skiing, or just exploring the town, and finish the day with a soak in one of the five famous sulfur-free hot springs that are located in the city.

by Audrey Slater. Sources: <https://westernmininghistory.com/towns/colorado/ouray/>, <https://www.legendsofamerica.com/ouray-colorado/>  
Photo: Wikipedia

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who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

Psalms 1:1 ESV



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# Local Mountain News & Notices

## Obituary Dennis Sprecher

Dennis Jacob Sprecher passed away on June 29th at St. Mary's Hospital in Walla Walla, Washington. He was born on April 28, 1951, in Elgin, North Dakota, to Jacob and Pauline Sprecher. Dennis was raised by his aunt and uncle, Henry and Mary Kurtz, in Missoula, Montana. He proudly served his country in the United States Air Force during the final years of the Vietnam War.

After his service, Dennis dedicated over thirty years to his career at Coors Brewing Company, where he was known for his steady work ethic and quiet strength.

Following his retirement, Dennis and his wife, Melody, settled in Westcliffe, Colorado, where he fulfilled a long-time dream of building his own home by hand. During his retirement, he worked at the Custer County Landfill and served one term as president of the Centennial Ranch & Aspen Mountain Ranch Association (CRAMRA). He loved the mountains, the wide-open skies, and the peaceful life he created there.

In his later years, Dennis and Melody moved to Walla Walla, Washington, to be cared for by their daughter, Trina.

Dennis is survived by his beloved wife, Melody; his children, Trina McCoon and Chris Sprecher; and his step-sons, Stanley and Daniel Huff. He is also remembered fondly by his sisters, Irene and Carol;



his grandchildren, James, Jared, Justin, Katie, Zachary, Alexander, Tobias, Grayson, Nickolas, Cameron, Emily, Tony, and Elijah; and many extended family members and friends.

He was preceded in death by his sister, Dorothy, and his brother, James.

A memorial service to honor Dennis's life will be held on September 6th at 1:00 p.m. at Centennial Ranch, 1165 Kit Carson Rd., Westcliffe, Colorado. All who knew and loved Dennis are welcome to attend.

Dennis will be remembered for his quiet generosity toward his neighbors and the strength with which he lived his life.

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## Sugarfoot to Receive Colorado Country Music Hall of Fame Induction

To Family, Friends and Followers of Sugarfoot;

It is with humble pride that Jerry and I (a.k.a. Sugarfoot) announce that we will be inducted into the Colorado Country Music Hall of Fame on August 17 in Parker, CO. This event will take place at "The Wild Goose Saloon" at 11160 S. Pikes Peak Drive, Parker, CO, (advance tickets available on the club's website). The festival will also be live streamed on the Colorado Country Music Hall Of Fame's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Colo-Country-Music-Hallof-Fame>

I am thinking that this event will be simi-

lar to the ones seen on TV (CMA, ACM) etc., having Vocalists, (male & female), Duo, Group ) etc. , only on the state level.

The event runs from 2 - 6 p.m. MST on a Sunday afternoon and is open to the public.

We hope you can join us, either in person, or by watching on Facebook . We are very honored and excited to be receiving this award. Our thanks to the CCMHOF.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us by email (sjbrown043@gmailcom) or by text at 719-371-4527.

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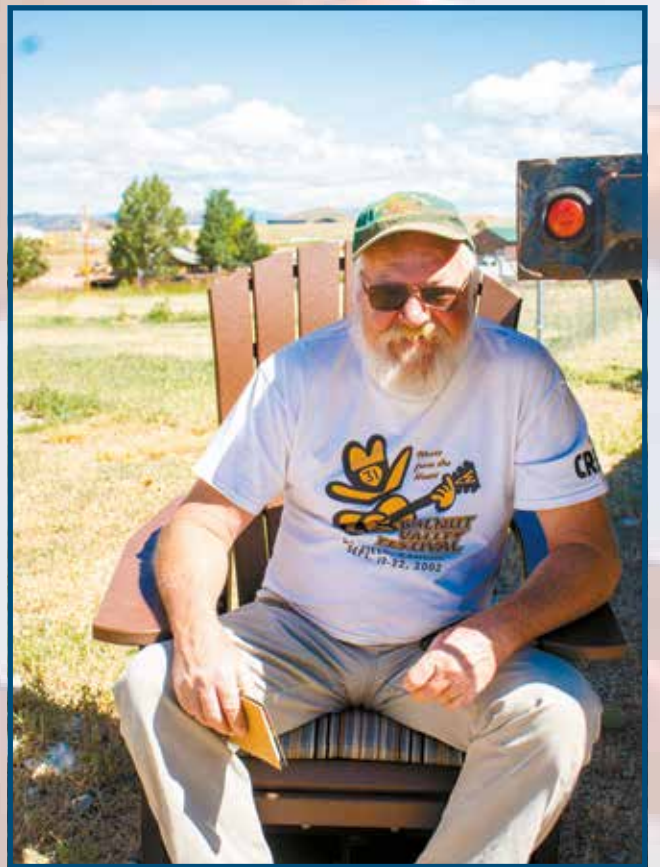
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## 2025, WESTCLIFFE, CO - PART 2



Sentinel photos by Rizza Edelman, Sips Scents N' Photographs; Layout by Katherine Brenchley



# A Day Camp in Paonia Shows How Far the Agenda to Sexualize Kids Has Gone

by Laureen Boll,  
Guest Commenter,  
The Rocky Mountain Voice

In the small, conservative town of Paonia, Colorado, with a population of just 1,500, a local organization is stirring debate with a new initiative aimed at children. The Learning Council, a tax-exempt nonprofit based in downtown Paonia, is hosting a “Sex Health Education Day Camp” for 10- to 13-year-olds on July 14–16.

Led by Alicia Michelsen, the organization’s executive director, the camp has raised eyebrows among some residents who question its motives and appropriateness, particularly given Michelsen’s history of pushing for controversial changes to local school curricula and a broader societal trend where adults seem increasingly focused on the sexuality of other people’s children.

### A Rejected Vision Fuels a New Initiative

Alicia Michelsen has been a prominent advocate for comprehensive sexual health education in Delta County. In 2021, she organized a demonstration in support of

a school district task force that introduced a new sex education curriculum to the Delta County School District 50J, emphasizing lessons on consent and the acceptance of sexual diversity.

According to a *Colorado Sun* article from May 2021, the school board unanimously rejected the proposed curriculum after a heated public meeting. The decision was made behind closed doors while supporters of the curriculum, waving rainbow banners, clashed

The camp’s curriculum, which includes topics like “Learning and Practicing Consent and Boundaries,” & “Sex, Technology, and Politics,” seems overly mature for pre-teens. Is this an agenda to sexualize children under the guise of education?

### The Learning Council’s Broader Agenda

The Learning Council, headquartered at The Hearth in downtown Paonia, describes itself as a community organization

Michelsen and Blake McClain, a young man described as “deeply caring about empowering the health and sexuality of our youth,” raises additional questions.

Why are adults so invested in the sexuality of other people’s children?

“open the door to empowering conversations at home.”

While one may defend this as fostering transparency and dialogue, it does not inherently resolve the deeper issues raised by the camp’s content, its organizer’s motives, or the broader societal trend of non-parents taking an active

## Why are adults so invested in the sexuality of other people’s children?

with opponents singing hymns and shouting Biblical admonitions from a pickup truck.

The rejection was a significant setback for Michelsen, who had invested years in the effort.

One wonders if the Sex Health Education Day Camp is Michelsen’s response to this defeat, a way to bypass the school board and directly influence young children.

supporting lifelong learning. Beyond the camp, it operates a Diversity Library featuring “queer and BIPOC authors” and “banned books.”

The organization also sponsored Delta Pride 2024, an all-ages event on October 27, 2024, where their booth offered information on how to obtain free abortion pills.

The camp itself, co-facilitated by

“This trend of strangers or self-proclaimed experts taking precedence over families in shaping young minds, strains the fabric of close-knit communities.”

The curriculum’s emphasis on topics like “cultivating authentic, loving relationships” and “nurturing healthy lives and sexuality” for 10- to 13-year-olds seems inappropriate for a small, family-oriented community like Paonia. Most parents feel these topics should be addressed at home, and tailored to their child’s maturity level and family values.

The camp’s Parent’s Night, scheduled before the event, aims to introduce facilitators and outline the curriculum, promising to

role in shaping children’s sexual education.

Parents may leave this introductory meeting with unanswered questions or feel pressured to acquiesce due to social dynamics or assurances of professionalism.

This format does not guarantee meaningful parental input or veto power over what their children are taught, especially when the camp

DAY CAMP  
see page 17

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# Colorado State News



## Colorado Not Delivering Much Bang for More Education Bucks

by Ari Armstrong,  
CompleteColorado.com

To hear some tell the story, the fundamental problem with education is inadequate funding. If only taxpayers would pony up more dollars, goes the line, students would excel. How much is enough? The answer from the teachers' unions is always "more."

Colorado's \$43.9 billion education budget is "far less than what school leaders say they need," *Chalkbeat* reports. Of course it is. There is no conceivable budget for which the response would not be "we need more."

