

Colorado’s Auto Theft Capital Gives Green Light to Car Thieves

by Joshua Sharf,
CompleteColorado.com

“Wait, where’s my Jeep?”

I was walking back across Monaco Parkway in Denver from Monday morning services at the synagogue, when I noticed something was missing from my driveway. My 2005 Jeep Wrangler. There was no shattered glass, no tools, no parts, no note reading, “Sayonara, Sucker!” Just a missing Jeep. My wife’s Subaru Ascent was present and untouched.

Twenty years ago, I would have been in an uncontrolled fury. Heck, seven months ago I probably would have been at least slamming doors and swearing. But this had nothing of December’s drama of a drowsy driver drifting onto our driveway and drilling my wife’s

Outback, sending into the side of my Jeep. There was no flaming car and wreckage, just a blank space and some experience in what to do and what to expect.

What I could do was call the Denver police and the insurance company, and what I could expect was never to see my Jeep again.

In this, I was not alone. Colorado is now routinely one of the three worst states in the country per capita for car theft, and Denver-Aurora-Centennial is the seventh-worst metro area in the country, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) 2024 National Vehicle Theft Report. It rated 430 thefts per 100,000 people. This was actually an improvement from 2023, when Colorado was the worst state overall, with 583 thefts per 100,000 people. The Denver

metro area is still at just under 600 per 100,000 residents.

It wasn’t always this way

According to the FBI’s Crime Data Explorer, from 1985 until about 2000, Colorado averaged around 1,000 stolen cars per month. Increasing population and recession push that number slowly upward, to briefly touch 2,000 in 2006, before returning to the previous average for another decade.

Then, in 2014, the Colorado legislature, without any dissenting votes, passed a law to tie the level of criminal mischief for car theft to the value of the car stolen, while lowering the overall penalties. The sliding scale of punishment not only encouraged more theft, but it also encouraged thieves to pick on poor and working-class people,

stealing cheaper cars to avoid more severe punishment. (This was a double-whammy to those families, coming on the heels of the federal Cash for Clunkers program which removed hundreds of thousands of inexpensive replacement vehicles from circulation.)

And so, unsurprisingly, car theft began to rise again, this time taking only three years to reach 2,000 a month, and prompting newly-elected Governor Jared Polis to declare car theft a major priority for his administration. That worked so well that car thefts doubled again to 4,000 a month from 2020 to 2022, from the combination of loose enforcement and economic restrictions from Covid and the George Floyd/BLM Summer of Love in 2020.

AUTO THEFT
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BOCC: State Highway Funding Cut, New Vehicles for the SO, County Work Week Brought Up

by George Gramlich,
News and Commentary

The July 7, 2025 Custer County Board of County Commissioners meeting started at 9 a.m. in the meeting room at All Aboard Westcliffe. All three Commissioners were present: Chair Bill Canda and members Lucas Epp and Paul Vogelsong.

Before Commissioner Items, Canda talked about how this meeting and once a month going forward will be staff and elected officials reports where all those reporting are encouraged to attend so everybody would know the various statuses and issues from the individual departments. He also mentioned that he wanted to start discussions on returning to a five-day work week for the County.

In Commissioner Items, Epp said all the big money allocated to the improvements on Highways 69 and 96 have been cut by the state. He said it doesn’t look good in the future as the state is cancelling projects due to budget shortfalls. He is also looking at the County’s vehicle fleet as there are a lot of vehicles not being used.

In Elected Officials report, Sheriff Rich Smith was first in line. Smith started his report noting the

Sheriff’s Office (SO) doubled the amount of traffic stops and tickets written since last year. (*Good news!. Main Street looks like Daytona Raceway sometimes.*) After the Texas flood disaster, Smith said a Deputy will review safety with all our local camps. He asked everybody to sign up for “Everbridge”, the County’s emergency alert system.

Smith said since the armed confrontation in front of the *Sentinel* during the *Sentinel’s* Flag Day celebration, he will be having an all-day seminar on safety for all security members of our local churches.

With regard to the SO’s patrol vehicle fleet, Smith said his goal is to get rid of all vehicles with mileage over 100k due to maintenance issues with vehicles with that much mileage. He said that he has a total of seven new vehicles coming in with four or them being paid for by a small group of local citizens. (*Wow. Thank you.*) With regards to the big trial coming up for the alleged triple murder, Smith noted that the new District Attorney, Jeff Lindsey, was doing a great job and that the DA’s Office is running much better that before.

BOCC
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U.S. Geology Survey Helo Low Flyovers in Custer County Next Week



Helicopter with boom used for low-level Earth MRI survey of the Colorado Alkaline Belt. Public Domain.

SilverWest Airport manager, Clyde Butler notified the community on Wednesday, that a survey helicopter will be flying low altitude grid lines in Custer County starting this weekend. The flights will continue for up to two weeks. The helicopter will be operating between 300 feet and 1,000 feet. The survey is federally funded by the U.S. Geologic Service.

According to Angella Farr, Geoprecision Surveys, “C-GZSX has already started flying near Fremont County, and we expect the survey to [last] a few weeks.”

Press Release

RESTON, VA. — The U.S. Geology Survey will conduct low-level helicopter flights over parts of southern Colorado to map critical

minerals using airborne geophysical technology, beginning in mid-July. The airborne survey will be conducted through Fall 2025, weather and wildfire restrictions permitting, covering parts of Park, Chaffee, Teller, Fremont, Custer, Pueblo, and Huerfano Counties.

Flights may resume in Spring 2026 if needed.

The Colorado flights are part of a national effort to map the mineral resources needed to drive the U.S. economy and protect national security, searching below ground and in tailings from old mines. As directed by the Energy Act of 2020, the USGS has identified 50 critical

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No Change Since Waco
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There is no wisdom, no understanding, no counsel that can prevail against the LORD. / A horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory is of the LORD.
Proverbs 21:30-31

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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

Key Personnel

George Gramlich - President & Managing Editor
George.Gramlich.sdc@gmail.com

Fred Hernandez - Vice President
FredHer8@proton.me

L. Vass - Secretary and Asst Editor / Graphics Layout
sdc.sentinel@gmail.com

Katherine Brechley - Advertising Coordinator
SentinelAds1791@gmail.com

Office Support

Accounting Services
Bookkeeper.sdc@gmail.com

Yvonne Phillips
sdc.sentinel@gmail.com

Mailing & Delivery

Galen Studebaker

Sentinel Founders

Mike Hess
George Gramlich
Mary Seifert
Rob Canterbury
Katherine Brechley

Sentinel Honor Roll

Dan Bubis
Jackie Bubis
Carol Clemenson
Scott Clemenson
Barbara Napolitan

Contributors

Audrey Slater
Mtn. Photo in Logo
by Peggi Collins

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Wedn: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Fri: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Closed Mon, Thurs & Weekends

Subscription Rates:

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

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P.O. Box 179
601 Main Street
Westcliffe, CO 81252



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SangreDeCristoSentinel

Elon Musk's New Political Party a Non-Starter in Colorado

by Jon Caldara, Commentary
CompleteColorado.com

When a bromance ends, the world just becomes less beautiful.

Imagine if John Lennon and Paul McCartney never split up how many more timeless Beatles songs we'd have. If Abbott and Costello stayed together, we'd have a sequel to "Who's on First." And if Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were still around, train robbery would still be cool. It's all good stuff.

The breakup of President Donald Trump and Elon Musk might be the most heartbreaking of all. These two incredible disruptors, one who upended politics and the other who upended technology, could have been the Lennon and McCartney of governmental reform. Now they're just doomed to be lyrics for another lovesick Taylor Swift song.

They broke up over Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill." And in a way they both had it right.

Elon did not respect the art of the politically possible. Getting a super-tenuous Republican majority to pass, well, anything is near-impossible. Getting the bill through took mastery of intimidation, seduction and deal-making. Don't underestimate the Donald.

Likewise, Trump had no respect for Elon's alarm over debt.

Without true budgetary reform soon, the nation will run over a cliff, potentially ending this near-250-year experiment in self-governance. Politicians have no incentive to face this fiscally unsustainable path that will destroy us. It's enough to drive a rich guy who can do simple math nuts.

Rich guys can buy frivolous things. Instead of a super-yacht or a losing sports franchise, Elon is going to buy his own political party. It's been done before, and it almost never ends well.

I don't know how to send rockets to Mars, build a global satellite communications network, or create a revolution of robot cars. But I do know government doesn't run like private enterprise. The incentives are all different.

Diffused taxpayers have little political influence, especially the yet-to-be-born ones who will be stuck paying for our spending spree. Insatiable and ravenous concentrated special-interests hold most all power.

Politics is the art of addition, not subtraction. To build a political movement, and particularly to build a political party, people need to come together for a common cause, for something. Ross Perot's Reform Party experiment is instructive. His supporters knew what they didn't want, the usual

two parties, but they couldn't agree on what they did want.

A political movement must have a shared goal, a clear finish line, an end zone where you can spike the football. The original Republican Party wanted abolition. The gay movement wanted marriage equality. Elon Musk's America Party's purpose seems to be, "we hate both parties."

"We hate both of them" is a feeling, not a political goal. It is not a vision. If Elon wants a party that is fiscally conservative yet socially liberal and proven to spoil elections, he need look no further than the Libertarian Party. It's been around for half-a-century, legally set up and ready to roll in every state.

Elon, you took over Twitter and turned it into X instead of building a brand-new platform from scratch. This isn't much different.

The Libertarian Party is dysfunctional. Libertarians would rather win an argument than an election. That's a particular shame in Colorado given a small-l libertarian sensibility that runs through most voters here. Colorado is a pro-abortion, pro-gay, pro-weed state but when voting on issues we're not pro-tax, pro-regulation or pro-crime (it's just our progressive Democrat elected officials who are).

Like the Libertarian Party, the America Party, should it get off the ground, will not find much success in Colorado. The biggest hurdle will be Musk himself. Colorado's Trump haters, which is most of our swing voters, will never forgive Elon for his bromance and helping Trump win in the first place. The Trump faithful will never support a party formed by a man who publicly went after their hero. Elon's party will be disliked from both sides.

And thanks to the media chorus, most Colorado swing voters will also see his DOGE experiment as a net negative, needlessly disrupting all those wonderful bureaucrats, paper-pushers and scientists who exist to tell us the sky is falling, thus we need more scientists.

Coloradans are past political parties. They're not just sick of the two major ones. They're sick of party politics altogether.

When, not if, Colorado jettisons its two-party political primary system, independent candidates will become mainstream.

Jon Caldara is president of the Independence Institute, a free market think tank in Denver.

Please see: <https://complete-colorado.com/2025/07/16/elon-musk-political-party-non-starter-colorado/>

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17 Colorado Sheriffs Sign Joint Letter to Polis Asking for Action on DOC Backlog and Funding

Press Release via CrimeWatch.net

The impact of the DOC transfer backlog on FCSO and the community Sheriff Cooper, in conjunction with 16 other sheriffs from across Colorado, have written a formal letter to Governor Jared Polis calling for action to resolve the Colorado Department of Corrections’ (DOC) inmate transfer backlog and the inadequate state reimbursement for housing state inmates in county jails. In the joint letter, the coalition of Colorado Sheriffs addresses the public safety and fiscal difficulties that result from delaying the transfer of DOC-sentenced inmates from our county jails into DOC custody.

Based on the available data regarding the operating costs of the FCSO Jail for the year 2024, it costs approximately \$130.00 per day to house one inmate at the Fremont County Jail. With the state only reimbursing \$77.16 a day for one inmate in their backlog, that leaves a \$52.84 deficit that must be paid by Fremont County and ultimately, the taxpayer. “County jails were never designed—or funded—to house state inmates for extended periods,” stated the

Colorado Sheriffs. “Yet we’re being forced to expand capacity and stretch already limited staff to accommodate inmates who should be in state custody. This isn’t just unsustainable—it’s unfair to local taxpayers.”

The coalition of sheriffs are urging the Governor to take the following immediate actions:

- Accelerate and reduce the DOC transfer backlog by using emergency bed capacity or contracted facilities.
- Adjust the per diem reimbursement rate to reflect true county costs.
- Enhance the capacity of mental health treatment to effectively manage court-ordered evaluations and transfers.
- Meet with Colorado sheriffs to collaborate and identify and implement joint solutions.

The letter to the Governor was signed by sheriffs from the following counties: El Paso, Teller, Pueblo, Douglas, Lake, Weld, Cheyenne, Montrose, Gilpin, Otero, Fremont, Grand, Archuleta, Kit Carson, Conejos, Garfield, and Costilla.

Created July 21, 2025 @ 4:21 PM

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<https://crimewatch.net/us/co/fremont/sheriff/180579/post/impact-doc-transfer-backlog-fcso-and-community>



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Local Mountain News & Notices

Town of Westcliffe July Meeting: ALTA Beer Cave, WM Fire Easement Saddle Club Permits, TOW Trees

by Laura Vass

Westcliffe Town Mtg. Report

The July Westcliffe Town Meeting was called to order on July 15th.

After some changes to last month's minutes, the consent agenda was approved.

First up in Old Business was the request to rezone Lot 6 in Shadow Ridge from highway commercial to single family residence. This was approved.

