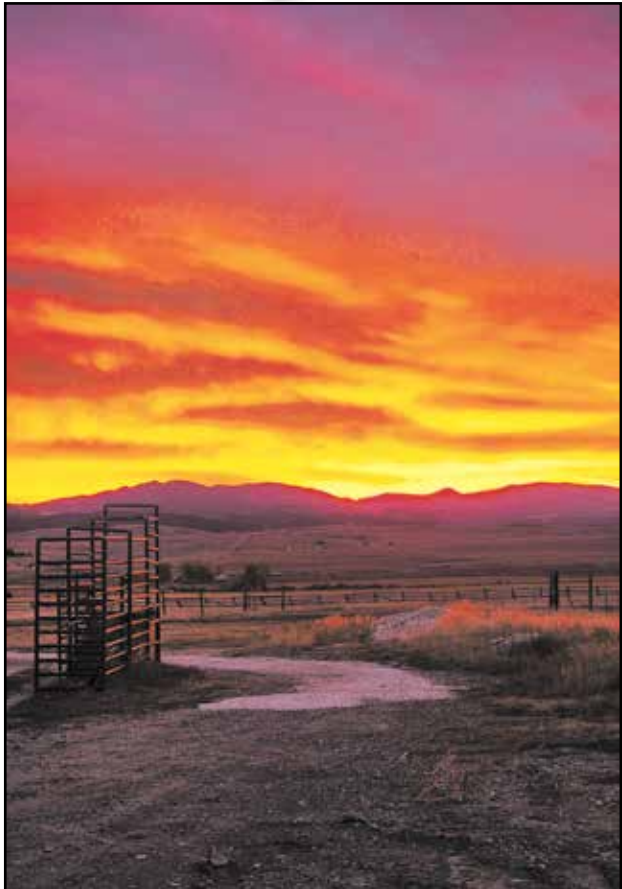




The heavens declare His handywork!

Fix It or Fund It: Inside the \$361 Million Standoff over Colorado’s Unfunded Mandates

by Jen Schumann,
Rocky Mountain Voice

Mesa County Commissioner Bobbie Daniel didn’t set out to launch a statewide revolt. Two years ago, she created a spreadsheet to track state mandates that came without funding. The goal was to help department heads navigate budgeting headaches. But that quiet act of accounting has since grown into something far louder—a bipartisan movement spanning more than 36 counties, with local governments now invoking state law to declare state mandates “optional.”

“We started this whole unfunded mandate tracker... trying to see how I could better

serve my constituents,” Daniel explained during a September 29 commission meeting. “But also my department heads, who are having to deal with the significant effects of an unfunded mandate yearly.”

Mesa County alone has estimated more than \$10 million annually in costs related to unfunded mandates. If similar burdens are carried by Colorado’s other 63 counties, the statewide impact could exceed \$361 million per year.

This isn’t just policy pushback. It’s a legal argument—and a growing number of counties are signaling they are ready to fight it out in court.

FIX IT or FUND IT
see page 16

Local Teen in Custody Post It Notes for Progress: WMVO and Custer County’s Residents



by Sentinel Staff

Preliminary information on this situation was released on the Custer County Sheriff’s Office FaceBook page on October 14th in order to confirm that there is no ongoing danger to the community. According to the post, multiple law enforcement agencies are now coordinating to determine the full sequence of events in each jurisdiction, and additional details will be released as they become available. This remains an active investigation. The suspect should be considered innocent until proven guilty.

A multi-county crime spree that began on the morning of October 14th with an armed carjacking in Silver Cliff, Colorado, came to an end the same afternoon with the arrest of a suspect in Colorado Springs.

Custer County deputies quickly responded (around noon) after a gunman used a firearm to steal a Mitsubishi SUV from a local resident at the (Dundee) dog park. As a precaution, Custer County Schools were placed on Lock In status after the incident.

The stolen vehicle was later involved in a law enforcement pursuit on Highway 50 near Highway 67 and was subsequently sighted traveling northbound on Highway 115 at a high rate of speed by the State Patrol. The suspect

abandoned this stolen vehicle in Colorado Springs.