But news from Mississippi and Alabama challenges the presumption that the fundamental issue is funding. Methodology seems to be more important. In other words, teachers actually teaching students more consistently makes a big difference.

### The Colorado advantage

Colorado spends \$16,410 per student for 2025, according to World Population Review. This roughly lines up with estimates from the Colorado Department of Education of \$15,752 per student for the 2023–24 school year. Mississippi, by contrast, spends \$12,394, while Alabama spends \$13,461. Of course both those states have lower costs of living. Still, it's hard to argue that students in those states have a big spending advantage.

Colorado has a big advantage in parents' education, with 44% of the population sporting a bachelor's degree or higher. By contrast, the figure is 25% for Mississippi and 27% for Alabama.

Colorado also has a huge advantage in poverty rates. Colorado has one of the lowest poverty rates in the nation at 9.3% (looking at 2023 numbers). Mississippi has nearly double that rate at 18%, while Alabama comes in at nearly 16%.

Given these figures, you'd expect Colorado students to radically outperform students from Mississippi

and Alabama on standardized tests. What we find instead is that Colorado students do score better, but not by much.

If we look at results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the "Nation's Report Card," we find the following average scores for fourth grade math for 2024: Colorado 239, Mississippi 239, and Alabama 236. The NAEP considers a score of 208 here to show "basic" understanding, a score of 238 to indicate proficiency, and a score of 268 to show advanced understanding.

“...Mississippi teachers checked to see if students knew how to read and then taught them how to read. I know, it sounds revolutionary.”

### Dropping the ball

To emphasize the point: Colorado fourth graders are doing as well as Mississippi students in math and barely better than Alabama students. That should serve as a blaring siren that something is seriously wrong with the school system in Colorado.

If we turn to fourth grade reading, we find that Colorado students scored an average of 221. The numbers are 219 in Mississippi and 213 in Alabama. Again, Colorado fourth graders are barely doing better than students in two of the poorest states in the country.

Let's look at some of the details about those other states. "Alabama is the only state where 4th-grade math scores are higher now than they were in 2019, before the pandemic," *NPR* reported in March. The story focuses on DeKalb County. One factor is that students there "returned for in-person learning in the fall of 2020, well ahead of schools in

most places across the country" (during the pandemic). But another ingredient is the schools' embrace of math manipulables in lower grades over wrote memorization to foster intuitive learning. I'm a huge believer in this, having used things like counting blocks and fraction wheels with my son when he was younger.

What about Mississippi? As Tim Daly writes for *Free Press* (hat tip Tyler Cowen), "Mississippi has become the fastest-improving school system in the country." When the Urban Institute adjusted for demographics, Daly writes, it found Mississippi students at or near the top in reading and math for first and fourth grade. Daly points out that throughout the country "education spending has risen significantly over the past decade . . . but student outcomes have not risen." Something else is going on in Mississippi.

The 74 reports "there really was a 'Mississippi Miracle' in reading." That article cites another from Mississippi First, in which Grace Breazeale outlines key components of Mississippi's success: literacy coaches for low-performing schools, universal screening assessments, better communication with parents, stricter standards for advancing grades, and "scientifically research-based reading instruction" (i.e., phonics-based).

In other words, to a greater extent, Mississippi teachers checked to see if students knew how to read and then taught them how to read. I know, it sounds revolutionary.

If Colorado schools would get at least as serious about math and reading as Alabama and Mississippi have become, on top of the many advantages many Colorado students already have, just imagine what our students could achieve.

Please see: <https://completecolorado.com/2025/07/01/colorado-not-delivering-much-bang-for-more-education-bucks/>

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# Price Tag of Importing Wolves Blows Past Cost Sold to Voters

by Sherrie Peif,  
CompleteColorado.com

DENVER —The cost of Colorado’s gray wolf introduction program has already more than doubled from the original price tag offered up to help sell the plan, according to the state’s wildlife agency.

In 2020, voters narrowly approved a plan to forcibly introduce gray wolves into western Colorado. At the time, they were told that it would cost approximately \$800,000 annually, beginning with fiscal year 2023-2024 to both implement the program and reimburse farmers and ranchers for livestock lost to depredation.

However, according Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), that amount spent on the program over the last two years was actually \$3 million. The numbers came to light during an interim legislative committee hearing on Monday, where lawmakers got an earful on the rocky rollout of the wolf importation plan from ranchers, agricultural groups, as well as fellow elected officials.

“A depredating pack was known to have depredated in Oregon before they put them in Middle Park,” Tom Harrington, a cattle producer in the Roaring Fork Valley, told members of the Water Resources and Agriculture Review Committee.

Harrington was referring to the Copper Creek wolf pack, which was found to be killing livestock in Pitkin County to such an extent that CPW eventually euthanized one of the wolves.

A depredating Colorado wolf from British Columbia was also shot by

wildlife officials in north central Wyoming in March after the wolf killed several sheep. In April another British Columbia wolf was found dead in Wyoming, but details of its demise were not released by Wyoming Game and Fish, saying they only release the numbers of wolves killed legally in the state.

Each time, Wyoming officials have returned the wolves’ tracking collars to Colorado. Wolves are legally able to be shot in Wyoming in about 85 percent of the state. Only near the Yellowstone area is it illegal.

In May of 2023, Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon refused to help Colorado by sending any of its wolves, but he also predicted transplanting wolves to areas outside of their natural habitat would lead to exactly what is occurring.

“We have target population numbers, and reducing those numbers to support a translocation in Colorado may jeopardize those successful management plans,” Gordon told the *Cowboy State Daily*. “In addition, it is likely that Wyoming wolves may very well desire to return to their home ranges, once again putting them in danger as they would likely traverse unsuitable areas of potential conflict.”

In other testimony from Monday’s committee, Democrat Sen. Dylan Roberts, whose district includes a large swath of Colorado’s High Country, including Eagle, Summit and Garfield counties, told the panel: “This seems out of control. And that’s just with ten wolves introduced the first year and 15 reintroduced with illusions that we’re going to go up to Canada and get 15 more wolves.

And they’re going to have pups and this is going to continue, so \$3 million is going to be \$10 million in a couple years. It seems completely out of control, especially because we’re cutting from other things. I’m very concerned.”

Mesa County Commissioners have also chimed in, asking CPW to pause the wolf imports until a better plan could be put in place.

“How did we get here? How did the reintroduction of one species become so politically charged that science, practicality and partnership have taken a back seat? It is becoming increasingly clear that political agendas, not science, are driving critical decisions,” a recent letter from the county commission reads in part.

“We strongly urge the Commission to pause future wolf reintroductions until the core programs – communication, carcass disposal, depredation investigations and compensation are fully implemented, functional and demonstrably effective. It is unreasonable and irresponsible to continue adding wolves to the landscape when foundational components of the management plan are not in place and are failing the people they are supposed to support.”

The request was denied, and in fact, CPW Director Jeff Davis told the committee the agency is working with officials in British Columbia to bring yet more wolves to Colorado this winter.

Please see: <https://completecolorado.com/2025/07/03/price-tag-importing-wolves-blows-past-cost-sold-to-voters/>

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The demagogue is one who preaches doctrines he knows to be untrue to men he knows to be idiots.

H.L. Mencken

# Study Reveals How Many Cups of Coffee Are Needed to Shield Against Liver Disease

by Tyler Durden,  
zerohedge.com

Waking up for the London Stock Exchange isn’t complete without the daily ritual: **fire up the espresso machine**, grind those dark roasted Robusta beans, and 30 seconds later—**boom**—a **jolt of caffeine strong enough to skim a dozen Goldman**, UBS, and Bank of America notes. But **here’s the kicker**: *the morning rocket fuel might be doing a lot more than energizing you for the trading session.*

According to a massive UK Bio-bank study (<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-10991-7>), coffee—yes, even the decaf, instant, and ground stuff—appears to **protect against chronic liver disease (CLD)**.

**“Coffee consumption has been linked with lower rates of CLD, but little is known about the ef-**

**fects of different coffee types, which vary in chemical composition,”** researchers from the University of Edinburgh Centre for Inflammation Research wrote in the report.

Here are the **key takeaways** from the study, which found that compared to non-coffee drinkers, **regular coffee drinkers had a:**

- 21% lower risk of incident CLD
- 20% lower risk of CLD or steatosis
- 49% lower risk of death from CLD

**Dose-Response:** **“The maximal protective effect was seen at around 3–4 cups each day.** The findings were robust to excluding events in the first 5 years. **Drinkers of decaffeinated, instant, and ground coffee (including espresso) also had lower risks of incident CLD, incident CLD or steatosis, death from CLD, and, to a lesser extent, HCC, with ground coffee (including espresso) having the largest effect,”** the researchers found.

Researchers noted, **“This study agrees with previous cohort studies that generally report inverse associations between coffee consumption and CLD outcomes, including deranged liver enzymes, fibrosis, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma.”**

Biologically, coffee’s protective effect is plausible. Caffeine inhibits the A2aA receptor, which otherwise promotes liver fibrosis. Yet decaffeinated coffee was also protective, pointing to other active compounds like chlorogenic acid, kahweol, and cafestol—especially concentrated in ground coffee. These compounds have shown anti-fibrotic effects in animal studies, suggesting a multifactorial mechanism behind coffee’s liver-protective properties.