In New Business, the first item was to consider a setback variance for the Wet Mountain Fire Protection District. The county has already approved the set back on county property. Fire Chief Coleman was there to explain the needed set back of 14 more feet toward the Road & Bridge property line for a 1,000 gallon LP tank that will power a new 80kW backup generator for the department. They also want to put a roof over the generator. This was approved.

Next was Consideration of a request to approve a modification of premises at Alta Convenience Store. (As background, when CF Altitude LLC (Alta) bought the gas station from previous owners, in June of 2023, they were able to get a transfer of the liquor license and have continued to hold that license. Last year they built a beer cave with several entries and refrigeration. But they did not attempt to get a permit from the town of Westcliffe until after the fact. When they did go before the town Board, they were denied because they had begun the remodel prior to getting approval. At that time, there was considerable backlash from the community and another liquor selling business as well, which perhaps should have been a separate topic since it was not a corporation creating a new business and asking for a new license to sell beer/wine but instead an existing business holding a license to sell beer already.)

Now, a year later, Alta has come back to the Board to request approval, so that the beer cave can be used as refrigerated storage and additional display that customers can walk in and out of. The Alta representative,

Kevin Coates presented his case as wanting to better comply with the State by having all the liquor in a designated area instead of having excess beer, warm on a palette in a different location in the store. He conceded that he is aware of the permit problem before.

Brian Cline, owner of Antler's Liquor, a few of his employees and another license holder came to the meeting to give their three-minute input. As, was the case last round, their argument seemed to center around the beer cave being a way for the competition to increase business which would, they speculated, decrease sales at the grocery store and two other existing liquor stores.

Mayor Wenke, after hearing from individuals, said that he has looked at the State liquor statutes and some of the case law and he cannot find where the position he took last year is supported by the court findings. (ie. any jurisdiction over the business's right to compete.) Mr. Wenke said he could not find any case law on the impact of (more liquor stores, expansion) on other businesses. Only cases and rulings on neighborhood impact. (Impact keeps coming, however.)

Alta representative Coates said CF Altitude bought the store which had the beer license and then Prop 125 passes. The ballot prop passed November of 2023 and became law in March 2023. (This created a new fermented malt beverage and wine retailer license, replacing the old license which was for convenience and grocery stores to sell beer only.)

Trustee Christie Patterson moves to table the discussion until next week, with a second and a unanimous vote. (The reasoning given is that by the August 19 meeting, they anticipate having a town lawyer in place.)

Under Complete Business Solutions (CBS) IT report, a plan to get more updates done, including a three-phoneline system,

TOW Mtg.
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Community Yard Sale Fundraiser for Texas Flood Victims

Press Release

Everyone in the Valley knows somebody affected by the devastating floods in Texas.

Let's show our love and support by linking arms in a community yard sale to benefit Texas, on Saturday, August 2nd from 8 a.m. to noon, bring your gently used items to the West Parking Lot of the Custer County Schools.

All proceeds raised that day will be donated to fam-

ilies affected by the floods through their vetted charitable organizations and boots on the ground in TX.

In the meantime, if you are grieving a loss and/or would like to support grieving families in Texas, please purchase one of our locally created Texas Strong Grief Workbooks. Created by local residents, proceeds will also go to families affected by the floods in our beloved TX.

<https://bit.ly/LoveTexas-Strong>

**Please note, the community yard sale organizer asks you to please stay with your items on August 2nd so you can take whatever you do not sell back home with you. The last thing we want to do is have to cut into the fundraiser's proceeds and have to pay to take unsold items to the landfill.

Contact kpenco29-cs@yahoo.com for more details.

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salidagunshop.com | 719-207-4285
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Lincolnparkpawn@hotmail.com
1 foot to over 1 mile, 75 different powders

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http://sangreshooting.com

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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.



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Premier Pest Control LLC
719-371-7404 ~ ppc16@privategarden.org
inspections, estimates, professional pest management
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Off Grid and Grid Tie
10 Hermit Lane. Silver Cliff 719-783-9666
email: pbailey@solarsolutions.com

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larryfinneydrilling@gmail.com

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Recurring Events

Mondays
10 a.m. Pickle Ball Silver Cliff Mem.Park (SCMP)
More info: 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 Library Community Rm., 209 Main St. Westcliffe
5 p.m. Post 170 Auxiliary mo. mtg (year-round) Cliffe Lanes
2nd and 4th Monday
6 – 7 p.m. Narcotics Anonymous
Community United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall.
Children Welcome. colobamanana@yahoo.com

Tuesdays
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.

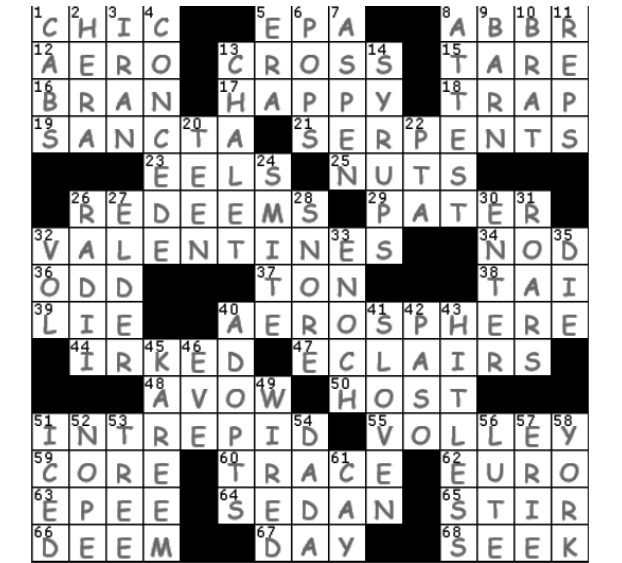
Wednesdays
8 -9 a.m. Veterans Coffee Social, Veterans and Caregivers welcome. West Custer County Library Community Rm., 209 Main St. Westcliffe
9:30 – 11 a.m. Line Dancers meet at United Methodist Church, 204 S 6th St. Call Debbie Underwood at (432) 553-7483.
9:45-11:45 a.m. The Posse Ladies Bible Study 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
6 p.m. Alcoholics Anonymous (CLSD) Big Book Study at St. Luke’s, 3rd & Rosita, Westcliffe. Martha at 719-371-1853.
6 p.m. Prayer Group Meeting. First Baptist Church of Westcliffe. Call 719-783-2498.

First Thursday of the Month
9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Comfort Quilters, FBC (log bldg next to the church) 417 S. 6th St. Contact Delores at 719-371-1451.
2nd Thursday of the Month
6 p.m. Custer County Republican Central Committee meeting. Ranchers Roost. The public is welcome See www.CusterGOP.com or Facebook page at https://m.facebook.com/custergop

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

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

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



LOW HELO from page 1

minerals essential to the U.S. economy and national security, with a supply chain vulnerable to disruption.

Instruments on the helicopter will measure variations in the Earth’s magnetic field and natural, low-level radiation created by different rock types beneath vegetation and up to several miles below the surface. This information will help researchers develop geologic maps in three dimensions. In addition to critical minerals, applications include evaluating natural resources such as water, preparing for natural hazards such as earthquakes and radon, and characterizing legacy mining areas.

The aircraft will fly along pre-planned fight paths relatively low to the ground at about 300 feet (100 meters) above the surface in some areas. Experienced pilots who are specially trained and approved for low-level flying will operate the aircraft. All

flights will occur during daylight hours and are coordinated with the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure accordance with U.S. law. The ground clearance will be increased to 1,000 feet (300+ meters) over populated areas. The flights will be based out of Fremont County airport near Cañon City, and will fly over the towns of Gardner, Rye, Colorado City, Beulah Valley, Rockvale, Coal Creek, Williamsburg, Florence, Penrose, Brookside, Lincoln Park, Cañon City, Park Center, Goldfield, Victor, Cripple Creek, Midland, Guffey, Cotopaxi, Coaldale, and Howard. Surveying over wilderness areas in the survey block are subject to access permissions with the relevant agencies.

The aircraft will be equipped with an elongated “boom” that extends in front of the main cabin that houses sensors. These scientific instruments are completely passive with no emissions that pose a risk to humans, animals, or plant life. No photography or video data will be collected. The

data collected will be made freely available to the public on ScienceBase once complete.

The flights could shift to other parts of the survey area as necessitated by adverse flying conditions.

The USGS has contracted with NV5, Edcon-PRJ, and Precision GeoSurveys to collect data.

The survey fits into a broader effort by the USGS Earth Mapping Resources Initiative, the Colorado Geological Survey, and other partners, to modernize our understanding of the Nation’s fundamental geologic framework and knowledge of mineral resources. Funding by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has facilitated coverage of such a large area. This effort is known as the Earth Mapping Resources Initiative, and it includes airborne geophysical surveys like this one, geochemical reconnaissance surveys, topographic mapping using LiDAR technology, hyperspectral surveys, and geologic mapping projects.

Custer Senior Center Menu

Monday, July 28 #25 French Dip Sandwich w/Au Jus Oven Browned Potatoes Mixed Vegetables Strawberries	Tuesday, July 29 #6 Baked Potato Broccoli w/Cheese Sauce Salad w/Lite French Plum, Fruit Cocktail Drop Biscuit w/Butter	Thursday, July 31 #62 Oriental Pepper Chicken Brown Rice Steamed Broccoli Spears Apple Fortune Cookie WW Bread w/Butter
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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

Christian Science 9:30 a.m. Worship <i>8 Bassick Place, Westcliffe</i> Church of Christ 9:30 a.m. Bible Study 10:30 a.m. Worship <i>818 Ohio Street, Silver Cliff 719/783-4601</i> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints 240 Ridgeline Dr, Westcliffe Pres: 719/214-4589 Cody Park Community Church 9:30 a.m. Sunday School ? 10:30 a.m. Worship Tues. 8:30 a.m., Prayer Mtg. Wedn. 7 p.m. Bible Study <i>0157 County Rd. 27A Cotopaxi 719/942-3526 (719) 942-3462</i> Community United Methodist Church 10 a.m. Worship <i>202 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe 719/783-2511</i> Cotopaxi Community Church 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 11 a.m. Worship 6 p.m. Wedn. Bible Study PastorSteveHolcomb@gmail.com <i>20326 Hwy: 50, Cotopaxi</i>	First Baptist Church of Westcliffe 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Fellowship 10:45 a.m. Worship <i>410 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe Pastor Josh Olsteen 719/783-2498</i> High Country Mennonite Church 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:45 a.m. Sunday School <i>103 N. Adams St, Westcliffe 719/783-9045</i> <i>Call Pastor Erv @ 719.429.0556 or Pastor Davie @ 719.371.3861</i> Huerfano Community Bible Church 10:30 a.m. Sunday Worship 7 p.m.: Thursday Bible Study <i>603 Leon Street, Walsenburg (719) 251-9053</i> Hope Lutheran Church 2 p.m. Worship 3:15 p.m. Bible Study <i>3rd & Powell Streets, Westcliffe Pastor Dan Kletke 719/783-2323 Lange Hall 719/783-2561</i> Living Stone Calvary Chapel Saturday evenings: 5:30 p.m. Sunday Mornings: 9:30 a.m. Outdoors Bring a lawn chair! <i>830 Bridge St., Canon City, CO Pastor Sean Meagher 719/276-0863</i>	Our Lady of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church <i>Diocese of Pueblo</i> 11 a.m. Sunday Mass 10 a.m. (2nd Tuesday of month) Mass 10 a.m. Wednesday Mass 5:30 p.m. Thursday Mass <i>109 S. 5th Street, Westcliffe 719/783-3507</i> Our Lady of Mt. Zion Catholic Church 11 a.m. Mass, 2nd & 3rd Sunday of month <i>210 S. 2nd St, Westcliffe 719/783-2491</i> Praise Community Church Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Praise & Worship 10:45 a.m. <i>215 N Pikes Peak Ave. , Florence 719/784-1184</i> St. Luke’s Episcopal Church 10:30 a.m. Worship & Eucharist 11:30 a.m. Fellowship 8:30 a.m. Prayer Service, Thursdays <i>3rd & Rosita Streets, Westcliffe 719/783-2477</i> St. Patrick’s Anglican Church 11 a.m. Worship 403 S. 2nd S., Westcliffe 925/339-0175 or 719/783-2500 Sacred Heart Catholic Church <i>Diocese of Pueblo</i> Saturday Mass 4 p.m. <i>Highway 69, Gardner Bldg. Mickey. 719/746-2037</i>	Sangre de Cristo Cowboy Church <i>Pastor: Mike Shields</i> 10 a.m. Sunday School 11 a.m. Worship Last Sunday of Month: Potluck at Noon sangredecristocowboychurch.com also on Facebook <i>60260 Hwy 69, Westcliffe 719/232-5372</i> Sangre de Cristo Fellowship 9 a.m. Meet & Greet 9:30 a.m. Service <i>120 Jerry Drive, Westcliffe 719/783-0903</i> Sangre de Cristo Seminary Chapel 10 a.m. Worship <i>6160 County Rd. 130, Westcliffe 719/ 371-1822</i> Valley Bible Fellowship 10 a.m. Worship <i>116 Hermit Lane, Silver Cliff 719/581-7572</i> Wetmore Baptist Church 9:45 a.m. Sunday School 10:45 a.m. Worship 1 p.m. Worship <i>Junction of Hwy 96 & 67, Wetmore 719/371-1230</i> Wetmore Community Church 9 a.m. Sunday School 10 a.m. Worship <i>699 County Rd. 395, Wetmore 719/784-0596</i>
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Send Church updates to sdc.sentinel@gmail.com
(719) 783-3360

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord”
1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 KJV

Christmas in July Fundraiser!