According to preliminary reports, the suspect allegedly committed one or two additional carjackings in Colorado Springs and allegedly discharged a firearm one or more times during the crime spree. He also allegedly pointed a firearm at a CDOT worker. An additional pursuit with Colorado Springs Police ensued before the suspect was finally captured.

The individual taken into custody has been identified as a juvenile resident of Custer County. Due to the suspect’s juvenile status, his name is not being released at this time. According to reports by KRDO, law enforcement has confirmed that the juvenile is being held at a detention facility and has been charged with the following:

- Attempted First Degree Murder
- Two Counts of Aggravated Robbery
- Three Counts of Attempted Aggravated Robbery
- Two Counts of Motor Vehicle Theft
- Ten Counts of Felony Menacing
- Vehicular Eluding
- Illegal Possession of a Handgun by a Juvenile
- Four Counts of Reckless Endangerment
- Obstruction

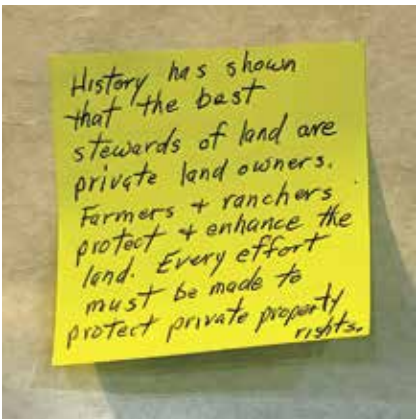
The Sentinel will continue to follow this case.

by Reggie Foster

Nearly 80 people attended the third Wet Mountain Valley Outdoors (WMVO) Community Network Meeting held on October 8th. The gathering marked another step in an effort to bring the community together to discuss how best to protect the rural heritage of Custer County and to also improve the things that may need improving.

The meeting opened with remarks from John Van Doren, who explained that Wet Mountain Valley Outdoors is working to bring state funding opportunities to Custer County through the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Regional Partnerships Initiative. WMVO was awarded seed funding through this initiative to help gather local input and guide the community in identifying outdoor projects that reflect local priorities and values.

To help facilitate the process, WMVO brought in Bill Fulton of The Civic Canopy and Kim Smoyer of Smoyer & Associates. Their presentation style has not been widely appreciated by the citizens of Custer County. Those on the core team made a nuanced decision that seemed to adjust the temperature of the attendees. This time small



group discussions were led by Yates McConnell from Upper Ark Watershed, WMVO Board members Sally Strom and John Van Doren, and Deb Adams from the Custer County Tourism Board.

Each Community Network meeting has built upon the last. The first meeting, held on August 6th, focused on building a foundation for collaboration. The second meeting, on September 6th, guided participants through the creation of a shared vision statement. Meeting three on October 8th, finally brought focus and shifted to identifying what’s already working in Custer County and what could be improved, enhanced, or newly

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PATRIOT ALERT!

Dominion Voting Sold

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Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.
Romans 13:1 KJV

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

We will be led by truth, facts, logic and common sense.

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

Key Personnel

Michael Foster - President & Managing Editor
editors.sentinel@gmail.com
Fred Hernandez - Vice President
FredHer8@proton.me
L. Vass - Secretary and Asst Editor / Graphics Layout
sdc.sentinel@gmail.com
Katherine Brencley - Advertising Coordinator
SentinelAds1791@gmail.com

Office Support

Accounting Services
Bookkeeper.sdc@gmail.com
Yvonne Phillips
sdc.sentinel@gmail.com
Mailing & Delivery
Galen Studebaker

Founding Editor

George Gramlich
2013-2025

Sentinel Founders

Mike Hess
George Gramlich
Mary Seifert
Rob Canterbury
Katherine Brencley

Sentinel Honor Roll

Dan Bubis
Jackie Bubis
Carol Clemenson
Scott Clemenson
Barbara Napolitan

Contributors

Audrey Slater
Mtn. Photo in Logo
by Peggi Collins

Business Hours:

Tues: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
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

How to contact us:

719-783-3360
P.O. Box 179
601 Main Street
Westcliffe, CO 81252
www.SDCSentinel.com

Please send your letters to sdc.sentinel@gmail.com

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Local Mountain News & Notices

Other People's Money

by Laura Vass, Opinion

In the 17th century, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the finance minister to France's Louis XIV, summed up the delicate nature of taxation:

"The art of taxation consists in so plucking the goose as to obtain the largest possible amount of feathers with the smallest possible amount of hissing."