Please see: <https://www.zerohedge.com/food/study-reveals-how-many-cups-coffee-needed-shield-against-liver-disease>

## LEGAL NOTICES

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Custer County seeks sealed bids for Lot 11 Blk 1, Lot 13 Blk 1, Lot 1 Blk 2, Lot 1B Blk 9, Golden Arrow Valley, conveyed by quitclaim deed. Please submit your sealed bid to the County Clerk, Kelley Camper, located at 205 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe, CO, no later than close of business on July 29, 2025. All bids will be opened by the Board of County Commissioners on July 30, 2025.

Sealed bids must include:  
Legal description – Lot 11 Blk 1, Lot 13 Blk 1, Lot 1 Blk 2, Lot 1B Blk 9, Golden Arrow Valley

Amount offered for lot, minimum \$2,000.00 each  
Bidder name, address, phone number, and email address  
On the outside of sealed envelope, please reference “sealed bid for Golden Arrow Valley lots”  
Custer County reserves the right to accept or reject the highest bidder

First published: July 11, 2025  
Last published: July 24, 2025  
Sangre de Cristo Sentinel  
Westcliffe, Colorado

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## DAY CAMP from page 14

is already scheduled and the curriculum is set.

### A National Narrative Invades a Small Town

In a small town rooted in traditional values, The Learning Council’s camp represents a clash between local autonomy and progressive ideologies often associated with urban or coastal elites.

Initiatives like this prioritize national agendas—such as promoting sexual diversity or redefining social norms—over the specific needs and values of Paonia’s 1,500 residents. The involvement of figures like Michelsen and McClain, who seem to position themselves as more qualified than parents

to guide children through adolescence, amplifies this tension.

This trend of strangers or self-proclaimed experts taking precedence over families in shaping young minds, strains the fabric of close-knit communities.

The Sex Health Education Day Camp, though small in scale, has become a flashpoint in a larger cultural battle, revealing a growing divide over who is best suited to shape the moral and personal development of the next generation. I’m on the side of parents.

**Laureen Boll** is a long-term Douglas County resident, retired healthcare executive, and active champion of classical liberalism. As the founder and CEO of MeritFirst Solutions, she leverages over 20 years of experience in organizational strategy,

human capital development, and policy research to help businesses refocus on their core mission while fostering an environment where talent and achievement drive success. Laureen has served on the Board of Directors of the Douglas County Libraries Foundation since 2019, reflecting her commitment to community engagement and education. A Coloradoan since the 1970s, Laureen is a dedicated parent and advocate for individual dignity and academic excellence in K-12 education, and she is passionate about preserving the independent spirit and values of her beloved home state.

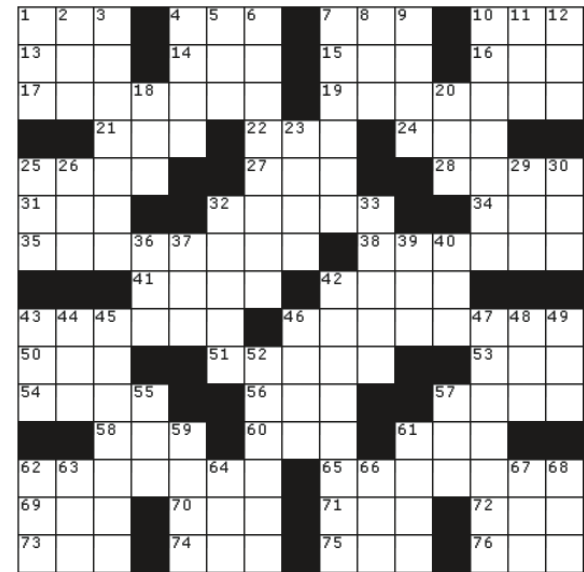
Please see: <https://rockymountainvoice.com/2025/07/08/boll-a-day-camp-in-paonia-shows-how-far-the-agenda-to-sexualize-kids-has-gone/>

Kids today lug around 40 oz Stanley cups like they're on a desert trek.

Meanwhile, we survived on a single sip from a germ-infested water fountain between classes and called it a day.



## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



### ACROSS

- 1 Liable
- 4 Poem
- 7 Representative
- 10 Touch an animal
- 13 Executive director
- 14 Bundle
- 15 Anger
- 16 Street abbr.
- 17 Upstart
- 19 Body of water in Jordan Rift Valley
- 21 Spacecraft detachment
- 22 Cow's chow
- 24 Distress call

- 25 Sense
- 27 American sign language
- 28 Missus
- 31 Insane
- 32 Afloat (2 wds.)
- 34 Often poetically
- 35 Infield hit
- 38 French brandy
- 41 Yellow metal
- 42 Three
- 43 Wife of Ahasuerus
- 46 Let the little \_\_\_ come to Me
- 50 In the manner of
- 51 Man shall not live by \_\_\_ alone

- 53 Gone by
- 54 What a clock tells
- 56 Samuel's mentor
- 57 Ratify
- 58 Noah's \_\_\_
- 60 Every
- 61 Attila the \_\_\_
- 62 Eye part (pl.)
- 65 One-celled animals
- 69 French "yes"
- 70 River (Spanish)
- 71 Catch some Z's
- 72 To be in debt
- 73 School group
- 74 No room for them in the \_\_\_
- 75 Tint
- 76 Teeny

### DOWN

- 1 American College of Physicians (abbr.)
- 2 Legume
- 3 Sub's weapon
- 4 Due
- 5 Tribe of Israel
- 6 Urbane
- 7 Samson's brain teaser
- 8 Before, poetically
- 9 Green legumes
- 10 The suffing of Christ on the cross
- 11 Adam and \_\_\_
- 12 British drink
- 18 Volume (abbr.)

- 20 \_\_\_ Jones Industrial avg.
- 23 Soviet Union
- 25 Madagascar franc (abbr.)
- 26 Serving of corn
- 29 Future Farmers of America (abr.)
- 30 And so forth
- 32 Speak without preparation
- 33 Pungent
- 36 Expression
- 37 Negative
- 39 Lubricate
- 40 The Creator
- 42 Siam
- 43 Basin
- 44 Boxer Muhammad
- 45 Region of Palestine
- 46 Tiny body part
- 47 Heavenly sign for Noah
- 48 Scrambled food
- 49 Not (refix)
- 52 Justification
- 55 Sea eagle
- 57 Take to court
- 59 Lotion brand
- 61 Faith, \_\_\_ and charity
- 62 Officer
- 63 Away
- 64 Old Testament city
- 66 Can
- 67 Respect
- 68 Visit

Key on page 7

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The Liberty Tree

Religion, The Constitution & Culture

State, National, & World

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.

Founding Fire: The Bible Blueprint Behind America's Birth

There's a reason the Founding Fathers often quoted Scripture—whether in public speech, personal letters, or the principles baked into the Constitution itself. They didn't see America as a new Israel in the theological sense or a replacement of God's people, but they recognized something sacred in the process of forming a nation under God. And whether they called it Providence, Liberty, or Natural Law, the roots ran deep into the soil of the Bible. In fact, the first five books of the Bible—the Torah—offer a striking blueprint that parallels the formation of the United States. We would do well to remember it and return to our ancient roots.

Genesis is the book of beginnings, where God makes a covenant with Abraham to establish a people with purpose. The American parallel? The Declaration of Independence and Constitution served as a covenant between the people and their government. Not a king ruling by bloodline or brute force, but a republic built on mutual agreement, trust in God, and inalienable rights. The Founders, like Abraham, weren't just breaking away—they were stepping into a destiny. Exodus tells the story of deliverance from tyranny. Israel was enslaved in Egypt; America was politically and economically in bondage to the British Crown. Just as Moses declared, "Let my people go," the Founders said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident." Liberty doesn't come cheap, but it does come with divine backing when the cause is just.

Leviticus is the law book. Israel wasn't just freed from Egypt to wander; they were given structure—laws, morals, and responsibilities that defined their identity. America followed suit. After the war, we didn't descend into chaos. The Constitution was written not to control the people, but to restrain government. It was a framework of ordered liberty grounded in timeless principles—not unlike Israel's commandments. Numbers is about counting and organizing. Israel took a census, assigned tribes, and prepared to enter the land. America, too, had to define its population, establish state representation, and manage westward expansion. Nation-building is never abstract—it's built on people, place, and purpose.

Deuteronomy is Moses' final charge. It's not new law—it's a reiteration and reinforcement. Before entering the Promised Land, Moses reminds Israel: obey God, honor the covenant, and beware the pride that comes with prosperity. Our early presidents echoed this. Washington warned against abandoning faith and morality. Adams said our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people. Jefferson feared what would happen if we forgot the Source of our liberty. So here we are. A nation with roots in faith, framed in freedom, now struggling to remember how and why we began. We don't need a new system. We need a return to the one that worked—because it worked *with* God, not in spite of Him. As recited in Psalm 33:12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance."