Join us
Sat. July 26, 2-5 pm
to support
Eagles Summit Ranch
Special Guest Speaker
Dave Roever

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Aug. 8 & 9, 2025

Pathfinder Park • 6655 State Hwy 115 • Florence, CO
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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.**

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Help Wanted

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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

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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.

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Events

July 03 -26, Sangres Art Guild "Shadows and Light" Art Show, Next week: "Wild & Crazy"
3rd Street Gallery, 59000 N. Hwy 69

Saturday, July 26 @ 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 25 Dinner 4:30 - 6 p.m.
Live Auctio 6:30 p.m.
Amish Mountain Valley School Fundraiser
@ the WMV Saddle Club, 90 CR 241, Westcliffe

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

July 26, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Beckwith Ranch Flea Market
64159 Highway 69 N, Westcliffe

August 2, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
WMV Rotary Club ROCKIN' the RANCH
All-Day Music Event Entry is FREE but DONATIONS GREATLY APPRECIATED. All proceeds benefit the Wet Mountain Valley Rotary Community Van Service. ALL LOCAL BANDS. Beckwith Ranch, 64159 Highway 69 N, Westcliffe

August 3, 12:30 - 3 p.m. (week 1)
KLZR High Peaks Summerfest. Music:Michael Hearn & Jimmy Stadler. @ All Aboard Depot

102 Main St. Westcliffe
August 3, 5-8 p.m.
KLZR Taste of the Valley

Next month:
August 8-9 Outdoorsmen Days--Florence
August 16 SilverWest Airfest
August 23 Blue & Brews Blues Festival

Community Services

Altitude Community Fitness
(719) 783-0750

American Legion Post #170
PO Box 424, Westcliffe, CO 81252
talpost170westcliffe@gmail.com
(719) 783-2462 westcliffepost170.org

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Dominic Edginton new VSO
(719) 618-8266 vso@custercounty.co.gov
Courthouse Bldg. (Rosita Rd. Entrance)

West Custer County Library
209 Main Street Westcliffe, CO 81252
(719) 783-9138
Tue. - Fri.: 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m..
Saturday: 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Wet Mountain Rotary Van Service
Limited Dispatch 719-783-2343

To Place an ad, please call 719-783-3360 or email sdc.sentinel@gmail.com.
The deadline for getting your information into the Classifieds is Monday at 4 p.m. for that week's edition.

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Wet Mountain Valley Outdoors Community Survey

Press Release

INTERESTED IN SHAPING THE OUTDOOR FUTURE OF THE WET MOUNTAIN VALLEY? Get started with 3 EASY STEPS:

Tourism and outdoor recreation use in Custer County is increasing every year. Information from this Community Survey will be used to create an Outdoor Recreation Plan to manage increasing outdoor recreation use in ways that maintain our beautiful natural resources, special outdoor experiences, and thriving economy.

1) Take the short survey below (takes 2-5 minutes)

2) Opt in for the longer survey at the end of the short survey for a chance to win an Outdoor Gift Basket (\$200 Value)

3) SAVE THE DATE for the initial Survey Results at the WMVO COMMUNITY MEETING August 6th at 5:30pm at Lange Hall

TAKE THE SURVEY:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WMVOShortSurvey2025>



Poetry in Custer County School

by Fred Hernandez

There is much unrecognized talent at the Custer County Elementary school. Teacher Mrs. Giste-Barnes instinctively felt this and has made an effort to bring it out into the public. Eager to generate interest among her students to participate in producing their creative work she submitted a number of poems to The America Library of Poetry. One such entry brought to the attention of the local paper is a piece entitled PLANES which is reproduced herewith. The author, Cole Scruggs, is a bright fifth grader whose dream is to someday be a pilot. Recently Cole received a letter from Mr. Paul Wilson Charles, Editor at The America Library of Poetry congratulating him and informing him that his entry has been officially registered at The Library. In fact he is eligible for the Grand Prize of \$500 should

PLANES



by Cole Scruggs

Practically supersonic
Light but huge and flies gracefully
Aerodynamic with wings
Never stops midair
Even gets used for war
Sometimes they are confused for a star.

his poem be chosen as the “Editors Choice Award” in September. In addition, Cole will receive a Certificate of Achievement honoring him as an award winning writer. His piece of poetry will be included in a book entitled “Excellence” to be published The American Library of Poetry in the Fall.

Congratulations to Cole Scruggs, up and coming poet from Custer County.



Cole and Morgan Scruggs
Courtesy photo

KIDS

Friday, July 25, 2025

Cobra Lily



Well, this week I found some interesting articles on carnivorous plants. I knew about the venus fly trap but now I am finding lilies that are carnivorous and may even be viable in our areas here in the mountains. So, here we go on another interesting adventure into plant life.

Cobra lily plants get their name because their flower is shaped like the hood of a cobra. The cobra lily is native to Northern California and Oregon, in the western United States, where the climate—while typically thought of as cool and humid—may be quite arid for many months of the year, more so than many carnivorous or pitcher plant genera could feasibly survive. However, the cobra lily has adapted and may be found near bogs, vernal pools, on forested rocky slopes (near snowmelt, especially), creeks, or near seeps with cold running water. It was first found in 1841 near Mount Shasta by a botanist named William D. Brackenridge.

The plant is carnivorous, which means it feeds on insects and other small animals. It attracts and trap insects with its striking appearance and slippery interior surface. It can grow up to three feet tall in the wild but typically reaches around 12 to 18 inches in cultivation. It is a cold-hardy plant and can survive in temperatures as low as 20°F. It is a slow-growing plant and may take several years to reach maturity. It can live for several decades in the wild.

Some Native American tribes have used the cobra plant in their traditional medicines. It is a low maintenance plant requiring little fertilization and watering. This sounds interesting to me I think I may try my hand at growing one of these plants.

by Audrey Slater. Sources: <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/houseplants/pitcher-plants/growing-cobra-lily-plants.htm>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darlingtonia_californica, <https://mentalbomb.com/cobra-plant-facts/#Fun>, Photo: Wikipedia

Sangre de Cristo Sentinel • Westcliffe, Colorado

CORNER

You, little children, are from God and have overcome them, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

1 John 4:4



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Custer County Students Attend Xplore Academy

Two students from Custer County School District attended a four-day Fire Fighting Skill Camp at Aims Community College in Windsor, Colorado, this month. Aims College offers a Summer Xplore Camp, a 15-week course to obtain a Fire Academy Certificate and many associates degrees in the Public Safety fields. The Windsor campus has the only climate-controlled Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) training and testing center in the state of Colorado.

John Tillotson, Battalion Chief, Training Officer and Junior Firefighter Trainer with the local Wet Mountain Fire Protection District, was there with the students.

Attendees Logan Nameth and Chris Carter, both incoming seniors, have an interest in firefighting for future, wildland and/or structure.

The four-day camp activities included repelling, extrication, fire behavior, fire attack for structure and car fires, and SCBA training. They also got educated on a ladder truck, flight helicopter and wildland and structure fire trucks.

Trainer Tillotson said, "They also had to do fitness tests similar to what career firefighters have to do in fire academy."

For more information on Aims College or Aims Summer Xplore Academy see <https://www.aims.edu/>

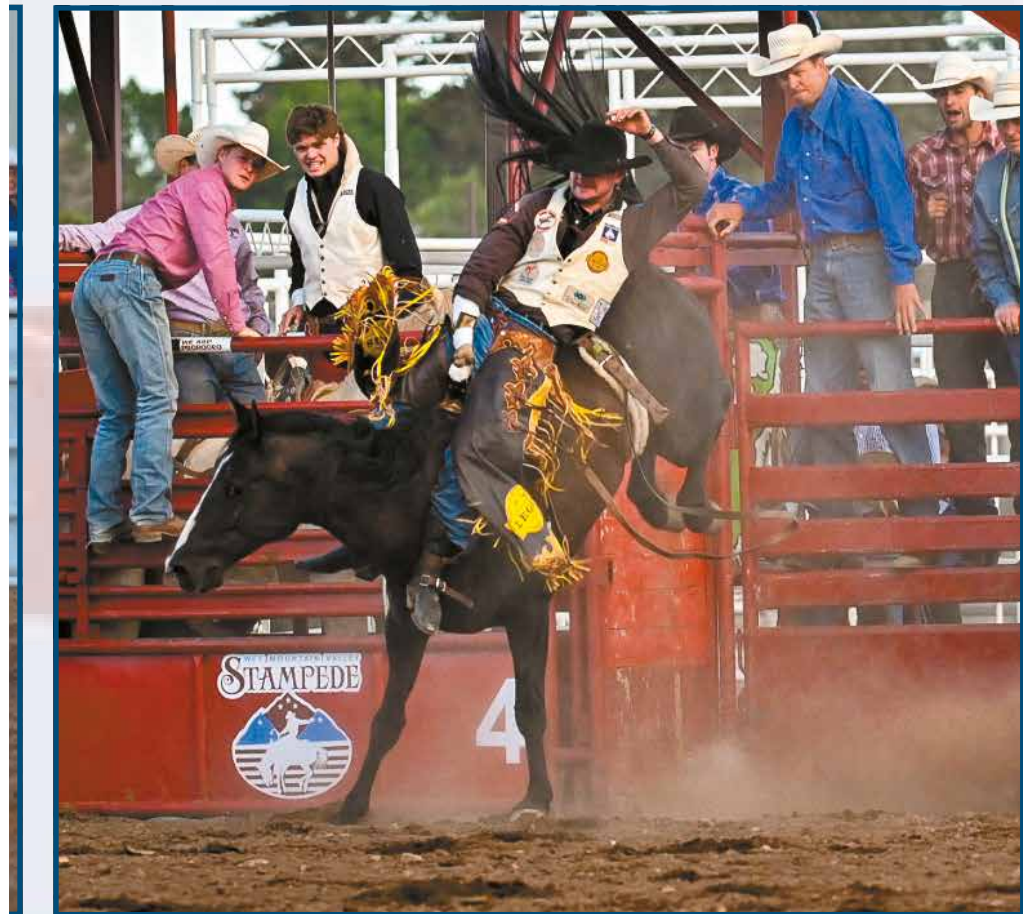


Photos by John Tillotson. Layout and story by Laura Vass

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Report Finds Colorado's Migration Is Down over 50% in the Last Decade, Raising Economic Concerns

by Kiara DeMare,
Colorado Public Radio

The state's population growth has declined by nearly 53% in the past 10 years, according to a new report released by the Common Sense Institute, a non-partisan research organization. The study measured net migration, which is the difference between people moving into the state and people leaving.

people moved to the area over the last decade. Colorado Springs also saw a dramatic decrease, at nearly 29%.

The report added that Denver County's unemployment rate is slightly above average as of May 2025, at 4.6%, while the national average is 4.2%.

It said that shifting preferences around living in high-density areas and remote work trends may be

from a 70% increase in inward migration to a major decrease over roughly the past decade.

The report points to the quantity of housing and quality of life as factors for the decrease. Housing affordability has been a **pressing issue in Denver** for several years.

And according to recent census data, building permits in Denver are on the decline as well, which can signal the decreasing supply in demand for residential housing.

Looking ahead, the report said there is the possibility for a gradual increase in net population, hitting its peak in 2028. That temporary growth could support employment in the service, construction, and tech sectors.

However, the report predicts that the growth won't last long; 2029 is projected to have a sharp decline, which could impact long-term planning for infrastructure, education, and housing supply.

It recommends that policymakers consider balancing workforce devel-

Net Migration Patterns in Colorado: 2015-2025

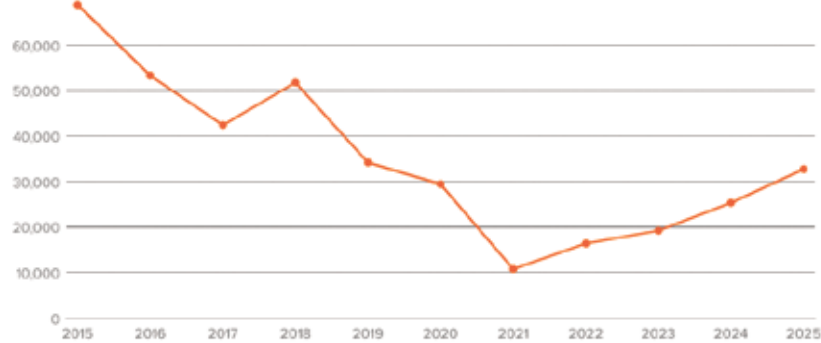


Chart: Shelby Filangi/CPR NewsSource:
Colorado State Demography Office, 2025 via Common Sense Institute

Nearly 40,000 fewer people moved to Colorado in 2025 than previous years.

The study ran from 2015 to 2025. It links the drop in migration to a number of issues facing Colorado, namely slowing economic growth, and suggests it could be due to "rising housing costs and reduced affordability."

The report suggests that this deceleration is linked to both a decrease in people moving to the state and an aging population, "both of which pose risks to the state's labor force capacity and overall economic dynamism."

Colorado's largest and fastest-growing population is people 65 and older. By 2030, the state will see about 40,000 retirees per year. As they retire, the amount of people joining the labor force decreases, marking concerns for talent shortfalls and the difficulty of meeting workforce demands.