For more than two decades as a Colorado resident, I've watched that same "art" practiced here, by local, state, and federal governments. Little by little, taxpayers are being plucked, often without realizing it, through new taxes, fees, and government "grants."

On the surface, grants sound great - free money for our community! But too often, these funds pay for studies, plans, or consultants that never lead to anything tangible. We end up spending thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money for binders on a shelf.

And because that money comes from "somewhere else," many shrug it off. "It's other people's money," they say. When money loses its face and connection to the people who earned it, waste becomes acceptable. Gratitude turns into entitlement.

Custer County is fortunate to have a strong tradition of neighbors helping neighbors. When a need is clear and real, folks organize, pitch in, and make things happen, most often without waiting for

government dollars. That's the difference between local stewardship and bureaucratic spending. One creates accountability and results. The other creates reports and red tape. Citizen efforts with real results include: Funding kidney transplants, helping fire victims rebuild, seeing families through tragedies, getting proper upgraded vest protection for our Sheriff Deputies through citizen donations and the Sheild616 organization, and equipping students with laptops, an effort that started with Wet Mountain Rotary who donated 76 chrome books, and other non-profits adding to that number. And don't forget monies donated and matched through Wet Mountain Valley Community Foundation.

Feeding all Students/Taxing a few to do it

Take, for instance, the state's "Healthy Meals for All" program. The idea of feeding kids healthy meals is one most of us can get behind. But when a program runs a massive deficit within two years, it's not sustainable. Instead of reforming it or scaling it back, the Legislature and Governor want to spend even more through Propositions LL and MM.

A "yes" vote on LL would divert \$12.4 million in taxpayer refunds back to that same meal program, and increase total state spending on it by \$33 million. That's on top of the \$263.4 million Colorado already received for school meals, milk, and related costs in 2024 for serving roughly 881,000 students.

Meanwhile, Custer County Schools spent about \$118,000 to feed roughly 265 students that same year. With grocery costs skyrocketing, it's fair to ask: is this the most responsible way to feed children who need it, or just another example of throwing money at a problem because it's "other people's money"?

Prop MM would go a step further, shifting the tax burden onto an estimated 192,000 taxpayers which is about six percent of Colorado taxpayers (three percent of the population will pay for it.) That kind of targeted taxation may sound fair to some, but history tells us that when you keep squeezing a small group hard enough, they eventually pack up and move; to Wyoming, perhaps, where there's no income tax.

Closer to home, Custer County Ballot Issue 1A proposes raising the lodging tax from 2% for tourism to 6%. The new revenue would go toward tourism related housing, and childcare. These might be worthy causes on their own. But again, the solution is another tax and the spending has been somewhat defined by the greater State decision that allowed for the tax increase to go to a county or municipal district vote.

Imagine if, instead, we offered zero-interest loans to local entrepreneurs to start home-based childcare centers. Or encouraged collaboration among nonprofits, neighbors helping neighbors through small-scale, accountable

efforts. That's worked in this county for generations, long before "grant writing" became the buzzword and the source of most funding.

Affordable housing faces the same trap. Government committees, like our own affordable housing committee, chase grants and draft reports, but offer few real incentives for builders. Progress crawls, and the "other people's money" mentality persists.

Questions Worth Asking Before You Vote

As I prepare to cast my ballot, these are the questions I'll be asking myself:

1. Does it promote small government, low taxes, and self-sufficient local control?
2. Would I vote to tax myself in perpetuity to fund this issue?
3. Do I trust the officials managing these funds to spend wisely? What's their record?
4. Could this problem be solved locally with a hand up, not a handout?
5. What strings are attached?

Henry David Thoreau once said, "That government is best which governs least." That wisdom still makes sense and feels like truth in this valley. Let's keep government close to home, our money in our own pockets where it belongs and our solutions rooted in local effort, not in the illusion of "free" money from somewhere or someone else.