Bill Wilson  
Dailyjot.com Printed with permission.

"They Called Us Hateful": Colorado Parents See Their Story Reflected in Supreme Court Ruling

by Jen Schumann,  
The Rocky Mountain Voice

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that public schools must allow parents to opt their children out of LGBTQ+ instruction that conflicts with their religious beliefs, BJ and Brecken Jones sat quietly in their living room—stunned, relieved and vindicated.

"For years, we were treated like extremists for simply protecting our kids," BJ said. "Now the Supreme Court says we were right all along."

For this Boulder County family, *Mahmoud v. Taylor* wasn't just a legal case—it was a mirror.

Reading the Court's opinion, BJ and Brecken saw their own experience reflected almost line for line.

What they didn't expect was that their quiet effort to opt out—rejected by school officials, scorned by activists and ultimately buried in district archives—would one day echo from the highest court in the country.

**The flashpoint: A lesson they never saw coming**

BJ and Brecken didn't expect controversy when they enrolled their daughter in first grade at Superior Elementary in Boulder Valley School District. But in 2018, they received word that the school would be observing Transgender Awareness Week with a series of presentations and in-class lessons.

Brecken stayed home with their children during Transgender Awareness Week, but she sent BJ into the classroom to see what was happening for himself.

What they learned shocked them.

"They played an activist YouTube video called *"Queer Kid Stuff..."* all with a talking teddy bear and cute jingles," BJ recalled. "Very radical material, advocating for boys to wear dresses, kids to choose their own gender."

The teacher then instructed students to pick their gender—he, she or they—and share it with a partner.

"My daughter was six years old, and they were asking kids in class to choose their gender. It felt very manipulative," he said.

After the lesson, students were escorted to the auditorium for a live performance by a transgender activist theater group.

"In the musical, a girl bird didn't want to be a girl anymore," BJ said. "She goes to see Dr. Squirrel, who magically converts her into a boy on stage—and all the other birds cheer."

**The denial: Policy promises—broken**

The Joneses figured opting out of these types of lessons would be straightforward. Under both BVSD

policy and Colorado law, parents have the right to excuse their kids from any part of comprehensive health education—including sexual-ity content—if it goes against their beliefs.

But soon after they made the request, the school replied with a flat-out refusal.

**District letter denying the opt-out request**

**"...Unfortunately, we are not able to accommodate your request to proactively opt-out your students from [transgender] topics that might be offensive to your religious beliefs...."**  
-BVSD E-mail 12/3/18

"Unfortunately, we are not able to accommodate your request to proactively opt-out your students from [transgender] topics that might be offensive to your religious beliefs," the letter stated.

According to the Joneses, the school argued that the content didn't fall under health education at all because it was framed as part of an "anti-bullying" program—even though the lessons were sexual in nature.

**The backlash: Booed, doxxed and publicly shamed**

After filing a formal complaint with the district, the Joneses expected due process. What they received instead was a wave of hostility—first from the school board, then from activists, then from the local media.

A CORA request later revealed internal emails confirming that a redacted copy of their private discrimination complaint—protected under federal FERPA law—had been forwarded by BVSD's communications director to a reporter at the *Daily Camera*. The leak occurred after the Joneses first spoke publicly but two weeks before their case was scheduled to be heard at the next board meeting.

CORA-2021-11-19-Jones-R.BarberEmailsMar.12,2019-RESPONSE.pdf (page 8 of 230)

From: Randy Barber on behalf of Randy Barber <randy.barber@bvsd.org>

To: Robbyn Fernandez

Subject: Re: Supplemental Complaint & Evidence Attached

Date: Wednesday, March 13, 2019 6:51:15 AM

Thanks Robbyn! I only took the complaint and supplemental complaint, redacted and sent to Amy.

Tina and I spoke to her after the Board meeting and she really wasn't interested in the complaint that much. I'll keep you posted.

Randy

On Tue, Mar 12, 2019 at 7:10 PM Robbyn Fernandez <robyn.fernandez@bvsd.org> wrote:  
Here is the supplement to the original complaint. Plus a lot of other stuff. You only need the complaint part.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: BJ Jones <[REDACTED]>

Date: Sun, Jan 6, 2019 at 11:37 PM

Subject: Supplemental Complaint & Evidence Attached

To: Robbyn Fernandez <robyn.fernandez@bvsd.org>

**Email showing Randy Barber admitting he sent the redacted complaint to the press**

The language stunned them. Not only was the school refusing to accommodate a religious concern—it was doing so despite its own rules.

Brecken pointed to the contradiction.

"You would think it would be pretty easy not to promote transgenderism to elementary age students," she said. "However, their response confirmed that transgender propaganda is everywhere and they were clearly unwilling to honor our legal rights."

BJ asserted that they weren't trying to argue with what others believe. It was about having the space to live by their beliefs too. And their right as a family to say, "not for our child."

"We asked our school for our children to be left out of these sexuality lessons," he said. "This is our right under policy and under state law, but because it was transgender, they would not allow it."

"Top district officials leaked our private documents to the press the day before our appeal was to be heard by the school board," BJ said.

What followed was a boardroom unlike anything the Joneses had ever seen.

"We were mobbed by over 120 activists, including people from the ACLU, Out Boulder, and the local health department," Brecken said. "They jeered. They booed. They sneered. But most of all, they came to bully us because we wanted our 6-year-old to be protected from age-inappropriate transgender material."

The meeting was supposed to be about their legal right to opt out. Instead, Brecken said, it became a public trial of their family's faith.

Board members offered no apology. They doubled down instead.

**CALLED US HATEFUL  
see page 22**

# ‘Sanctuary’ Policies Saw 25K Illegal Immigrants Released from Jails to Streets

by S.A. McCarthy,  
The Washington Stand

A new study is revealing one of the greatest dangers that “sanctuary” cities and states pose to the public: allowing murderers and rapists to roam the streets. The Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) analyzed new statistics from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and found that between October 1 of 2022 and February 6 of 2025, over 25,000 illegal immigrants arrested for crimes in “sanctuary” jurisdictions were released back into the public, instead of being handed over to ICE. Of the illegal immigrants released, 72 were charged with or convicted of homicide.

Broken down by state, California led the way by releasing 13,025 illegal immigrants from jails (52% of the 25,283 released nationwide), while Illinois trailed behind at 2,946, followed relatively closely by Virginia at 1,601. Other states that released a high volume of illegal immigrants from jails include Massachusetts (1,324), Connecticut (1,153), New York (873), Minnesota (873), North Carolina (508), Pennsylvania (486), Maryland (384), Colorado (295), New Jersey (239), Kentucky (192), New Mexico (157), Wyoming (155), Indiana (139) and South Carolina (111).

Santa Clara Main Jail in California released a total of 2,981 during the studied period. Cook County Jail in Chicago released 1,804, and Fairfax County Adult Detention Center in Virginia released 1,151. Of the 30 jails that freed the most illegal immigrants, 18 are located in California. Jails in California also let 29 illegal immigrants go with homicide charges or convictions, and Illinois jails released 28. Other jails responsible for releasing illegal

immigrants with homicide charges or convictions were located in Arkansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

The study’s author and director of policy at CIS, Jessica Vaughan, told *The Washington Stand* that “sanctuary” policies — which largely shield illegal immigrants from prosecution or investigation on the basis of their noncitizenship and refuse or prohibit cooperation with ICE and other agencies in enforcing federal immigration law — often “attract” illegal immigrants to “sanctuary” jurisdictions.

“When a state or local government provides benefits and services to illegal aliens, it becomes well known among the migrant networks,” Vaughan said. “New York, Boston, and Denver are the latest examples, where we saw thousands of newly-arrived illegal border crossers flock to these cities under the Biden years, because these cities were offering hotel rooms, meals and other services.” She added that “criminal aliens also pay attention to local sanctuary policies, not so much for free hotel rooms, but because they know that they are not going to be turned over to ICE if they are arrested for a local crime, and they discuss this openly with reporters, local detectives and prosecutors.”

“Sanctuary” cities have proven to be an obstacle for President Donald Trump’s mass deportation program. Just days after Trump returned to the White House, officials in Chicago began working to undermine ICE raids and shield illegal immigrants in the city. When ICE raids hit Los Angeles, the City of Angels erupted in violent riots. So far, Trump and his deputies have filed lawsuits against

both Chicago and Los Angeles, two of the three largest “sanctuary” cities in the country, and the state of New York, where officials have implemented “sanctuary” policies.

“Trump has several options to try to discourage or block sanctuary policies, and he is exercising these options,” Vaughan told *TWS*. “He can bring lawsuits to try to obtain injunctions against these state and local policies. Those lawsuits will take some time to play out, but several have already been initiated, including most recently in Los Angeles.” She continued, “In addition, Trump can withhold certain kinds of federal funding to states and localities that interfere with immigration enforcement, such as by prohibiting cooperation.”