The report said that job growth is projected to increase by only 1.2% this year.

Denver hit the hardest

Denver is "stuck in the slow lane," according to the report. According to the Denver Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA), 66% fewer

Net Migration Projections for Denver PMSA: 2024-2050

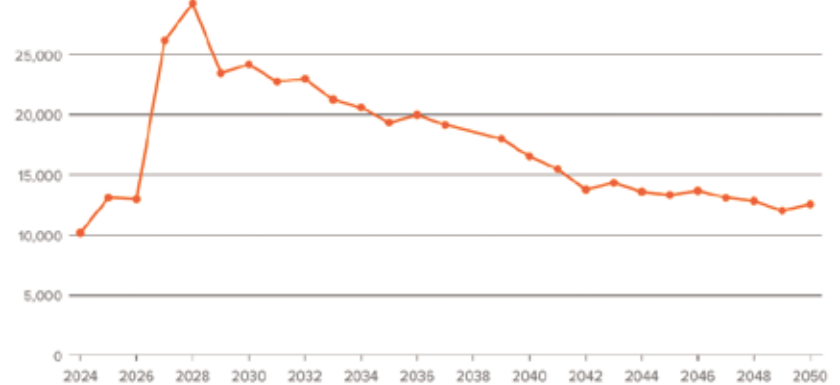


Chart: Shelby Filangi/CPR NewsSource:
Colorado State Demography Office, 2025 via Common Sense Institute

driving more residents to relocate to the surrounding suburbs outside of Denver, or leaving the region altogether.

The State Demography Office, which works with the national census, defines the Denver area as Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson counties.

The report found that the decrease in Colorado, in comparison to commercially and culturally similar cities, is startling. The Denver-Aurora-Lakewood area is the only such area in the nation reported to have a negative percentage change

oment, housing policy, and regional planning. "State and local policymakers will need to closely monitor these trends and address the root causes driving out-migration," it reads.

That decline is supposed to gradually continue across the state through 2050.

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Please see: <https://www.cpr.org/2025/07/15/fewer-people-moving-to-colorado-report/>

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Colorado State News



Rural Colorado District Takes Aim at LGBTQ Policy Protections, Seeks to Join Trans Athlete Lawsuit

by Ann Schimke,
Chalkbeat Colorado

This story was originally published by Chalkbeat. Sign up for their newsletters at ckbe.at/newsletters.

A rural school district in southwest Colorado on Tuesday removed nondiscrimination policy protections for LGBTQ people, following a Trump administration push to eliminate such safeguards.

The school board in the conservative-leaning Montezuma-Cortez district unanimously approved changes removing references to “sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression” from the policy. Also at Tuesday’s meeting, the board introduced a policy that would ban transgender students from joining school sports that match their gender identity — one that could permanently replace an emergency version adopted by the board in June.

Such moves are growing more common in school districts around the country, spurred by new federal policies and a charged political environment that’s elevating culture war issues to the top of the agenda in some communities. Montezuma-Cortez, along with two other Colorado districts, three charter schools, and a Board of Cooperative Educational Services are now seeking to join a lawsuit over the issue of transgender student athletes.

District 49 in the Colorado Springs area spearheaded the lawsuit in May, suing the state and the Colorado High School

Activities Association over policies that allow transgender youth to play on school sports teams that match their gender identity.

Court documents filed Tuesday indicate that the Montezuma-Cortez, Academy 20, and Colorado Springs 11 districts, along with Monument Academy, The Classical Academy, James Irwin Charter Schools, and Education ReEnvisioned BOCES, have asked to join as plaintiffs.

Sherri Wright, who represents western and southern Colorado on the State Board of Education and previously worked as a teacher in Cortez, weighed in against transgender girls on girls sports teams at the Montezuma-Cortez board meeting [last] Tuesday.

“We do not need to endanger our girls,” she said, citing the possibility of injury if cisgender girls and transgender girls play sports together.

There’s no nationwide data showing the number of transgender girls who compete on girls teams at school or the number of injuries that occur in such situations.

Trump has targeted transgender rights since his first day in office, but many legal experts say his administration cannot, on its own, exclude transgender people from federal anti-discrimination law and that Colorado law, which includes protections for LGBTQ people, supersedes school district policy anyway.

LAWSUIT
see page 23

Thornton Resolution ‘Reaffirms’ Local Control Over Zoning, Land-Law

by Savana Kascak,
CompleteColorado.com

THORNTON, CO

The Thornton City Council last week unanimously passed a resolution throwing their support to neighboring Westminster—along with five other Front Range Colorado municipalities—in an ongoing lawsuit against the state over home-rule authority.

Thornton, in the north Denver metro-area and with a population of around 145,000, shares a border with Westminster to the southwest.

In May, Westminster, along with Aurora, Arvada, Glendale, Greenwood Village, and Lafayette, filed a lawsuit against both the state and Gov. Jared Polis over the passing of two land use and zoning bills during the 2024 legislative session that the cities say infringe on their local authority guaranteed by the state Constitution. The cities are seeking an injunction against both the legislation and an accompanying executive order from Gov. Polis.

House Bill 24-1304, Minimum Parking Requirements, bars municipalities within a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) from enacting and enforcing minimum parking requirements for multi-family developments.

House Bill 24-1313, Housing in Transit-Oriented Communities, mandates local governments designated as “oriented

transit communities” to increase zoning capacities to enable state-defined housing density goals.

Governor Polis signed both bills into law in early May.

The Thornton resolution, introduced by Councilwoman Jessica Sandgren, denounces both bills, as well as an executive order from Gov. Polis’ threatening to withhold discretionary or competitive funding, such as grants, contracts, loans, or tax credits, from municipalities that refuse to comply with the mandates.

“Our resolution makes it clear: Thornton reaffirms its constitutional authority under Article 20, Section 6 to govern land use and zoning locally, based on community input and our own comprehensive vision for growth—not one-size-fits-all state mandates,” wrote Thornton Mayor Jan Kulmann in a Facebook post.

Kulmann also expressed her desire to send a copy of the city’s resolution directly to Gov. Polis.

“As Thornton’s mayor, I believe we know what works best for our residents—and that local elected leaders, working hand-in-hand with our community, are best positioned to lead thoughtful, sustainable development,” concluded Kulmann.

Please see: <https://completecolorado.com/2025/07/15/thornton-resolution-backs-home-rule-authority-over-zoning-land-use/>



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Colorado State News



Colorado’s Unelected Boards Hold the Real Power —and It’s Hurting Rural Counties

by Cory Gaines, Commentary,
Colorado Accountability Project,

Via Rock Mountain Voice

Regulatory Capture and Colorado’s Unelected Boards

I wrote a bit back (see the first link below) about how our state is increasingly turfing what ought to be legislative control to a series of unelected boards, how legislative laziness has effectively handed over control of our state to them.

Rulemaking and regulation might make things more efficient, it might enable higher policy output with less time, but it is not without cost. It’s one of those costs I want to cover today: policy by unelected board opens us up to control, not by the people, but by industry and (increasingly in Colorado) advocates.

This is due to cronyism in board appointments and also what might loosely be termed a form of “regulatory capture” (if you will allow the expansion of the definition to not just include industry but also well-funded advocacy groups).

Regulatory capture is when a political entity is co-opted to serve the needs of some minority political interest. One example is when an industry group (or group of major players in that industry) gains so much influence as to essentially control the board which regulates them. Another is when some advocacy group gains that influence in an area which they’re keen on.

In addition to making it so we the people are not running things via our accountable elected officials, per the Wikipedia explainer on the topic linked second below: “When regulatory capture occurs,

a special interest is prioritized over the general interests of the public, leading to a net loss for society.”

A commonly-cited example of this dynamic is when large players in an industry befriend a regulatory board and sway policy in such a way as to squeeze out the smaller players. They use the government as their cudgel in the game of survival that is business.

It’s not quite a canonical example, but I can give you a Colorado case that’s close. Back in 2024, Governor Polis, a group of big oil companies, and environmentalists got together behind closed doors to come to a compromise to avoid other ballot issue fights and rulemaking. The compromise they came up with is summarized in screenshot 1 attached, taken from the *Sun* article [third link] below.

Know who didn’t get a seat at the table? Smaller producers. I’m not an expert on the oil business, but I’d bet you my lunch that the big producers who got to meet with the governor can manage to meet the requirements they agreed to a lot more easily and cheaply than the smaller ones.

Shifting to look at how advocacy groups and special interests have co-opted the regulatory process in Colorado paints, in some sense, a worse picture than industry capture. I say this because when you look at advocacy groups interacting with rulemaking boards, especially in the era of Governor Jared Polis, you see the advocates operating on both sides of the table.

CPW is the easiest and most obvious example. The Center for Biological Diversity recently submitted a request for rulemaking to CPW in an

The structure of the deal includes an agreement that the legislature will pass two bills:

- One that will fund efforts to cap abandoned and low-producing wells to prevent them from leaking greenhouse gasses and set new emissions reductions targets in state law, including a 30% oil and gas industry reduction in nitrogen oxides by 2025 and a 50% reduction by 2030. The bill will also have new enforcement mechanism and require modeling of emissions affects on disproportionately impacted communities in the Denver area.
- One that will impose a new fee on every barrel of oil produced in Colorado that will fluctuate based on market prices but generate an estimated \$138 million a year. Eighty percent of the revenue from the fee will go toward transit projects, including possibly the creation of a new Front Range passenger system, while the rest will go toward public lands, specifically renewing areas that have been affected by drilling.

attempt to end-run around what voters (at least in Denver) have expressly rejected. The fact that the Center went to CPW’s board (stuffed with known animal rights activists and having more strings tying them to the Center than strands in a spider web) is exactly what I mean about working both sides of the table.

The activists on the board are sympathetic to and associated with the cause of the advocate on the other side trying to take institute policy via the board. If you want more context on that and another example, check out an op ed I wrote on this topic linked fourth below.

Another more recent example comes from the CPR article linked fifth below. Skipping the subject of the article (which is not too germane to the subject here), I pulled a quote:

“Other advocates want to see the state take decisive action. Elise Jones, the executive director of



of the legislature delegating to rulemaking bodies, is the reality that a Colorado for all means boards made up of Polis’ cronies and friends. Rather than true diversity of thought and location in this state, we have people who move in and out of the very advocacy groups that sit in front of the board at hearings to influence policy.

As I mentioned in my earlier post on the topic of regulatory boards (link 1 below), this is not how things ought to run in this state.

I again urge you to speak up about this. Contact your state senator and representative. Testify in front of these boards and call things like this out. Share information with your friends so that they can also get a sense of just how little influence over policy they now have in their own state.

References:

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- <https://www.cpr.org/2025/07/08/gas-powered-lawn-tools-colorado-law-enforcement/>
- Please see <https://rockmountainvoice.com/2025/07/22/gaines-colorados-unelected-boards-hold-the-real-power-and-its-hurting-rural-counties/>



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TOW Mtg.
from page 5

changing out software for emails, computer security, and backup methods.was discussed and passed.

Next on the agenda was Consideration of a request to approve waiving future light permits for events at the Saddle Club. Ileen Squire was not able to be at the meeting. and the item was tabled. But not before discussion. Mayor Wenke said several times that he did not want to do anything that would shut down the annual rodeo. Trustee Christie Patterson asked for approval to gather information on Dark Skies communities and their ordinances and put them into a presentation, something she is already researching. She also voiced that she did not find it appropriate for an organization to have so much power over the Town’s decision making. This was rebutted by Trustee Jagow who is part of the Dark Skies local group. He said that Dark Skies does not have power over the Board and they would just like to see the town enforce what it has already put in place. There were complaints about the Saddle Club not obtaining permits, and some questions as to whether an earlier agreement gave permissions for non-complying Light trespass for 11 days of events per year, was for one year or all years, and whether that eliminated the need for a permit during the rodeo. This morphed into a discussion of 1) tabling the talk and 2) Having a workshop to discuss revamping the light ordinance so that compliance is clear. Part of this clarity issue has to do with the Saddle Club getting advice on compliant lighting only to have local Dark Skies argue that it is not compliant. No date for the workshop was set.

Citizen Lisa Kelley had questions about weed killer being used by the town. She said after a Town Facebook post saying they would be spraying for weeds this summer, there were 100 plus comments, all negative. The town then issued a statement that included a reference to targeted areas. In the meeting, the response was that they do not spray near curbs and only do noxious weed areas of concern and only do the application twice a year. They can’t always give the name of the product because based on recommendation, the town changes those each year (to prevent resilience) and that they have used things such as Weed & Feed. The presenter asked if they could at least post the dates ahead of time and use the flags to warn people in the park areas. They do not apply it near curbs or water sheds and they can’t spray if there is wind or rain. Since it is weather/wind dependent, the maintenance guy said he was not sure if they could give exact dates. He also said they are using flags at several points but sometimes these blow away.

The Mayor said the Town would attempt to give a rough date and use the flags.

Karen Yager said closing the park for one day, might be a good idea. The maintenance guy said they try to do all the parks on the same day.

Discussion and approval of the Westcliffe Parks Advisory Committee (WPAC) July report was next.

Mr. Dembowski said there isn’t much shade in the park areas, which was also pointed out in the last presentation. Trees are dying (age related). There is need for tree planting to be a multi-year plan to keep a good distribution of ages of trees.