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Business Directory QR
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website <https://SangreDeCristoSentinel.com>

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West Custer County Library is now offering a program to deliver library materials to our mobility impaired patrons. On the 2nd & 4th Mondays we will bring the library to you! Or we can arrange for transportation to bring you to library events! Please visit our website at westcusterlibrary.org under 'services' or give us a call to learn more!





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Custer County Business Close Up

Colorado Forestry and Earthworks

Custer County’s business- es and business owners are the foundation of our County and our County’s future! Please join the *Sentinel* team on our journey to celebrate and pay tribute to the amazing people that make Custer County what it is today.

Being an entrepreneur in a small town can be tough. But the Gaide family has figured out the formula for success with Colorado Forestry and Earthworks, LLC (also known as CF&E). Their success is not only doing great things for their customers, they are also employing about 15 of our neighbors! Their website best describes what they

do: “For All Your Earthly Needs”. So if you need help with fire mitigation, land clearing, site prepara- tion, erosion control, foun- dations, landscaping, road/ driveway building, septic installation or gravel, they are definitely worth a call to get an estimate for your latest project!

The founder, Shawn Gaide, and his brother Mike grew up in our community after their grandparents moved here from Pueblo in the 60’s. Shawn finished school in the Custer County High School so he knows our community well. In fact, Shawn went off to College at Western Colorado University and returned to teach in the

Custer County School for four years. Brenda Gaide married Shawn in 2006, and joined the business last year where she now serves as the President of CF&E. All their kids have either graduated in our school system or are attending now.

Shawn’s expertise is in excavation and everything that involves dirt. In fact, their website states: “When it comes to dirt, we’re the pro’s.” Before starting CF&E, Shawn worked for several other companies gaining valuable experience in excavation, tree-cutting, and clearing land. He knows it all and loves working in our community. You will likely see the CF&E fleet and equipment all over the County. Again, check out the website (COforearth. com) for details on all their services!

When you see their logo all over town, you won’t see all the other things they’ve done for the community. The Gaide family’s in- volvement started with their grandparents role in the Rotary Club and getting the Rotary Van program started. Today, they are



CF&E Driveway perfection.

Photo courtesy of the Gaide’s

still serving the community in many other ways— especially at the school. For example, Brenda served on the School Board for four years. Most recently, they joined their Director of Operations, Warren Gold, in working on “Operation

Fresh Start” by building a home for a local Veteran and his wife with many other local companies donating materials along with +\$7,000 that’s been raised in cash from our community. It’s a very exciting project!

If you’d like some help for your “Earthly Needs”, CF&E can be contacted at (719) 285-9992 or “info@coforearth.com”.

On a much more personal note from the authors, we have been students of America’s founding and our Founding Fathers by attending countless educa- tional conferences, class- es and reading a LOT of books. After learning more about CF&E, we can’t think of a better example of our Founding Father’s vision of what the possibilities are with a little grit, hard work and rugged individualism!

Judy and Rick Meckstroth



Shawn driving.

Photo Courtesy of the Gaide’s



Barb Beckner

Financial Advisor

Barb@peaks-integrity.com

Ron Beckner

Financial Advisor

Ron@peaks-integrity.com

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Local Mountain News & Notices

BOCC: DOLA Childcare Grant Strategies and SO Vehicles

by Reggie Foster

October 8, 2025
BOCC Mtg. Report

Epp spent a day with the CCI legislative group which is made up of many county commissioners. Their discussion this past week centered around items that will impact counties in 2026. Clawing back monies was a priority, Epp used the examples of getting monies designated to care for park entrance roads back to counties and implementing excise taxes for counties to which that would apply. The group should have a list of tier one and tier two priorities within a week. Budget hearings have been completed for all elected officials, the Sheriff and Road & Bridge.

Canda mentioned the Upper Ark meeting coming up next week and receiving complaints about TV Channel reception not working properly. Technical problem between Colorado Springs and the Valley that Hilltop is working on. The County will likely have some cost in the fix. Canda also praised the elected officials, Vernon Roth and department heads for the budget work that has been completed to date. The landfill will need a scraper at some point. Right now the County is renting it and all involved believe the County should discuss buying a scraper instead. The issue was placed on the October 16th agenda.