Vaughan noted that the Big Beautiful Bill “included a provision saying that certain grantees for law enforcement funding must comply with a provision in federal law that prohibits policies that block communication and cooperation with federal immigration agencies. Trump should also work with Congress to clarify the legal issues surrounding state and local cooperation with ICE.” She added, “I would also like to see a provision in the law to deny tax-exempt status for bonds issued by sanctuary jurisdictions to finance local spending projects, and one to allow victims harmed by sanctuary policies to sue the state and local government for damages.”

**(Editor/GG: Don’t forget, our local libs endorse this release policy. The safety of our citizens is of NO concern to them.)**

Please see: <https://washingtonstand.com/news/statistics-sanctuary-policies-saw-25k-illegal-immigrants-released-from-jails-to-streets>

# Wyoming Mine Inches America Closer to Unshackling Itself From China

by Audrey Streb

THE DAILY CALLER  
NEWS FOUNDATION

The U.S. is opening its first new Wyoming coal mine in decades to extract both coal and critical rare earth metals, inching the country closer to the Trump administration’s energy independence goals.

The Brook Mine opened on Friday and will soon begin extracting coal and various rare earth metals, which the U.S. currently relies heavily on China to supply. Though Former President Joe Biden placed stringent regulations on mining, President Donald Trump has signed a series of executive orders to unshackle the coal industry and has made moves to increase domestic rare earth mineral acquisition.

“This is America answering the call. We’ve become too dependent on critical minerals from countries overseas, most of all China,” Energy Secretary Chris Wright said Friday as he joined the mine’s developer, Ramaco Resources, for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. “We have these materials here in the United States. ... In Wyoming, we have two critical things together: coal, the biggest source of electricity on the planet, and rare earth minerals, critical to our national security and our economic security.”

Wright noted that stringent regulation forced domestic mining to shut down, though the Trump administration is working to revive it. The Biden administration cracked down on the coal industry, which helped lead to shuttered power plants around the U.S. and an increased risk of blackouts.

Rare earths are a group of 17 elements vital for producing several technologies, from smartphones to military targeting and surveillance systems. Despite their critical role, the U.S. relies on imports for 80% of its rare earth needs — mostly from China, which dominates the global rare earth market and controls 92% of the world’s refining capacity.

Notably, the Pentagon recently moved to become the largest shareholder of stock in MP Minerals, which oversees another rare earth minerals mine located in Mountain Pass, California.

DOE and Ramaco Resources did not respond to the *Daily Caller News Foundation’s* requests for comment.

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Please see: <https://dailycallernewsfoundation.org/2025/07/11/new-mine-inches-america-closer-to-unshackling-itself-from-china/>

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Deadline for all other submissions is noon on Monday, and can be emailed to [sdc.sentinel@gmail.com](mailto:sdc.sentinel@gmail.com)

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Please limit Letters to the Editor to 500 words or less.

Please include your name, address and phone number.

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# 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*

## New Concealed Carry Burdens Heaped on Law Abiding Coloradans

by Savana Kascak,  
[CompleteColorado.com](#)

DENVER—A state law in effect as of July 1st layers on new education and training burdens for obtaining and renewing permits for the carrying of a concealed handgun in Colorado, this despite data suggesting permit holders are already an exceptionally responsible and law-abiding group.

[House Bill 24-1174](#) passed along party lines in the Democrat-controlled legislature last year, and among other things significantly expands classroom training requirements to obtain a concealed handgun permit (CHP), to include a live-fire exercise and a written exam, with instructors “verified” by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

The bill additionally requires a “refresher” class for the renewal

of a permit, which includes the exam and live-fire mandates. Nowhere does the bill cite evidence of any issues arising from previous requirements, nor of CHP holders as committing acts of gun violence.

This is on top of the fingerprint-based background check already long required by law.

The in-person course, among other things, covers firearm handling, shooting and storage, as well as state laws on self-defense and purchasing, owning, or transporting a firearm. The course can be broken up into hourly increments if necessary.

Colorado concealed carry permits are valid for five years, and a CHP holder may renew their permit up to 120 days before expiration.

Despite a growing hostility towards CHP holders by the

legislature and anti-gun rights groups, Colorado continues to see an uptick in concealed carry permits. As [previously reported by Complete Colorado](#), from 2020-2024, 161,000 Colorado adults put themselves under the legal scrutiny required for carry permits, and another 146,000 renewed existing permits.

County sheriffs’ offices also saw an increase in concealed carry permits during the last few weeks of June. Douglas County, for example, saw a record 95 new permit applications, and 53 renewals in a single day as residents rushed to beat the July 1st deadline for the harsher requirements. A [CBS4 interview quotes](#) applicants referring to the new law as both “burdensome” and “unnecessary.”

David Kopel, research director at the Independence Institute\*

and adjunct professor of advanced constitutional law at the University of Denver’s Sturm College of Law, has shown that concealed handgun permit holders as a group are remarkably law-abiding.

During a 2022 debate over concealed carry in city parks, [Kopel presented data to the Denver City Council](#) showing that among Colorado’s 21 and over adult population, a CHP holder is “about 39 times less likely to be arrested than an adult without one.”

“Concealed carry is, by its nature, virtually impossible to detect, unless a person walks through a metal detector or is frisked by the police. Obtaining a concealed carry permit requires hundreds of dollars in fees and expenses, including for training, as well as the post-training hours necessary

to go through the permitting process,” writes Kopel. “The only people who bother to go through the onerous process are people who are so concerned about legal compliance that they spend significant resources just to obtain a card from the government allowing them to legally do what they could have done anyway for free, and with very low risk of being caught.”

The [Crime Prevention Research Center in 2024](#) estimated that just under 18 percent of the Colorado population 21 or older holds a carry permit.

*\*Independence Institute is publisher of Complete Colorado.*

Please see: <https://comple-tecolorado.com/2025/07/07/new-concealed-carry-permit-burdens-heaped-on-law-abiding-coloradans/>

## FBI Issues Report After Examining P320 Pistol Following ‘Uncommanded Discharge’

by Tom Knighton,  
[BearingArms.com](#)

“Guns don’t just go off.”

I’ve said that for ages. When there’s an intentional discharge of any kind, the person who owns the gun often claims it just went off, and we’ve all likely dismissed those claims because guns generally don’t.

But since 2017, I’ve followed the story of the Sig Sauer P320.

What started with a YouTuber finding that the guns would discharge if dropped, should they land a certain way, has turned into far, far more. We’ve seen a lot of cases where guns are going off in the holster, even, with video proof of it such as the one I [talked about earlier this week](#).

But it seems the FBI took a look at a firearm that “just went off” and just released a report on their findings, [according to Outdoor Life](#).

*“A report by the FBI’s Ballistic Research Facility that was recently made public has placed the Sig Sauer M18/P320 series of striker-fired semi-auto pistols back into the spotlight. The report was based on the BRF’s tests of a Sig Sauer M18 that had been issued to a motor officer with the Michigan State*

*Police. That pistol experienced an “uncommanded discharge” in July 2024, according to the document. The incident occurred while the gun was holstered, and in front of multiple witnesses. It joins a substantial list of similar reports, many of which have resulted in lawsuits.*

*The report was released [last] Monday after a public-records request to the Michigan State Police, the agency confirmed to OL, and distributed [last] Tuesday in a YouTube video. The results of the August 2024 report were inconclusive, but that hasn’t stopped a renewed flow of online speculation by people questioning the pistol’s design. At issue is whether the P320 and its variants are capable of an uncommanded discharge — meaning that the gun can potentially fire when there is no contact with or manipulation of the trigger.*

[...]

*With respect to the FBI report that was just made public, two observations stand out.*

*One is that the striker safety spring, which keeps pressure on a plunger that prevents the striker from moving forward, shifted position during one portion of the FBI’s test. If the spring were somehow dislodged, that could potentially negate that safety*

*feature. The other was a test where the primary and secondary sear locks were intentionally overridden. During one iteration of this test, which was performed with the slide and frame being pressed together and pulled apart by hand while manually releasing the sear, the FBI was able to cause several empty primed cases to fire.*

*The problem with the first issue is that the window the FBI cut into the slide (in order to examine the striker safety spring under recoil) is part of what retains the spring. By removing that material, the spring was able to move.*

*The second issue is less clear. The FBI’s description of their test where its agents applied pressure and torque to the slide and frame is vague. And so far, the FBI hasn’t responded to OL’s requests for comment on the test.*

*A spokesman for Sig Sauer confirmed the test document’s authenticity for Outdoor Life, and was independently obtained by OL from the Michigan State Police.”*

I get what OL is saying here, but there’s something they failed to note in their story on the report.

Here’s what I found explicitly spelled out in the FBI report itself:

“A reliable test could not be developed at the time of this document to test the effectiveness of the secondary sear notch. However, testing did indicate with movements representing those common to a law enforcement officer it is possible to render the Striker Safety Lock inoperable and ineffective at preventing the striker from impacting a chambered round if complete sear engagement is lost. It is important to note that the Striker Safety Lock, by design, is the last safety in line to prevent an unintended discharge as it is in place to protect against a secondary sear notch override.”