In ‘Discussion offering possible alternate budget concepts’ to support preserving the park’s budget, the Board will add this to the upcoming (no date yet) Budget workshop. The Board still needs to decide on policy for trees planted in memorial, among other things.

After one trustee noted that the volunteers on the WPAC did put a plan together which they presented at a workshop already and wondered what can be done for this year since some tree planting was budgeted for this year. Mayor Wenke, after more discussion, proposed that the Board at least vote on the two principles presented (not the finance and implementation) of 1) planting trees every year and 2) placing trees in two specific areas in WPAC’s plan that would provide shade to families at the parks near the playground and the proposed future playground, as funding allows. This was approved.

The Board discussed briefly the upcoming budget, reserves, how much should be there. They decided there is a need to revisit best practices on reserve amounts and dipping into those. (Basically, the “belt” is tightening and there could be tough budget decisions in August.)

Patterson also pointed out that a lot of the parks improvements that Mayor Wenke said “got done somehow” without changing the budget dramatically, were done through partnerships in the community and grant monies and reminded everyone that upkeep and maintenance of those improvements, which is costly, fall on the town.

With no comments from the public, the meeting was adjourned.

LEGAL NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Custer County Board of County Commissioners is proposing the expenditure of an estimated \$12,000.00 for Custer County Search and Rescue for reimbursement of registration fees for training of their core technical rescue members, to be taken from the Custer County Title III Secure Rural Schools Act and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, reauthorized by section 524 of P.L. 114-10, of 2015. (Public Law 114-10). These funds can only be expended in accordance with provisions made in the law.

Copies of the Fact Sheet that explains the proposals in further detail are available at the County Clerk’s Office for review.

This is the notice of 524 of the 45-day public comment period for the proposal. Comments must be submitted by September 8, 2025, to the Custer County Commissioner’s Office (County Annex Building, 615 Rosita Ave, Westcliffe, CO), by mail to PO Box 150, Westcliffe, CO 81252, or by email to bocccadmin@custercounty-co.gov.

Ordered and published by Lucas D. Epp, Vice Chairman, Board of Custer County Commissioners.

First published: July 25, 2025
Last published: September 5, 2025
Sangre de Cristo Sentinel
Westcliffe, Colorado

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.

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First published: July 11, 2025
Last published: July 25, 2025
Sangre de Cristo Sentinel
Westcliffe, Colorado

BOCC
from page 1

The County’s Treasurer, Virginia Trujillo, was the next presenter. She made an alarming statement that the Polis regime is considering eliminating the Senior Citizen Homestead Property Exemption savings in our annual property taxes! She said it might happen next year. *(Nice. Punishing our senior citizens to spend the money on the welfare state.)*

Our County Assessor, JD Heinrick was next. He commented that his new Assessor system is going real well. He said that the state has/will be raising residential tax rates for homeowners. The money would go to local schools. *(Polis is punishing landowners so the state can reduce its funding to schools.)*

Dominic Edginton gave the Custer County Veteran Services Office report. He said the VAG grant he gets has been cut in half (\$30 to \$15k). Good news is that the Custer County American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars both got \$60k grants from the VA. Dominic noted that 40% of the vets he sees are from Fremont County. He signed in 111 new grant applications in June.

The Human Resource Department’s report was delivered by its Director, Bob Smith. He has been reviewing the staffing levels of all the departments in the County to see where they stand. There have been four applications for the vacant Planning & Zoning Department Director’s position. The switch over from the in-house processing of the court’s Useful Public Service workload to a private administrator is looking good.

Vernon Roth gave the Finance Department’s report. The regular county audit process is doing good. He is getting

a bunch of RFP answers for hiring an outside consultant, on a regular basis, to assist our Information Technology (IT) Department.

IT’s report was given by John Mapes (Many of the presenters at the meeting gave John glowing reports on his assistance to them.) John said he is continuing to look at switching the County’s phone system to VOIP instead of the Centurylink service currently used.

Planning & Zoning was next. They did 19 septic inspections in June. They are continuing to work on the Golden Arrow subdivision (off of Oak Creek Grade) where there are a bunch of non-permitted occupations (three squatters) taking place. (P&Z said they need a Deputy when they go there.) The squatters were given 30 days to vacate.

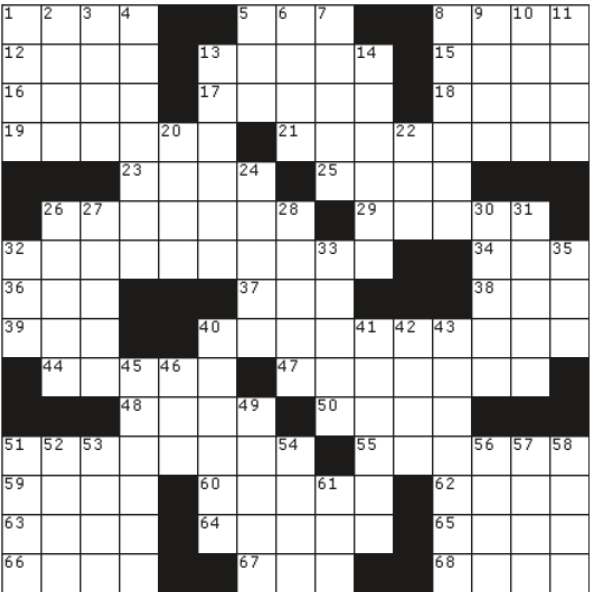
No big news at the SilverWest Airport. They are getting ready for the big air show. Their new website (which was done with help from the Tourism Bureau whom they gave thanks to) is up and running and being well received.

The Landfill reported their first half of year gross revenue was \$153k. They had to put out a fire on one of the trash truckers that dump there. *(Probably a lithium battery.)*

Recycling reported a big uptick in volume. Year-to-date gross sales were \$15k and they made 150 bales during that time.

In Public Comments, a County employee zoomed in and complained that Canda’s mention of looking at going back to a five-day work week was done without any County employee input. “No transparency” was mentioned. Canda responded that he brought up the subject just to get the discussion going.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

- 1 Modish
- 5 Government agency
- 8 Shorten (abbr.)
- 12 Air (prefix)
- 13 Symbol of suffering
- 15 Biblical weed
- 16 Cereal ingredient
- 17 With 32A & 67A, timely exclamation
- 18 Catch
- 19 Holy places
- 21 Vipers
- 23 Snaky fish
- 25 Cashews, for example
- 26 Saves
- 29 Pa
- 32 See 17A
- 34 Cain fled to this land
- 36 Strange

- 37 2,000 pounds
- 38 Thai
- 39 Fib
- 40 Atmosphere around earth
- 44 Irritated
- 47 Custard filled pastries
- 48 Declare
- 50 Entertainer
- 51 Brave
- 55 Salvo
- 59 Marrow
- 60 Outline
- 62 European monetary unit
- 63 Dueling sword
- 64 Type of car
- 65 Mix
- 66 Believe
- 67 See 17A
- 68 Search

DOWN

- 1 Taxis
- 2 Zeus' wife
- 3 Iraq's neighbor
- 4 Yield
- 5 Time period
- 6 What toast does, with “up”
- 7 Quaking tree
- 8 Affirm
- 9 Farm building
- 10 Imp
- 11 Representatives
- 13 Mountain cottage
- 14 Pancake needs
- 20 Adolescent
- 22 School group
- 24 Strike (KJV)
- 26 Radiuses
- 27 NT church leader
- 28 Saw logs
- 30 Come on stage
- 31 Thunderous sounds
- 32 Volume (abbr.)
- 33 First son of Cain
- 35 Casino roller
- 40 Takes in
- 41 Slob
- 42 El __ (Texas city)
- 43 Batter's bane
- 45 BB player __ Abdul Jabbar
- 46 First woman
- 49 Hooked up
- 51 Chilled
- 52 Uh-uh
- 53 Beech, e.g.
- 54 Daddy
- 56 Pear shaped instrument
- 57 A canal
- 58 New __ (city)
- 61 Key
- Key on page 8

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.

No, the Hardest Word

The story of Balaam and Balak in *Numbers 22–25* is one of the most ironic and haunting narratives in the Torah. It’s filled with drama, satire, and sobering lessons about obedience, temptation, and the cost of compromise. At the center of it all is one simple but difficult word: No. Balak, the king of Moab, was terrified of the advancing Israelites. Instead of preparing for war, he hatched a spiritual scheme—hire the infamous prophet Balaam to curse God’s people. Balaam had a reputation. He wasn’t a fraud; he had legitimate spiritual insight. But he also had a greedy, self-serving heart, and that would be his undoing.

When Balak’s messengers arrive with their offer, Balaam does something that sounds spiritual—he seeks the LORD. And the LORD gives a clear, unmistakable answer: *“You are not to go with them. You are not to curse the people because they are blessed”* (Numbers 22:12). End of discussion, right? Not for Balaam. When a higher offer comes, he dares to ask God a second time—as if maybe God hadn’t thought it through the first time. The LORD gives him conditional permission but sends an angel to oppose him. Balaam is blind to the spiritual reality until his donkey—yes, his donkey—starts prophesying better than he can. The entire scene would be comical if it weren’t so tragic. The prophet of nations can’t see the angel, but the beast of burden can.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks once noted, *“The hardest word to hear in any language is the word no.”* And that’s the heart of Balaam’s downfall. God already said no. That should’ve been enough. But Balaam wasn’t looking for obedience—he was looking for a loophole. That made him vulnerable to flattery, money, and ultimately destruction. Even after his failed attempts to curse Israel—all turned to blessings by God—Balaam couldn’t resist finding a workaround. He advised Balak on how to make Israel fall, not through curses but through corruption. Invite them into Moabite worship. Seduce them with idolatry and immorality. And it worked—24,000 died under God’s judgment until Pincas (Phinehas) the priest rose up in righteous zeal to stop the rot.

The lesson is sharp. God doesn’t waffle. He doesn’t change His mind to fit our desires. If He says “No,” it’s for our good. And when we try to negotiate with what He’s already made clear, we’re not being spiritual—we’re being rebellious. Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:37 echo this truth: *“Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything more is from the evil one.”* The lesson is not only about speech, but also integrity. It’s about aligning our hearts with God’s will, even when it’s hard. In a world allergic to boundaries and uncomfortable with absolutes, we need to recover the strength of “No.” Sometimes, “No” is the most loving word we can say or hear. When God says it, He’s not being harsh. He’s being holy. And in His holiness is our safety, if only we would listen the first time.

Bill Wilson
Dailyjot.com Printed with permission.

“ I’m Not Going to Lie ”: Louisiana Pastor Fired from Public Library Over Trans Pronouns

by Dan Hart,
The Washington Stand

Last week, a Christian pastor in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, found himself fired from his job at the local public library after he refused to use the preferred pronouns of a coworker who identified as the opposite sex. The firing occurred despite a growing legal precedent supporting the free speech rights of those who say they cannot be forced to utter language that they believe is wrong.

On July 7th, Luke Ash, who serves as lead pastor of Stevendale Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, had a conversation with a coworker at the East Baton Rouge Parish Library about an individual who was in training. After being informed that the female individual preferred to be called “he,” Ash continued to use biologically accurate pronouns in reference to her. When Ash’s coworker attempted to “correct” him into using the individual’s preferred pronouns, the pastor declined to use them. After being reprimanded by his supervisor for violating the library’s code of conduct, Ash **received notice that his job was terminated** on July 10th.

The issue of compelled speech surrounding transgender identities involving the usage of pronouns contrary to an individual’s biological sex has been at the center of immense controversy for at least the last decade. The issue reached a new level of cultural visibility in 2016, when Canadian psychologist and college professor Jordan Peterson released a series of viral YouTube videos that criticized a Canadian law that classified the refusal to use transgender pronouns as discrimination against those who identify as trans, saying that the law violated civil rights by compelling speech.

In the years since, numerous individuals have lost jobs over their refusal to use trans pronouns in **the U.S. and the U.K.** People like **Peter Vlaming**, a high school teacher in West Point, Virginia, who was fired in 2018 for refusing to refer to a student with trans pronouns, chose to fight back and filed a lawsuit against the public school district for wrongful termination over his religious beliefs not to use pronouns at odds with biological sex. Last year, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled in Vlaming’s favor, and the West Point School Board agreed to settle with Vlaming for \$575,000.

Despite the rising legal precedent toward freedom of speech and religion in states like Virginia, people

like Luke Ash are finding themselves swiftly out of jobs over an entrenched gender ideology in the public education and library sectors, even in red states like Louisiana.

“There were several things that were happening at the library to make me know that this was not a place

They’re very clever,” he explained. “They think it’s a sin to ‘ban’ books, and if you talk about banning books, putting a book on a list, then that’s well within their wheelhouse to call you a Nazi or whatever.

that was necessarily hospitable for a Christian or even a conservatively-minded person, but I just kind of kept my mouth shut and just tried to do a good job and respect everybody that came my way,” Ash **explained** during Tuesday’s edition of *“Washington Watch with Tony Perkins.”* “But, as Jordan Peterson kind of famously said in a thing that went viral, there’s a difference between telling me what I can’t say and then telling me what I have to say, and so that was the line for me at that point.”

Ash went on to state that his rationale for not using trans pronouns was simple: “I’m not going to lie. I cannot do it. I will not do it.”

The pastor further observed that his firing over trans ideology was in line with a thinly veiled pattern within the library of a bias against all things conservative.