Attorney Dan Slater worked with PDS' attorney to align the outsourced IT contract. The new contract will not cover all printers and devices. Secondary and back-up computers, printers, etc., used by county employees will be serviced by John Mapes, County GIS and IT. The Master Client agreement was approved unanimously. The commissioners also approved the Custer County Extension Office's request to apply for the 2026 NRA grant for 4-H Shooting Sports. This grant provides supplies and equipment instead of dollars. There is no matching of funds requirement.

Stacy Terrill, Director of the Custer County Kids Council (CCKC) submitted an application to DOLA for a local childcare grant. The organization reached back to Terrill for needed clarification on strategies to support the local childcare grant if received. DOLA requested that the strategies be more clearly defined and that the BOCC must then commit to adopting one or more of the specifically identified strategies. DOLA requires this action as a show of support to the CCKC in doing this work. The strategies actually become the work CCKC is asked to do through the grant.

OCTOBER 8th BOCC
see page 14



Bookends October 2025 Library News

The nights are now longer than the days. What better time to settle down with a good book? But wait – what if you can't get to the library to pick out a new read? Did you know that the library now offers home delivery of library materials to our mobility-impaired readers? Books, DVD's, materials to read yourself or with your grandies. Or even our new Read With Me literacy kits, designed for an adult and a kid to enjoy reading together. All these and more can be delivered to your home if you are unable to get to the library. And thanks to a partnership with Wet Mountain Rotary Community Service and its Rotary Van Service, we can also bring mobility-impaired residents to the library to enjoy our events and programs. Or to pick out their own reading material, like a real live copy of the *Wall Street Journal*, or one of our magazines. Fill out an application today on our website, www.westcusterlibrary.org. On the top blue toolbar, click on "Services" and then on "Home Delivery." Fill out the application and we'll get back to you to arrange delivery or transport to the program of your choice. And make sure to tell folks you know that we offer this service – word of mouth is the best advertising ever. (And see our ad in this week's newspaper on page 2!)

Here are two upcoming programs that you don't want to miss: Coffee and doughnuts with Sheriff Rich Smith on Tuesday,

November 4 (Election Day) at 9 a.m. Tell Sheriff Smith what's on your mind. This is one of our quarterly meet and greets with Sheriff Smith. (And don't forget to VOTE, whether by mail or ballot – it's one of the founding principles of our nation. Make your voice heard!)

New iPhone got you buffaloed? Your computer isn't doing what you want it to do? Can't get into your email? Bring yourself and your device to our twice-monthly Tech Cafe for expert help. Have a cup of coffee on us while getting yourself and your tech straightened out. Tech Cafe is every second and fourth Thursday of the month from 10 a.m. to noon in the Community Room, and is designed to help learners of all levels up their tech game. The next Tech Cafe dates are October 23 and November 13.

Finally, it's almost Halloween, so here are some spooky (and not so spooky) suggestions for finishing out the month. *Death in the Dark* by Bryce Moore: oooohhh, a WWII Jack the Ripper? Tell me more! Or, how about an alternate WWII story with British witches! Young Lydia has to find the Grimorium Bellum, an ancient book that leaves a trail of death and destruction, before the Nazis do. And not so spooky, here's a cute picture book to share with a kid you like: *Aggie and the Ghost* by Matthew Forsythe. Aggie is not so lonely after she finds her house is haunted. Happy Halloween!



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VOTE NO ON LOCAL BALLOT 1A

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TAX**

**\$1.5M
LOSS**

**VOTE
NO**

What this really costs Custer County

X \$1,500,000 Economic Loss

Based on current visitor trends, this 300% tax hike is expected to drive away business, shrinking our local economy by \$1.5 Million for \$169,777 childcare and housing subsidies!

Keep Custer County Affordable!

We Are Already Losing Tourism

Lodging revenue is down 20% since 2023. We cannot afford to put up a **TRIPLE TAX** sign at the county line. Don't let a "Feel-Good" Tax cost local jobs!