In other words, it’s entirely possible that things police officers do on a routine basis may cause the Striker Safety Lock to not work as intended, thus leading to an unintentional discharge while inside the holster.

Now, one big caveat: This was an examination of a single pistol. This one handgun was one that an officer carried that did go off, which means that what the FBI lab found may not be a systemic issue in and of itself. It might be. It may also be a one in 1,000 flaw that is missing from the vast majority of firearms, but creates problems for that one poor guy who gets the bad gun.

But this is an independent, third-party investigation that found that, yeah, sometimes these guns do “just go off.”

*Outdoor Life* notes that while many of the cases against Sig have been dismissed, they’ve lost a couple of them outright.

Sig has still refused to claim any responsibility and has gone on the offensive, accusing critics of being anti-gun, which hasn’t made anyone really happy. Now, I get that legally, saying they may have screwed up is a non-starter. I really do. While I’d like for them to do so, they’re probably not going to unless they want to give their lawyers an aneurysm.

But the attacks on critics were way too much.

I just want Sig to fix the darn guns. Most of their firearms work great. I have friends who love their P365s, for example, and a lot of people love their P320s.

Yet this report does seem to suggest that, yeah, there’s likely something to the claims of these just going off, even if there weren’t videos showing it happening.

Please see: <https://bearingarms.com/tomknighton/2025/07/10/fbi-issues-report-after-examining-p320-pistol-following-uncommanded-discharge-nl229215>

“The laws that forbid the carrying of arms are laws of such a nature. They disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes.... Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants; they serve rather to encourage than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man.”

- Thomas Jefferson, Commonplace Book (quoting 18th century criminologist Cesare Beccaria), 1774-1776

# Smith & Wesson Adds Bodyguard 2.0 to Carry Comp Lineup

by Duncan Johnson,  
ammoland.com

Smith & Wesson Brands, Inc (NASDAQ Global Select: SWBI), a leader in firearm manufacturing and design, announces today the release of the Performance Center® Bodyguard 2.0 Carry Comp.

When Smith & Wesson sought to redesign the original hammer-fired Bodyguard pistol, the goal was to deliver a new micro platform that provided unparalleled performance in a small and lightweight package. Key design enhancements of the Bodyguard 2.0 include improved ergonomics, increased capacity, and a crisp striker-fired trigger, all of which contributed to its recognition of various industry awards and its role in revolutionizing the micro-category. Now, staying committed to innovation, Smith & Wesson plans to build on the success of the [Bodyguard 2.0](#) series, with the introduction of a Performance Center model.

The Performance Center Bodyguard 2.0 Carry Comp, chambered in 380 Auto, is built with a ported 3.1-inch barrel, has a 10+1 capacity using a flush-fit magazine, and 12+1 with the extended option. It ships with Ameriglo® Protector Night Sights out of the box and is integrated



with Carry Comp series features to enhance the overall shooting experience.

The strategically designed PowerPort™ located at the end of the barrel, at the twelve o'clock position, diverts gas upwards, reducing felt recoil, which in turn improves overall control. The aggressive slide design includes increased serration coverage for easier manipulation, lightening cuts for weight reduction, and a sleek Performance Center Gray Armornite® finish.

This micro pistol has an overall height of 4-inches, a width just under

1-inch, and weighs in at 11.8 ounces unloaded, making it ideal for an everyday carry option. A 10-round compliant variant is available, and users can also choose between manual thumb safety and non-thumb safety models.

Superior performance, perfect balance – the Smith & Wesson Performance Center Bodyguard 2.0 Carry Comp. For more information, visit [www.smith-wesson.com](http://www.smith-wesson.com).

Please see: <https://www.ammoland.com/2025/07/smith-wesson-adds-bodyguard-2-0-to-carry-comp-lineup/>

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### Salida Gunshop Upcoming Events

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Saturday, July 19, 9am-2pm: Steel Challenge Fundamentals  
4:30pm: Ruck with us SGS-Hunt Club  
Friday, July 25, 9am-12pm: PEW PEW Pistol 4-8pm: Ladies Night  
Saturday, July 26: 7:45am-4pm: Ladies CCW  
Friday, August 1: 4-6:30pm: New Shooter Friday  
Saturday, August 2: 7:45am-4pm: CCW  
Tuesday, August 5: 5-6:30pm: Veterans After Action Coffee  
*Please call or go online for details and to sign up!*

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## Honduran Illegal Arrested by ICE

Press Release  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
July 13, 2025

This Honduran national Melvin Rodriguez’s U.S. rap sheet is too disturbing to overlook, with arrests for:

- Kidnapping/false imprisonment
- Domestic battery by strangulation
- Domestic battery
- Assault x2
- DUI
- Driving without a license

ICE officers at our New Orleans field office arrested him to protect the public.



Melvin Rodriquez

Press Release  
US Border Patrol El Centro Sector  
July, 12, 2025

This illegal alien was apprehended at the CA marijuana facility. Turns out he had

## Just One of the California Marijuana Facility Arrests



been sentenced to 7 years for kidnapping and attempted rape with ANOTHER prior conviction for attempted child molestation.

This felon was working at the same farm as 19 kids - one being 14 years old.

### Social Security Applauds Passage of Legislation Providing Historic Tax Relief for Seniors

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is celebrating the passage of the One Big, Beautiful Bill, a landmark piece of legislation that delivers long-awaited tax relief to millions of older Americans.

The bill ensures that nearly 90% of Social Security beneficiaries will no longer pay federal income taxes on their benefits, providing meaningful and immediate relief to seniors who have spent a lifetime contributing to our nation's economy.

“This is a historic step forward for America’s seniors,” said Social Security Commissioner Frank Bisignano. “For nearly 90 years, Social Security has been a cornerstone of economic security for older Americans. By significantly reducing the tax burden on benefits, this legislation reaffirms President Trump’s promise to protect Social Security and helps ensure that seniors can better enjoy the retirement they’ve earned.”



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**CALLED US HATEFUL**  
**see page 18**

One later compared objecting families to white supremacists and xenophobes. Another said she “felt sorry” for a child who testified in favor of religious opt-outs, wondering aloud if the girl had merely been parroting her parents’ “dogma.”

“This incident shook our family to the core,” BJ said. “We didn’t want to homeschool. We just felt backed into a corner.”

They made the hard decision to withdraw their children and homeschool instead.

“We had to completely reorient our lives,” Brecken added. “But we did it because we knew what was at stake.”

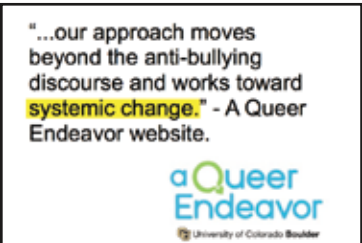
**The ideological blueprint:**  
**‘Queering the classroom’ by design**

Before making that decision, the Joneses took a closer look—and what they found convinced them this wasn’t just a one-time lesson, but part of something bigger.

“We found out that BVSD pays an activist group called A Queer Endeavor to push a covert operation called ‘queering the classroom,’” Brecken said. “They teach teachers how to intentionally weave sexuality topics into normal everyday curriculum, like math problems, essay prompts and even PE.”

Publicly available training materials confirm that assertion. The group, based out of the University of Colorado Boulder, describes its mission as working toward “systemic change” by embedding LGBTQ+ per-spectives into every corner of school life—not just health class.

**A Queer Endeavor slide stating its approach moves “beyond the anti-bullying discourse and works toward systemic change”**

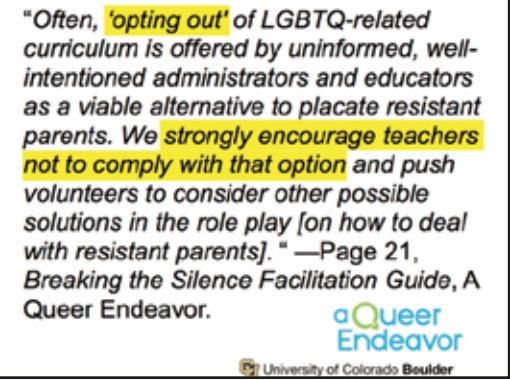


In one training guide titled Breaking the Silence, used by educators in Colorado and nationwide, A Queer Endeavor tells teachers how to respond to pushback from parents—and discourages any accommodation.



“We strongly encourage teachers not to comply with that option,” the guide reads, referring to parental opt-out requests.

**Page 21 of A Queer Endeavor’s training guide discouraging opt-out compliance**



Another slide instructs teachers to “disrupt” cisnormativity, heteronormativity and power hierarchies, posing questions like “Is the gender binary reinforced or challenged by this text?” and “How can you weave queer perspectives into a math lesson?”

**Instructional slide on disrupting heteronormativity**

To the Joneses, the intent was clear: bypass parents, embed ideology and punish those who resisted.

“They weren’t just teaching tolerance,” BJ said. “They were replacing one belief system with another—and calling our beliefs hateful.”