“They’re very clever,” he explained. “They think it’s a sin to ‘ban’ books, and if you talk about banning books, putting a book on a list, then that’s well within their wheelhouse to call you a Nazi or whatever. But they’re absolutely limiting access to books by which books they decide to purchase for the library or even on the promotion of [the] books displayed. So there’s a continuum of access. It’s not just about banning a book on a piece of paper. If you can pretend that that book doesn’t exist, that’s even more effective.”

Ash also pointed out that despite the declining popularity of public libraries due to the rise in audio-books and ubiquitous internet access, libraries still largely act as a community and cultural hub in most cities, even as they emphasize LGBT Pride material for children and young adults, including Drag Queen Story Hours.

“[T]hey’re trying to pivot so that they can still continue to have a purpose for existing as a community center,” he noted. “In a lot of ways ... they are trying to replace the local church as a community center. The main library in Baton Rouge Parish has stained glass in it. Instead of doing Vacation Bible School, we have [the] summer

reading program. Obviously, we want our children to read, but we don’t want the library to be taking the place of the local church.”

Still, the pull toward holding down a secure career in a taxpayer-funded public library is something that is very appealing even for conservative Christians, the pastor acknowledged. But in the end, he underscored, God must be honored above all things.

“Jesus said, you have to serve God or mammon,” he emphasized. “And a lot of times there is a fork in the road, and we decide to compromise for the sake of mammon. And I think that we’re very good at being lawyers to ourselves and deceiving ourselves into saying, ‘You know what? What I’m doing is actually the more loving thing ... if I just concede on this thing, I’m actually being more loving.’ And I would just say no. The loving thing is to tell the truth. Jesus said that he’s the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the father except through him. And so if we back off of the truth, then we back off the visibility of anything at all — but especially Jesus.”

As to what advice Ash would give to others who may find themselves in his position, the pastor urged believers not to be afraid to engage the culture if the moment calls for it. “There are those who would say, ‘You’re going to have to choose a lane between being a culture warrior or a pastor or a culture warrior and a Christian.’ And I would just say, we don’t go out looking for a fight, but those who desire to live godly [lives] will suffer persecution. And whenever it comes time to fight, find a group of happy warriors and go to battle.”

Please see: <https://washingtonstand.com/news/im-not-going-to-lie-louisiana-pastor-fired-from-public-library-over-trans-pronouns>

Tulsi Debunks Top Obama ‘Russia Hoax Lies’ In Latest Bombshell Release

by Tyler Durden, ZeroHedge.com
—July 23, 2025

And here it is - DNI Tulsi Gabbard on Wednesday released more damning evidence against the Obama administration, which she says exposes how they “manufactured the January 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment that they knew was false, promoting the LIE that Vladimir Putin and the Russian government helped President Trump win the 2016 election.”

“In doing so, they conspired to subvert the will of the American people, working with their partners in the media to promote the lie, in order to undermine the legitimacy of President Trump, essentially enacting a years-long coup against him.”

According to Gabbard, “Here are the top Obama Russia Hoax lies debunked by today’s release.”

LIE: Putin and the Russian Government helped Trump win the 2016 election.

TRUTH: President Obama, former Director of the CIA John Brennan, and others fabricated the Russia Hoax, suppressed intelligence showing Putin was preparing for a Clinton victory, manufactured findings from shoddy sources, disobeyed IC standards, and knowingly lied to the American people.

LIE: The fabricated Steele Dossier was not used as a source in the Obama Administration’s January 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment of the November 2016 election.

TRUTH: Not only did CIA Director Brennan, FBI Director Comey, DNI Clapper and others include the Steele Dossier in the 2017 ICA, they overruled senior Intel officials who warned them it was fabricated and should not be used.

LIE: The Obama Administration’s January ICA was an independent Intelligence Community product, produced with apolitical analysis.

TRUTH: Obama ordered the Intelligence Community to create an Intelligence Community Assessment they knew was false, promoting a contrived narrative, with the intent of undermining the legitimacy and power of a duly elected President of the United States, Donald Trump.

Authored by Matt Margolis via PJMedia.ocm,

Barack Obama’s team is in full damage control mode after Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard declassified and released evidence that Obama and his top officials in his administration knowingly fabricated intelligence to push the false narrative that Trump was compromised by Russia—an operation designed to delegitimize his election and kneecap his ability to govern.

Together, the @ODNIGov records released on Friday, the @TheJusticeDept’s June 2018 report known as the “Clinton annex”

released earlier this week, and the @HouseIntel oversight report we released today confirm what many Americans have known: The Russia Hoax was a lie that was knowingly created by the Obama Administration to undermine the legitimacy and power of the duly elected President of the United States, Donald Trump.

On Tuesday, Barack Obama released a statement through a spokesman in response to the recent release of Russiagate documents implicating the former president in the effort to delegitimize Trump’s presidency.

“Out of respect for the office of the presidency, our office does not normally dignify the constant nonsense and misinformation flowing out of this White House with a response,” the statement read.

“But these claims are outrageous enough to merit one. These bizarre allegations are ridiculous and a weak attempt at distraction.”

But, Gabbard isn’t backing down.

In an appearance on “*Rob Schmitt Tonight*” on Newsmax Tuesday, she announced that her team will be releasing documents that directly contradict Barack Obama’s latest attempt to rewrite the history of the Russia collusion hoax.

“We will be releasing further documents tomorrow that will refute that statement,” Gabbard said, dismissing the statement outright as part of pattern of misinformation pushed by top Democrats and their allies in the media ever since the release of what she called the “manufactured intelligence document” in January 2017.

She didn’t stop there. “We will be pulling a whole host of statements that were made by the Obama administration, by Hillary Clinton, by senior Democrat

TULSI DEBUNKS
see page 20

100% of 2025 Job Growth Went to Americans Thanks to Mass Deportations

by S.A. McCarthy,
The Washington Stand

President Donald Trump’s mass deportation program is already having an effect on the job market, with gains going to Americans rather than foreign-born workers. The U.S. Department of Labor **announced** this month that “native-born workers have accounted for ALL job gains since January.”

In a recent podcast, economics editor and attorney John Carney **explained** that net job growth under the Biden administration went to foreign-born workers, but the Trump administration has reversed that trend. “When you are adding up all the people who gained and all the people who lost, the net increase in jobs is going to Americans,” Carney said. He continued, “Whereas, during the Biden administration, you had fewer Americans being

employed every month and more foreigners being employed. So the net gain was all going to foreign workers, to migrants of some sort or another.”

“Now it’s going to Americans,” the veteran economics writer observed. He continued, “It’s going to native-born Americans. That’s actually quite interesting, too: it’s not just going to people who are legal residents of the United States, it’s actually going to ... American-born people.” Carney added, “This is very important, again, because that’s fundamentally who the country is supposed to work for, for the people we have here. And it is working for them again, for us again.”

Carney further explained that wage growth is rising as more job growth goes to Americans. “One of the reasons wage growth gets bad is when businesses believe that they can just import new

workers. They don’t give people raises because they say, ‘You know what? I’ve got more workers in the pipeline. I can just draw people over the border,’” he said. “So, without that, they have to start bidding against each other, basically a competitive bidding war for American workers. And that’s what we’re seeing in the wage gains.” Carney noted that “the wage numbers are now outpacing inflation, which is, again, the reverse of what we saw under Biden, where inflation consistently outpaced wage gains.”

Even Wendy Edelberg, a senior fellow in economic studies at the left-of-center Brookings Institution, **admitted** in an interview that mass deportations will drive up American earnings. “As a result of this immigration policy, we will have negative net migration, which is to say more people leaving the country than entering the country this year for the first

time in many decades,” she observed. “We’re going to see stronger wage growth in some occupations, stronger wage growth in the agricultural sector, stronger wage growth for home health workers” due to the decreased share of foreign-born workers.

E.J. Antoni, chief economist at the Heritage Foundation’s Grover M. Hermann Center for the Federal Budget, told The Washington Stand, “Political pundits and commentators seem to forget that the labor market is a market, with outcomes determined by supply and demand. Mass deportations will include some unskilled labor, reducing the supply, and therefore putting upward pressure on price, which we call wages.” Antoni continued, “Again, these are simple market dynamics that apply everywhere, but people often pretend the labor market is somehow exempt from the laws of economics.” He added, “Of

course, many illegal aliens aren’t working at all, so they’re not participating in the labor market and removing them from the country has no direct effect on the wage rate for unskilled labor.”

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports have **demonstrated** that, under the Biden administration, nearly 90% of job growth went to immigrants, not to Americans, with an estimated 60% of new jobs going to **illegal immigrants**. The Trump administration’s deportation raids have inspired many illegal immigrants to voluntarily **leave** the workforce in the U.S. and self-deport, resulting in measurably **higher wages** for Americans in blue-collar jobs.

Please see: <https://washingtonstand.com/news/100-of-2025-job-growth-went-to-americans-thanks-to-mass-deportations>

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1776

The Second Amendment Corner

Liberty's Line in the Sand



2025

Airport Director's Killing by ATF Agents Show Nothing Has Changed Since WACO

by Tom Knighton,
BearingArms.com

The Waco disaster is one of a handful of cases where the federal government has shown it cannot be trusted blindly by anyone. It became a rallying cry, much like Ruby Ridge, and not without reason. The feds botched it, and people were killed who didn't need to be killed. They did it.

But after Waco, the ATF supposedly learned. We wouldn't have another situation like that ever again.

Only, we did.

Brian Malinowski ran the airport in Little Rock, Arkansas.

He had a good job, a loving family, and a hobby of selling guns. It wasn't his livelihood, so under the rules at the time, he figured he was in the clear. He would rent a booth at gun shows and sell some firearms. Did he make money? Maybe. Probably, even. But the rules for who had to have an FFL at the time said nothing about profit exclusively. It wasn't part of his livelihood, and that should have meant he was in the clear.

That means, as far as Malinowski knew, he was complying with the law.

The ATF, however, felt otherwise.

Malinowski is now dead, and his widow is suing the ATF. Over at The Gun Writer, Lee Williams took a look at the complaint, took out the legalese, and broke it down so we know exactly where the ATF screwed up.

And really, they screwed up by the numbers.

"Bryan Malinowski was a lifelong collector. As a child he started collecting coins, a hobby he carried into his adulthood. Several years ago, his father handed him down his gun collection, which sparked Bryan's interest in firearms. He became a gun collector and hobbyist."

In March 2024, federal regulations did not require an individual seller to hold a federal firearms license

(FFL) as a dealer in firearms unless that individual's principal objective in selling firearms was livelihood and profit.

At the time of his death, Bryan Malinowski was the highest paid city employee in the city of Little Rock as the Executive Director of the Little Rock Airport, where he earned an annual salary of more than \$260,000.

Bryan did not believe that by selling at gun shows he was engaging in conduct "with the principal objective of livelihood and profit," and therefore did not believe he needed an FFL to sell firearms at gun shows.

In December 2023, the ATF opened an investigation and began following Bryan to and from work and on the weekends, placing a tracker on his car, and surveilling his daily activities."

Bryan, however, was aware of this. The ATF had never reached out to him in any way. Agents had never spoken with him except a couple who interacted with him while undercover. He had no idea anyone suspected him of a crime.

He was also a law-abiding citizen with no criminal history or history of violence. The ATF knew this. This appears to be clear in multiple documents from ATF officials.

When they planned to serve the search warrant--it was not an arrest warrant, mind you--they expected it to be a short in-and-out sort of thing, with Bryan cooperating the entire time. They expect it to go as easily as it could.

It should be noted that the Biden administration's new "engaged in the business" rule hadn't gone into effect yet. It had been announced, but was still something like a month away.

So far as Bryan Malinowski knew, he was still following the law, so he'd have no reason to offer any kind of resistance. The ATF agents planning the operation didn't expect him to provide any, even if they thought he wasn't.

Then what happened?

"According to Agent Hicks, the vast majority of the search

warrants executed by the Arkansas ATF team are dynamic entries, and that when ATF makes a dynamic entry into a home, they are usually "dealing with violent armed career criminals and drug dealers ... [that's] the bulk of the types of cases that we work."

According to the Operations Plan, if a "reasonable time" passed with no response, the entry team leader would give the command for the team to conduct a "limited penetration."

A "limited penetration" is a type of dynamic entry where an ATF agent carrying the shield enters first. The agent with the shield then stops a foot or two inside the threshold of the door, followed by additional agents visually securing each part of the home visible from the front door threshold. Agents then call out to the occupants.

In the wake of the chaos of ATF's 1993 raid of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, the agency came under significant public criticism and congressional scrutiny for using excessive force in carrying out their enforcement responsibilities.

The resulting federal review of ATF's use of force and operations concluded that a "dynamic entry, which relies on speed and surprise and may involve forced entry, is a preferred tactic during high-risk operations--those where ATF believes that suspects pose a threat of violence or in operations where evidence can be easily destroyed," and that "a dynamic entry could be planned only after all other tactical options had been considered."

[...]

Despite knowing that Bryan did not pose a danger to them and believing that he would cooperate, ATF agents planned for a dynamic entry, approaching the Malinowski home wearing tactical gear, including ballistic vests and tactical helmets.

Most were armed with semi-automatic Colt M4 carbine rifles chambered in 5.56 caliber—a common weapon used by the U.S. military. They also possessed 9mm handguns. One agent carried a battering ram, another carried a ballistic shield, and another had a Halligan pry tool.