**The Supreme Court decision: A national win, a personal reckoning.**

On June 27, 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a 6–3 ruling in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, holding that public schools cannot force students to participate in LGBTQ+-themed instruction when doing so places a substantial burden on a family’s religious beliefs. The decision echoed the Joneses’ experience in

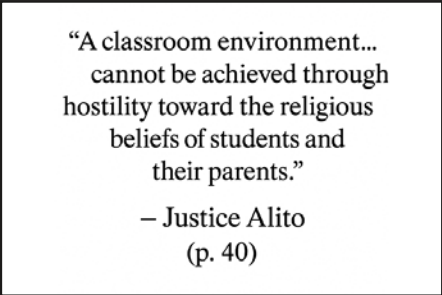
almost every detail. “It’s not just our win—it’s for all parents of faith who’ve been sidelined, silenced or called names for wanting a say in their children’s education,” Brecken said.

Justice Samuel Alito, writing for the majority, condemned school policies that deny religious parents the ability to shield their children from world view-based classroom instruction.

“The government cannot condition the benefit of free public education on parents’ acceptance of such instruction,” Alito wrote (p. 1).

He continued:

“These books present a very real threat of undermining the religious beliefs that parents wish to instill in their children... and the books exert upon children a psychological pressure to conform” (p. 25).



The opinion highlighted instances where school officials encouraged teachers to correct children who expressed dissenting views. According to Alito, instructing a student that his comment is “hurtful” after stating boys can’t become girls constitutes a coercive and unconstitutional burden on that child’s religious development (p. 26).

Justice Clarence Thomas, in a concurring opinion, called the Montgomery County curriculum “an impermissible attempt to standardize the views of students” and warned that schools were adopting new ideological programs without historical precedent or religious accommodation (p. 10).

BJ and Brecken said they were stunned by how directly the ruling mirrored what had happened in their own district.

“The Court said it’s unconstitutional to tell a 6-year-old her faith is hurtful. That’s what happened to us,” BJ said. Brecken agreed.

“We weren’t trying to ban books. We were just trying to opt out, quietly. And for that, they called us hateful. That’s what this decision changes—it says we’re not alone, and we’re not wrong.”

**“They weren’t just teaching tolerance,” BJ said. “They were replacing one belief system with another—and calling our beliefs hateful.”**

In a July 3 *Denver Post* column, Brecken and BJ stated the ruling is “a crucial win for religious liberty and a victory for true inclusivity by expecting that religious families’ beliefs don’t stop at the classroom door.” And a “very personal win” for their family as well.

The Court also dismissed arguments that religious families should just leave the public system. As Alito wrote:

“It is both insulting and legally unsound to tell parents that they must abstain from public education in order to raise their children in their religious faiths” (p. 20).

For Colorado families, the Joneses said the implications are immediate.

“Colorado schools don’t get a pass just because this happened in Maryland,” Brecken said. “This ruling applies nationwide. They can’t pretend anymore.”

**Final reflection: What this was always about**

For BJ and Brecken Jones, the Supreme Court ruling did more than validate a legal argument. It confirmed something far

deeper—that their faith, their parenting and their quiet request for respect never deserved the backlash they received.

“We cannot continue allowing educators to treat families like ours with such hostility,” Brecken said. “These are our children. We should be allowed to stand up and say something without being bullied and doxxed into silence.”

It wasn’t said with anger—but resolve.

Since leaving Boulder Valley School District, the Joneses say their children are thriving. Their daughter, now homeschooled, reads five grades above level, is a year ahead in math and ranked in the 98th percentile on standardized testing this year.

“They’re more confident,” Brecken said. “They’re not constantly second-guessing what they can say in class or whether

their faith is going to be seen as wrong.”

BJ said homeschooling has brought more unity to their home. “We know what they’re learning, and it aligns with what we believe,” he said.

But they still hear from families across Colorado—some too afraid to speak, others too weary to fight.

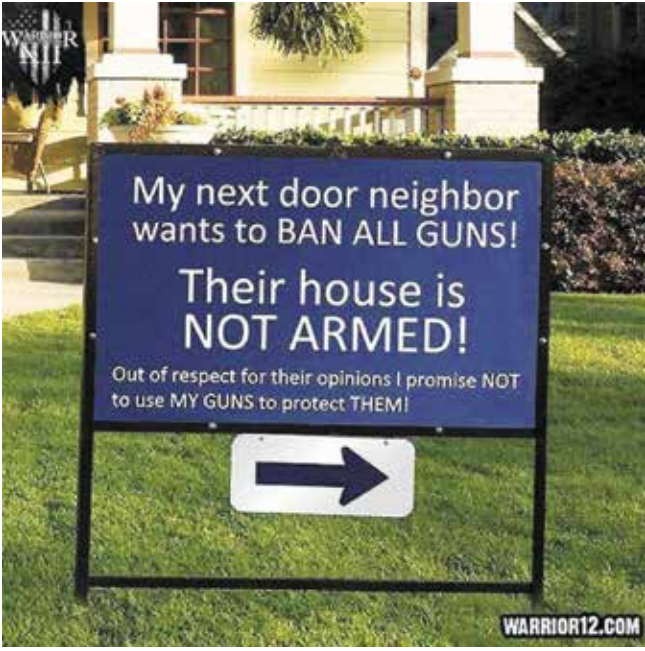
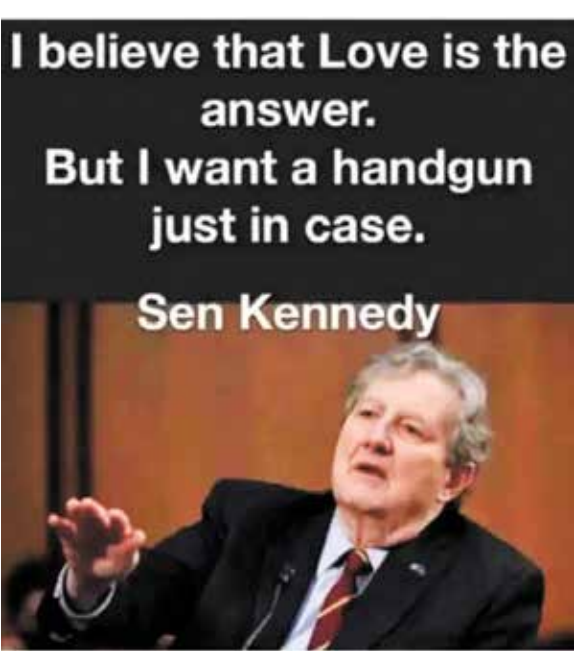
BJ said the lesson isn’t about politics or power. It’s about restoring the relationship between parents and public institutions.

“We were never trying to shut anything down,” he said. “We just wanted to be left out. That’s what real inclusion looks like—letting people live by their beliefs without punishing them for it.”

In *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, the highest court in the land agreed.

And now, as Colorado schools revisit their policies in the wake of that ruling, the Joneses hope they’ll finally do what the district failed to do back then—listen.

Please see: <https://rockymountaininvoice.com/2025/07/09/they-called-us-hateful-colorado-parents-see-their-story-reflected-in-supreme-court-ruling/>



# Ohio Man Gets Multiple Life Sentences for Heinous Triple Murders

Ohio man gets multiple life sentences for murdering three victims, directing others to dismember & bury two of the bodies following ICE HSI criminal investigation

Press Release  
ICE.gov

COLUMBUS, Ohio – A Columbus man was sentenced in U.S. District Court July 1st to three consecutive life sentences plus an additional 60 consecutive months in prison for murdering three victims as part of a narcotics conspiracy to rob a local marijuana dealer of drugs and cash. The defendant, who was also sentenced to five other life sentences to run concurrently to all other counts, had others dismember and bury two of the bodies to dispose of evidence of his crimes.

Following a three-week trial in December 2024, a jury found Larry J. Williams, Jr., 44, also known as “J Streets” and “J”, guilty of all 16 counts as charged against him in a second superseding indictment in September 2021.

According to court documents and trial testimony, Williams was a leader of a narcotics conspiracy in 2018 to rob a local marijuana dealer of drugs and cash in his residence, which ultimately resulted in the shooting death of another person within that house. To cover up for this murder, Williams murdered a man and a woman with knowledge of the first murder.

On June 27, 2018, defendants robbed at gunpoint a drug premises at 847 E.N. Broadway in Columbus. The co-conspirators planned and carried out the robbery to steal one of the resident’s marijuana and cash and then profit from the sale of the drugs; they recruited Williams to help in the robbery. During the robbery, Williams murdered a different individual present at the residence, Connor Reynolds, a 23-year-old from Grove City.

In August 2018, Williams then murdered Henry Watson, a 52-year-old from Columbus, to prevent him from providing information regarding Connor Reynolds’s murder to law enforcement.

On the same day, and immediately following the murder of Henry Watson, Williams murdered Tera Pennington, a 48-year-old from Columbus, to prevent her from serving as a witness to the previous crimes.

Williams then instructed individuals to clean the crime scene with bleach and other chemicals. Williams conspired to obstruct justice by concealing the bodies of Henry Watson and Tera Pennington. He directed others to dismember and remove the bodies from the crime scene and bury the victims’ remains at another location.