"There is a vast body of evidence and intelligence that debunks and refutes this statement you've just read and others coming from some of the Democrat leaders in Congress today," Gabbard concluded.

With more documents expected to drop soon, Gabbard is making it clear she intends to expose the Obama-era narrative for what it was—an orchestrated political operation designed to undercut the legitimacy of a duly elected president.

The agents and TFOs decided to approach the home stealthily and under the cover of darkness and planned to cover the home's video doorbell to obscure their presence.

The agents chose to prepare for and execute a dynamic entry despite the Malinowski search warrant execution not posing a threat of violence or evidence destruction."

They'd aborted an earlier planned search because Malinowski had left town, even though it wasn't an arrest warrant, and they could have still searched the home without him there.

They could have talked to him at his office, where he would likely be unarmed, as it's a secure facility that doesn't permit firearms.

Instead, they made a dynamic entry on a man who had no reason to suspect he was under investigation by federal authorities. Further, it appears that their clothing did not clearly identify them as federal agents or local law enforcement officers, who assisted in the raid. What markings there were happened to be obscured by their body armor or other equipment.

Now, let's understand something. Most people go through life with something of a "I have nothing to fear if I have nothing to hide" mentality. They don't expect the cops to bust into their homes in the wee hours of the morning because they're doing nothing that would warrant such a thing. Criminals might not be overly surprised, but regular folks? Yeah, they don't expect the cops to kick in the door.

So, when a door gets kicked in by people wearing dark clothing and no visible insignias showing them to be law enforcement, even if they're screaming who they are at the top of their lungs, many gun owners are going to view it as a home invasion and act accordingly.

There was a ballistic shield with the word "POLICE" on it, but guess what? It never made it inside the house. Malinowski never saw it.

Now that the truth is starting to trickle out, the Obama crowd is sweating—and for good reason. Tulsi Gabbard's document drops are pulling back the curtain on what looks like a coordinated effort by Obama and his top brass to sabotage a duly elected president using fake intelligence and a complicit media echo chamber. The phony Russia narrative was a deliberate attempt to delegitimize Trump before he even took the oath. And now, the evidence is catching up.

Other efforts to identify themselves included a local officer chirping his siren and having his car's blue lights on, but neighbors say they never saw or heard any of that, meaning Malinowski likely didn't either.

But it wasn't just that, either.

See, they'd put tape over the Malinowskis' video doorbell. They failed to ring that doorbell, opting to knock instead. They made no other moves to notify Malinowski that law enforcement was outside seeking to come in.

From the moment when the knocking started, 28 seconds passed before agents decided to breach the door.

28 seconds.

Malinowski lived in a house of over 2,700 square feet. My house is nowhere near that large, and even if I hear the knocking at my front door immediately after it starts, it may take me more than a few seconds to get to the door. In the wee hours of the morning, before I may even be awake? 28 seconds isn't nearly enough time.

Based on what we're seeing here, this is really no different than how badly the ATF screwed up in Waco, and for what?

A man who, by all measures, seems to have honestly believed he did nothing wrong and sure looks to have been right about that, is dead. The ATF has yet another black eye to go along with pretty much everything else the agency is known for--seriously, have they ever gotten it right?--and an innocent man is gone, his family left reeling, because agents on the ground got jumpy, antsy, and likely wanted to feel like real bada**es for a change.

Absolutely pathetic.

(Editor/GG: Hopefully Trump's new management team at the ATF will fix this.)

Please see: <https://bearingarms.com/tomknighton/2025/07/17/a-look-at-airport-directors-killing-by-atf-agents-shows-nothings-changed-since-waco-n1229292>

TULSI DEBUNKS from page 19

officials, by their friends in the media," she said. "They state over and over again after this January 2017 manufactured intelligence document was created that repeat the narrative."

Gabbard laid out a damning list of examples.

"The New York Times says, 'Russian hackers acted to aid

Trump in the election,'" she quoted.

"Obama's CIA Director John Brennan says, 'There is strong consensus among us... to support the CIA claim Russian hackers aided Donald Trump's election.'"

And of course, Hillary Clinton's infamous refrain: "I would be president if not for the Russian hackers supporting Donald Trump."



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Shotgun, Rifle or Pistol: What’s Best for Home Defense

by F. Riehi, Editor in Chief,
ammoland.com

When something goes bump in the night, what’s your move? Are you grabbing the trusty 12-gauge, racking your AR, or reaching for the pistol in the nightstand?

It’s a question every responsible gun owner wrestles with at some point: *What’s the best firearm for home defense?* The truth is, there isn’t a one-size-fits-all answer—but let’s break it down in plain English.

Why the Gun Choice Matters

Your home is your castle. And if danger ever comes through your door, you want to be ready to defend it—and your family—with confidence. But the “best” tool depends on your living situation, training, and what you’re comfortable running under stress.

Two seasoned shooters from Vortex Nation recently put this debate to the test in their latest video, above, with drywall, ballistic gel, and some high-tempo drills. Here’s what we learned—and how you can apply it.

The Case for Each Weapon Platform

Shotgun: King of Close Quarters

The 12-gauge is a devastating tool at close range. Loaded with buckshot or even a slug, it delivers incredible stopping power. And with a pump-action like the Mossberg 590, you’ve got flexibility to load everything from birdshot to slugs.

In testing, buckshot put multiple projectiles on target simultaneously, creating an enormous wound cavity in ballistic gel. Even low-recoil birdshot—usually dismissed in defensive talk—showed surprising effectiveness within a home-defense distance.

Pros:

- ✓ Massive stopping power
- ✓ Versatile ammo options
- ✓ Great intimidation factor

Cons:

- ✗ Can be unwieldy in tight hallways
- ✗ Overpenetration risk with slugs or heavy buckshot
- ✗ Slower reloads under pressure

Pistol: Quick, Light, and Nimble

The handgun shines for maneuverability and one-handed use. Whether it’s keeping a hand free for dialing 911, guiding kids

to safety, or opening doors, a pistol gives you options.

During the Vortex course, the shooter with a 9mm was able to engage targets effectively—even with a moving threat. Using modern defensive ammo like Hornady Critical Duty, the 9mm showed textbook penetration and expansion in gel testing.

Pros:

- ✓ Compact and easy to store securely
- ✓ Can be run with one hand
- ✓ Faster follow-up shots

Cons:

- ✗ Requires excellent shot placement under stress
- ✗ Smaller projectiles mean less energy transfer
- ✗ Lower capacity than some carbines

Rifle/Carbine: The Modern Defender

AR-15 rifles deserve repeated mention, as they offer excellent accuracy, higher capacity, and are highly controllable—especially with a red dot.

But overpenetration becomes a big concern. Even lightweight .223/5.56 rounds can zip through drywall and into the next room, which is something every home defender needs to consider.

Pros:

- ✓ High accuracy and capacity
- ✓ Low recoil with .223/5.56
- ✓ Excellent in trained hands

Cons:

- ✗ Overpenetration in close quarters
- ✗ Longer length makes them harder to maneuver indoors

Overpenetration: The Elephant in the Room

Every round, from birdshot to 9mm, has the potential to go through drywall. Testing revealed even light buckshot and pistol rounds zipped through walls and into the gel block beyond.

That’s why situational awareness and proper target identification are critical. *Know where your family members are and what’s behind your target.*

So...Which One Wins?

Here’s the kicker: **there’s no “perfect” choice.**

✓ If you’ve got tight hallways and young kids, a pistol you can lock up but bring into action fast might be the way to go.

✓ If you live alone in a house and want raw stopping power, the shotgun is hard to beat.

✓ If you’re highly trained and want maximum control and capacity, the carbine might make sense.

The best home-defense firearm is the one you’re trained on, can deploy confidently, and can use effectively in your living environment.

Takeaways for Responsible Gun Owners

- **Train, train, train.** Tools don’t save lives—training does.
- **Consider a quality light.** Most bad things happen in the dark.
- **Secure your firearm.** Keep it out of unauthorized hands, but accessible under stress.
- **Think through your layout.** Walk your home and plan your movements now—not during an emergency.

At the end of the day, what matters most isn’t the caliber or platform—it’s *you*. Pick the tool that works for *your* situation, and practice until running it becomes second nature.

Please see: <https://www.ammoland.com/2025/07/shotgun-rifle-or-pistol-whats-best-for-home-defense-vortex-nation-breaks-it-down-video/>

‘Gun Free Zones’ Responsible for Increased Gun Thefts

by Alan Gottlieb, ammoland.com
BELLEVUE, WA

A new report from the Council on Criminal Justice revealing an increase in firearms thefts from parked cars over a five-year study period (2018-2022) overlooks one major component of the problem: the necessity for legally-armed citizens to leave their firearms before entering so-called “gun-free zones,” the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms observed.

“While the report raises alarms about a 31 percent increase of gun thefts from vehicles,” said CCRKBA Chairman Alan Gottlieb, “it fails to mention a major reason people must leave their firearms in their cars, and that’s the proliferation of ‘gun-free zones’ and ‘sensitive areas,’ all promoted by the same social justice extremists who complain about guns falling into the wrong hands.

“A legally-owned firearm is safest when it is in the possession of its owner,” Gottlieb explained. “Armed private citizens should never be expected to leave their firearms just to have lunch, attend a meeting or public hearing, handle personal business in a government building, enter churches, synagogues or mosques, or merely to go shopping at a mall or market.

“Research indicates that mass shootings occur more frequently in so-called ‘gun-free zones’ than any other venue,” he continued. “Legally-armed citizens have successfully intervened in such situations and prevented tragedies, such as the incident at Indiana’s Greenwood Park Mall, where a young man neutralized a would-be mass shooter after he had opened fire in the food court area. Armed volunteers have stopped killers in places of worship in Texas and Michigan.

“Establishing laws that disarm honest citizens while creating risk-free

environments for criminals and crazy people is not simply ineffective,” Gottlieb stated, “it’s insane. Such restrictions not only make it impossible for victims to defend themselves, they provide unparalleled opportunities for thieves, especially during the holiday season.

“No law should ever be allowed to force law-abiding citizens to leave their means of self-defense locked in an automobile,” he said. “If you want to prevent gun thefts from parking lots and garages, don’t make things easier for thieves. If you want to deter mass shootings in public places, make it possible for people to fight back. If you want to keep guns out of the wrong hands, then allow those guns to be in the right hands.”

Please see: <https://www.ammoland.com/2025/07/gun-free-zones-responsible-for-increased-gun-thefts-from-cars/>



If ever a time should come, when vain and aspiring men shall possess the highest seats in Government, our country will stand in need of its experienced patriots to prevent its ruin. —Samuel Adams

China Finalizes New Export Control On Crucial Mine Processing Technologies

by Tyler Durden,
ZeroHedge.com

Authored by Bill Pan via *The Epoch Times* (emphasis ours),

China has finalized new export controls on technologies crucial to making batteries and processing critical minerals, materializing a threat made in the earlier stage of its trade war with the United States.

In a joint announcement on July 15th, China’s Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Science and Technology unveiled an updated version of its Catalog of Technologies Prohibited or Restricted from Export.

The catalog, alongside two dual-use export control lists, is a key instrument governing China’s export control regime. It is divided into two categories: technologies completely banned from export, and technologies restricted under a licensing regime. Technologies on the restricted list cannot be exported without government approval.

The latest update adds a new entry: battery cathode material preparation technology, which specifically covers those for producing lithium iron phosphate (LFP), lithium manganese iron phosphate (LMFP), and phosphate-based cathode precursors. These are essential materials for lithium-ion batteries used in electric vehicles.

The catalog also tightens existing rules under the section on the Non-Ferrous Metal Smelting and Rolling Industry, expanding restrictions on technologies for extracting metallic lithium and gallium, a vital material in semiconductor chips.

This round of revisions was initially proposed in January, shortly before the second inauguration of President Donald Trump, who has pledged to use tariffs and other tools to protect U.S. industries and

rebalance trade between the United States and the rest of the world.

The U.S.–China trade war is currently in a state of truce, putting on hold Trump’s April 2 executive order on reciprocal tariffs, which would have raised tariffs on Chinese imports to as high as 145 percent.

China remains the world’s dominant miner and refiner of lithium and gallium. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has identified both materials as critical to national security and economic competitiveness.

According to a USGS report released in January, the United States is unable to domestically source any of 31 key critical minerals, and can only commercially refine one: beryllium. China, by contrast, is the primary source for eight of those minerals and the near-exclusive provider of 17.

Gallium was among three materials Beijing subjected to export controls in December 2024. In a parallel development, a high-grade gallium deposit discovered in Montana earlier that year has received fast-track permitting approval under the Trump administration, part of a broader push to reshore critical mineral supply chains and reduce reliance on Chinese imports.

The Montana deposit is being extracted by U.S. Critical Materials, a Utah-based company. Harvey Kaye, the company’s executive director, said during a hearing before the House Small Business Committee that it will extract gallium first.

“Our plan is to extract from our deposit literally this year and be able to, in effect, stand on the steps of the White House and/or Congress with a bag of gallium ... found in Montana, processed with American technology, and available for the defense of this country and, indeed, the free world,” Kaye said.