Williams used a residence at 121 Stevens Ave. as a drug premises to sell fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine and



allow addicts to use narcotics. On more than one occasion, users overdosed in the basement of the home and co-conspirators provided Narcan to revive the users.

A total of 13 defendants have been convicted and sentenced in this case.

“I’m extremely proud of the agents, partners and prosecutors who all worked so hard to deliver justice in this case,” said ICE HSI Detroit acting Special Agent in Charge Jared Murphey. “This case underscores the systemic violence and death that occurs when drug traffickers operate in our communities. ICE HSI remains committed to working with our partners to hold these offenders to account for their crimes.”

Co-defendant Patrick Foster, 41, of Columbus, was sentenced today to 70 months in prison. Foster directed three other co-defendants working for him to assist Williams in moving and disposing of two dead bodies. The co-conspirators jackhammered through the concrete in the basement floor of a residence on Sullivant Avenue owned by Foster. They then buried the dismembered bodies by pouring new concrete.

Kelly A. Norris, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Jared Murphey, Acting Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Detroit; Franklin County Sheriff Dallas Baldwin and Columbus Police Chief Elaine Bryant announced the sentences imposed today by U.S. District Judge Michael H. Watson. Assistant United States Attorneys Elizabeth A. Geraghty and Timothy D. Prichard are representing the United States in this case.

The joint investigation includes assistance from the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), Franklin County Coroner’s Office, Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC), U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF), the Columbus Division of Fire and the Pickaway County Sheriff’s Office.

Please see: <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ohio-man-gets-multiple-life-sentences-murdering-3-victims-directing-others-dismember>

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## IRS Finally Recognizes That the 1st Amendment Permits Pastors to Speak from the Pulpit

by Zack Smith,  
*The Daily Signal*

Surely, in today’s America, the federal government can’t punish pastors for preaching from the pulpit about how to apply God’s Word to everyday life.

And yet, for seventy years, the Internal Revenue Service did just that.

It used a provision of the Internal Revenue Code called the Johnson Amendment—inserted in 1954 by then-Senator Lyndon B. Johnson to stymie his political opponents—to chill free speech in churches.

The amendment uses nebulous language designed to prevent nonprofits from expressing views on political issues and candidates. The relevant language says that an entity will retain its nonprofit status only if it:

... does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.

What that means has been largely left to the IRS’s discretion. While the IRS has generally said it doesn’t prioritize enforcing this provision (more on that in a minute), the fact that it’s there wrongly chills pastors’ and parishioners’ First Amendment rights.

But even more troubling has been the IRS’s uneven enforcement.

For years, Democrat candidates have campaigned at black churches, often engaging in quasi-campaign rallies during worship services. For example, when President Joe Biden visited one service, the pastor declared, “we love you President Biden,” and the congregation chanted “Go Joseph.” Of course, no IRS enforcement action followed.

But on the other hand, when a pastor at a more theologically conservative evangelical church pointed out inconsistencies between Biblical values and the Democratic Platform during the run up to the 2020 election, the IRS found that this violated the Johnson Amendment and imposed a penalty on the church.

On top of that, the very next year the IRS denied nonprofit status to an organization called Christians Engaged because it “educate[s] Christians on what the [B]ible says” and the “[B]ible teachings [at issue] are typically affiliated with the [Republican] Party and candidates.” According to the IRS, this “disqualifie[d]” Christians Engaged from receiving nonprofit status. Although

the decision was ultimately reversed, the damage to the First Amendment had been done.

Fortunately, the IRS agreed earlier this month to interpret the Johnson Amendment more narrowly. It agreed that “the Johnson Amendment does not reach speech by a house of worship to its congregation, in connection with religious services through its customary channels of communication on matters of faith, concerning electoral politics viewed through the lens of religious faith.”

It’s now clear—although it should have been clear all along—that pastors can talk to their congregations about how to view certain salient political issues (like abortion) through a religious lens.

Sadly, the IRS only agreed to this concession as a result of a lawsuit filed by several churches and religious organizations. And the parties and IRS have asked the federal court hearing the case to enter an agreed-upon order reflecting the IRS’s new position.

That’s good news. And the order will protect the parties who brought this case. But a different IRS Commissioner under a different presidential administration could interpret the Johnson Amendment in a more speech-restricting manner against different parties since the statutory text remains. Congress should act and repeal it. And some members of Congress have proposed doing just that.

From the beginning, the Johnson Amendment was designed to stifle politically disfavored speech. After all, that may have been one of the motivating factors behind LBJ adding this statutory language.

But what should have been clear all along has now been made explicit: Neither statutory language nor the IRS’s interpretation of it can trump the Constitution. Americans have a First Amendment right to freely exercise their faith and a First Amendment right to freely speak their minds, especially on religious and political issues and how the two arenas intersect.

While the IRS has used the Johnson Amendment to penalize certain churches and stifle their speech, that no longer can be the case, at least for now. But regardless of whether a tax penalty is imposed, it’s important for pastors and parishioners to have the courage of their convictions and to speak the truth regardless of consequences.

Please see: <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/07/11/irs-finally-recognizes-that-the-first-amendment-permits-pastors-to-speak-from-the-pulpit/>



# FUNDRAISER FOR MOUNTAIN VALLEY SCHOOL AT THE WET MOUNTAIN VALLEY SADDLE CLUB FRIDAY EVENING, JULY 25TH

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## USAID Quietly Sent Thousands Of Viruses To Chinese Military-Linked Biolab

by Emily Kopp

THE DAILY CALLER  
NEWS FOUNDATION

—July 8, 2025

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) shipped thousands of viral samples to a lab in Wuhan over the course of a 10-year program even though it had no formal agreement with the lab in place, according to previously unreported documents.

The documents show that USAID funded the exportation of 11,000 samples from Yunnan Province, where some of the closest relatives of the COVID-19 virus circulate, to Wuhan, the epicenter of the pandemic, with no apparent plan for ensuring the samples were not misdirected to bioweapons and remained accessible to the U.S. government.

A \$210 million USAID public health program called PREDICT, steered by the University of California-Davis, collected viral samples in countries throughout the globe but lacked long-term storage when funding dried up, according to rudimentary plans in 2019.

USAID's sample dispensation plan for China is sparse: "No

need [sic] information from Yunnan. They were never an official lab partner for PREDICT. All samples they helped collected [sic] are sent to, tested, and stored in Wuhan."

The "lab" refers to the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV). WIV was a close partner of USAID contractor EcoHealth Alliance and a slated partner for a PREDICT-like program supported by the State Department. The lab has poor biosafety practices and ties to the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

One of the closest known relatives of the COVID virus is among the viruses sampled with USAID funding.

"Investigations involving USAID's former funding of global health awards remain active and ongoing," a senior State Department official said in a statement to the *Daily Caller News Foundation*. "The American people can rest assured knowing that under the Trump Administration we will not be funding these controversial programs."

The internal documents were obtained through a FOIA lawsuit brought by U.S. Right to Know, a nonprofit newsroom and public health research group.

The shuttering of USAID – which

was officially completed Tuesday – has ignited a debate about its net impact on global health. A study in *The Lancet* projected an association between a dropoff in USAID funding and 14 million deaths based on an epidemiological model.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement Tuesday that USAID spending has often undermined rather than strengthened American interests.

"Beyond creating a globe-spanning NGO industrial complex at taxpayer expense, USAID has little to show since the end of the Cold War," Rubio said. "Development objectives have rarely been met, instability has often worsened, and anti-American sentiment has only grown."

The now-defunct agency's connection to the Wuhan lab complicates its global health legacy.

"The USAID \$210 million contract for PREDICT should have included contractual terms that required all samples, or at least copies of all samples, be transferred to and stored by a US government facility," said Rutgers University molecular biologist Richard Ebright told the DCNF. "The PREDICT gift did none of this."

UC Davis did not respond to a request for comment. The State Department did not respond to a request for comment.

### Did USAID Fund COVID's Ancestor?

Many of the viruses stored at the lab in Wuhan may have been sampled with U.S. funding yet remain out of reach for U.S. government entities investigating the origins of COVID.

The samples were set to be preserved for testing – with human samples preserved for 10 years – the documents show. But the documents suggest that requirement was never incorporated into a formal contract with USAID.

The two scientists supervising the samples were: Ben Hu, a virologist at the WIV, who reportedly became sick with COVID-like symptoms in 2019; and Peter Daszak, a scientist who was debarred from federal funding after the U.S. government deemed him a threat to public safety for inadequate oversight of the research in Wuhan.

Hu and Daszak did not reply to requests for comment.

The documents show PREDICT contractors discussing viral samples taken from wildlife and stored in India, Liberia, Malaysia,

the Republic of Congo and China. Some of the samples were stored in virus-transport media (VTM), which allows researchers to store live viruses for later use in the lab.

"It's not rocket science to require a contract and supporting paperwork which establishes a relationship, testing protocol, and chain of custody, when one is sending out lab samples," said Reuben Guttman, a partner at Guttman, Buschner & Brooks PLLC who specializes in ensuring the integrity of government programs, in an interview with the DCNF. "In any scientific endeavor, you need confidence in your results. That requires paperwork to prove your methodology is sound."

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