Please see <https://www.zerohedge.com/commodities/china-finalizes-new-export-control-crucial-mine-processing-technologies>

‘We Are Not For Sale’ - Utah Governor Blocks Chinese-Owned Company from Buying Land In the State

by Tyler Durden,
ZeroHedge.com

Authored by James Xu via *The Epoch Times* (emphasis ours),

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox said on Tuesday that a Chinese-owned company has been blocked from purchasing state land as a result of legislation that bans land ownership from entities deemed adversarial.

Speaking during a press conference in Palmyra, Utah, Cox said Cirrus Aircraft is majority owned by the Avian Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), a company identified by the Pentagon as having ties to the Chinese communist regime’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA), thereby posing national security risks.

Cox said AVIC makes “fighter jets, helicopters, and drones for the Chinese military” and that they “appear on multiple federal watch lists and are banned from federal contracts, assistance, and benefits due to serious national security concerns.”

“Their proposed investment in Utah was millions of dollars and hundreds of jobs,” Cox said. “And I don’t care. We are not for sale.”

This sentiment was cemented into law in 2024 through the efforts of Rep. Candice Pierucci and other sponsors, who passed HB516, a bill that restricts land purchases by companies backed by foreign adversaries, namely China, Iran, North Korea or Russia.

Under the new state law, companies have one year to sell the land. If they miss the deadline, the Division of Facilities Construction and Management may seize the property and deposit any remaining post-sale proceeds into the General Fund.

“So we really gave them an opportunity to either play nice or do it the hard way,” Pierucci said at the briefing on Tuesday.

Utah was one of the first states to pass legislation on foreign land ownership.

“Protecting our defense infrastructure and our agriculture is not just about

military readiness,” Cox said. “It’s also about economic strength. These missions contribute \$23 billion to Utah’s economy, support over 177,000 jobs, and represent nearly 10 percent of our state’s GDP.”

Cox said he also wanted to set the record straight on the degree of foreign ownership in Utah, addressing some “really dumb maps that keep floating around the internet.”

“Sadly, everyone believes those dumb maps that get made up, showing that millions of acres in Utah are owned by the Chinese government. That is absolutely not true,” he said.

China held a relatively small amount of U.S. agricultural land in 2021, about 0.9 percent of all foreign-held land, or 349,442 acres nationwide, according to the National Association of Counties. Utah ranked as the fourth-largest state for Chinese land ownership, with 32,447 acres in 2022.

Cox said most estimates show that 35,000 to 37,000 acres were previously owned by Chinese entities. He said that “35,000 acres of that has been divested and is no longer owned by the Chinese government.”

The remaining land is a “very, very, very small percentage,” Cox said. “We continue to investigate, and we will continue to make sure that we are enforcing the law.”

Pierucci also pointed out the shutdown of CCP-funded Confucius Institutes at Utah universities in 2022. They are “identified by the State Department and the FBI as Chinese propaganda outlets,” she said.

Cox stressed that policies aimed at the Chinese communist regime are not an attack on Chinese citizens.

“We have nothing against the Chinese people. They are good people, many of them are Americans who live here, who are our neighbours,” Cox said. “They are not the problem. It is the Chinese government, and we want to make that clear.”

<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/we-are-not-sale-governor-blocks-chinese-owned-company-buying-land-utah>



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7th Circuit Court Drops the Hammer: Illegal Aliens Have No 2nd Amendment Rights

July 18, 2025

by Ammoland Editors & Staff,
Ammoland.com

The battle over the meaning of “the people” in the Second Amendment just got a big update. In a unanimous 3-0 decision, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit ruled this week that illegal aliens have no constitutional right to keep and bear arms.

This landmark case—*United States v. Carbajal-Flores*—was brought after Heriberto Carbajal-Flores, a Mexican citizen unlawfully in the U.S., was arrested for firing a pistol in Chicago during the 2020 riots. He argued that the Second Amendment protected his right to carry a gun for self-defense.

The court disagreed, finding that America’s tradition of tying gun rights to loyalty and citizenship stretches all the way back to the Founding Era—and even earlier.

What the Court Actually Said

Writing for the panel, Judge Brennan didn’t mince words:

“From the colonies to—most critically—the early Republic, governments consistently conditioned the ability to possess firearms on one’s loyalty to the sovereign. People outside the polity were regularly disarmed unless and until they swore an oath of allegiance. This provides strong historical evidence that the Founders would have considered such regulations compatible with the Second Amendment.”

Put simply: if you haven’t pledged allegiance to America, you don’t get to claim its constitutional protections—especially when it comes to firearms.

The court explained that this principle wasn’t new. Back in colonial times, even white settlers who refused to swear loyalty to the revolutionary cause were disarmed. Slaves and Native Americans were barred from bearing arms too—not merely because of race, but because they were viewed as outside the “national community.”

“Aliens, as a matter of their status, have not yet affirmed their allegiance to the sovereign. That has uniformly served as the basis for disarming them.”

How This Fits With Bruen & Heller

After the Supreme Court’s 2022 *Bruen* decision, courts have been re-evaluating gun laws based on whether they fit America’s “historical tradition.” Flores argued that because he lived in the U.S. for years, he should count as part of “the people” protected by the Second Amendment.

But the Seventh Circuit said even if Flores fell under “the people”, the government carried its burden by showing a long history of restricting guns to those loyal to the nation.

“Section 922(g)(5)(A) is thus sufficiently analogous to many earlier firearm regulations. Because the law ‘comport[s] with the principles underlying the Second Amendment,’ we hold that it overcomes Carbajal-Flores’s facial challenge.”

A Major Win for 2A Logic

Second Amendment attorney Mark Smith, host of *Four Boxes Diner*, broke it down bluntly in his reaction video:

“There’s no way, no how that individuals here illegally are going to be deemed to have Second Amendment rights. Period. Full stop.”

This ruling aligns with decisions from other federal circuits. The Fifth and Eighth Circuits have also said that people in the country illegally can’t claim Second Amendment protection.

Why This Matters for U.S. Gun Owners

This case reinforces something many gun owners have long argued: the right to keep and bear arms isn’t just about geography—it’s about being part of “We the People.”

It’s not about whether someone is dangerous or peaceful. It’s about allegiance. As the court wrote:

“The unfortunate practice of disarming slaves and Native Americans survived the Revolutionary War, confirming the Founders adhered to the tradition of barring groups deemed outside the polity from keeping arms.”

In today’s context, the court found this tradition extends to illegal aliens.

Could This Reach the Supreme Court?

With several appeals courts now in agreement, it’s likely only a matter of time before the Supreme Court gets asked to weigh in. When that happens, expect major fireworks.

For now, though, the Seventh Circuit’s ruling stands as a strong precedent and a reminder that the Second Amendment is deeply tied to loyalty, citizenship, and the responsibilities that come with being a U.S. citizen, not border crashers.

Please see: <https://www.ammoland.com/2025/07/7th-circuit-court-drops-the-hammer-illegal-aliens-have-no-2nd-amendment-rights/>

LAWSUIT from page 15

Still, they say efforts to remove LGBTQ protections at the local level send harmful messages about who is valued and deserves protection from discrimination.

At a May school board meeting in Montezuma-Cortez, board member Mike Lynch said the policy change was needed because of Trump’s threats to withhold funding from schools that “support certain previously protected classes like sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity.” He later clarified that Trump has not threatened to withhold funding over protections based on sexual orientation. Still, the term wasn’t restored to the policy.

Lynch, who chairs the district committee that drafted the new nondiscrimination policy, said not every group must be explicitly named in the policy to have protection from discrimination.

Noting that the policy talks about unlawful discrimination, he said, “If it is unlawful to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, then the policy covers it.”

The policy adopted Tuesday now cites 10 instead of 13 protected characteristics in a section prohibiting harassment. The 10 include disability, race, creed, color, sex, marital status, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services.

Some community members objected to the non-discrimination policy changes.

Emily Christenson, a parent in the 2,400-student district, said even though Colorado law contains protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, including the terms in school district policy is important.

“You may feel ... that it’s redundant to list them there, but to remove only some of the protected classes from your policy clearly states that you condone harassment inflicted upon these groups of our community,” she said.

Cayce Hamerschlag, who spoke about both the nondiscrimination policy and the transgender student athlete policy, said the board is choosing to deny rights to some students with no legal requirement to do so.

“In the spirit of transparency,” she told the board, “perhaps you should change your slogan from ‘Every Student. Every Day.’ to ‘Certain Students. Some Days.’”

(Chalkbeat is a nonprofit news organization covering public education.)

Please see: <https://www.chalkbeat.org/colorado/2025/07/17/montezuma-cortez-district-targets-lgbtq-discrimination-protections-and-transgender-athletes/>

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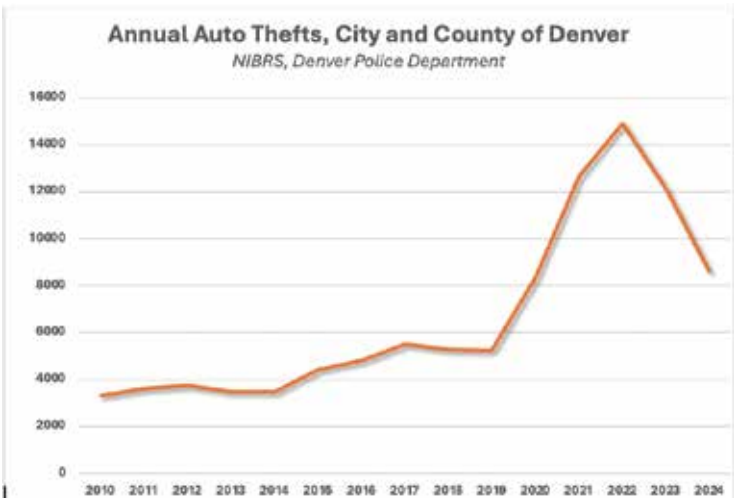
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AUTO THEFT
from page 1

In Denver, reported thefts climbed to nearly 15,000 a year in 2022, or 1,250 a month. That was more than the entire state of Colorado had registered for most of its history (see Figure 1).

See Figure 1



Eventually, elected officials began to take action. In 2022, the City of Aurora enacted mandatory minimum sentences for car theft, and in 2023, the state legislature did an about-face, removing the tie between the cost of the car stolen and the level of the resulting felony.

Theft rates have declined significantly from their peaks, to

about 3,000 per month statewide and 8,600 annually in Denver, but these numbers are only barely tolerable by comparison to the immediate past, and remain well above both historical averages and the level of safety the public has a right to expect.

According to the state’s most recent Auto Theft Annual Report, the Denver Metro area accounts

for 70% of the state’s thefts, so it’s not surprising that the decline there accounts for most of the overall statewide improvement.

Part of that decline, as well as a return to over 90% recovery rates and some marginal increase in arrests, is a result of the Flock license plate-reading cameras that Denver installed beginning in May of last year.

A Tale of Two Cities – Aurora and Denver

It’s true that the Flock cameras were controversial for privacy reasons from the beginning. Depending on who had access to the data, they could be properly used to alert police to stolen vehicles or cars used in crimes, or improperly used to track individuals suspected of no crime at all.

But it’s equally true that Flock cameras and license plate readers (LPRs) are incredibly useful tools in finding, tracking, and recovering stolen vehicles.

This according to Aurora Police Sergeant Paul Davis, the officer in charge of the case where my vehicle was recovered.

Yes, on Wednesday, two days after the theft, I got a call from someone who identified himself as a member of Aurora’s DART unit:

“Does anyone else have permission to drive your vehicle?”

“No.”

“Does anyone else have permission to be in your vehicle?”

“No.”

“If we apprehend the suspects, do you wish to press charges?”

“Oh, yes.”

I was sufficiently suspicious of this call that I actually called the number back to get the officer’s name and badge number. But an hour or so later, I got another call telling me where the car was, that it appeared drivable, and that I could come pick it up.

According to Sgt. Davis, the DART (Direct Action Response Team) was restarted in 2022 after a hiatus of several years. That, not coincidentally, was the peak year for auto thefts in the state and the metro area. LPRs are one of the key tools they use to initiate surveillance of a vehicle.

Frequently, the purpose of stealing a car isn’t to chop it up and sell it for parts, as I had assumed. It’s for the anonymity that a stolen car can provide to criminals to commit other crimes. That’s why cars recovered after an extended period of time are frequently in terrible condition – it’s being used for other criminal activity, which means it’s being rode hard and put away wet, and the criminals can’t risk taking it in for service, especially when it’s easy to just ditch it and steal another one. The sooner you get your car back, the better chance you have of being able to drive it again.

In my case, finding the car also meant finding the criminal. He was arrested, and charges have

been filed. That’s important, because frequently stolen cars – which, remember, are usually used in the commission of more crimes – can prove to be an entry point into larger criminal enterprises, according to Davis.

Which makes it all the more infuriating that the Denver City Council voted to terminate the Flock camera program at the end of the year, not over legitimate privacy concerns, but in order to protect illegal aliens from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

That’s right. While other jurisdictions are amping up their programs to recover stolen cars, Denver just terminated a program that helps get cars back in better condition and generates more leads into larger criminal organizations, because the City Council is afraid that it might lead to illegal immigrants being deported.

So congratulations, Denver, on prioritizing the ability of illegal immigrant to evade law enforcement over the physical safety and personal property of your tax-paying citizens. We’ll see how that works out.

Please see: <https://completescolorado.com/2025/07/21/colorado-auto-theft-capital-green-light-car-thieves/>