PAID FOR BY: KEEP CUSTER COUNTY AFFORDABLE COMMITTEE Peggi Collins, Treasurer

Sources & other information at: www.KCCA.info



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“We the People” Speak

Letters to the Editor

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Rules: We will print, at our discretion, the thoughts and ideas of our fellow citizen-patriots. Please limit your offerings to 500 words or less. No profanity or vulgarity, no personal attacks, and please sign your name and give us the general location of your residence. Also please provide your phone number or email - for confirmation only. *The opinions expressed here are solely those of the author; they do not necessarily reflect the opinions held or endorsed by the Sentinel.*

Keep the Lodging Tax True to Its Purpose

Letter to the Editor:
The upcoming 1A ballot proposal to raise the county lodging tax and expand how that money can be spent may sound harmless—but it’s a slippery slope that violates both fairness and the original intent of the law.
The 2% County Lodging tax was approved to promote tourism—period.
Visitors can then choose to spend *their* discretionary funds at the local events and businesses of *their* choice. The lodging tax was never meant to become a catch-all funding source for unrelated social programs. Expanding its use to cover housing, childcare, or any other local services unfairly shifts the burden of community costs onto visitors and travelers who have no voice in local elections or budgets. That’s not sound public policy—it’s taxation without representation.
The expanded uses allowed under **HB25-1247** undermine voter trust. The County Tourism

Board was entrusted with ensuring that funds are used for their originally approved purpose—promoting and supporting tourism and not for any new and unrelated language authorized after the fact. That needs to be recomunicated by voters to our elected officials and appointed tourism board members with a **NO VOTE on 1A**.
When citizens originally approved the lodging tax, they did so with the understanding that revenues would be used to attract visitors and strengthen the tourism economy. Changing that purpose after the fact not only violates voter intent but erodes confidence in local government and in the ballot process itself.
And the unfairness doesn’t stop there. The same politicians in Denver just passed **HB25B-1005**, eliminating the small administrative “vendor fee” that businesses could retain for the paperwork and cost of collecting and remitting sales taxes.

Stay Alert! Out of touch politicians continue proposing new ways to reach into taxpayers’ wallets—such as the thankfully postponed **HB25-1302**, which would have added up to a 1.5% “fee” on already nationally escalating homeowners’ insurance policies—so that these same politicians could redistribute more of your money through a new state grant program.
At some point, we must acknowledge that the money tree is bare. Every new tax, fee, or “special use” charge eventually hits the same people—local families, small businesses, and visitors who support our communities.
Let’s draw the line. Keep the lodging tax where it belongs: supporting tourism, not padding government budgets or funding unrelated social programs.
—Cindy Howard,
former lodging owner/
tourism board member in
Custer County

CC Dem Chair on 1A

Dear Editor:
Yet another letter regarding Ballot Issue 1A. We should all know 1A proposes raising the current Lodging Tax from 2% to 6%, with proceeds being divided evenly between Tourism, Child Care Programs and Workforce Housing Programs.
Custer County is limited in its sources of revenues and thus limited in the breadth and quality of the services provided. The Lodging Tax provides new revenue stream to add currently unavailable dollars to desperately needed resources for child care and workforce housing. These are not only noble causes, but requisites for a healthy future economy in Custer County. The leaders of these efforts are dedicated and passionate citizens who care about our residents and their ability to live, work and thrive in Custer County. I have heard directly from them on the depth of the problems as well as specific ideas for use of the money to approach solutions. They are past the consultant phase and are on to implementation should 1A succeed. I encourage all voters to recognize the need and vote YES on 1A.
There are, of course, concerns about the effect of a tax increase. First, be clear, it is only levied on the price of overnight accommodations. It has been argued in the Notice of Election (by Charley Ellison as the Against Position is his letter to [both local papers on] 26Sept2025 [and 03Oct2025] that we will lose \$1.5 million in spending revenues due to the hike based on numbers with no citation (sciencedirect.com is not a reference, but a search engine. I had no success finding his numbers). Even if true, best I can conclude is that he assumed tourism spending will go up to \$25 million in 2026. (0.06 X 25M = 1.5M). Since the total travel spending for Custer County has been roughly flat for the last 4 years, with \$21.5M in 2024 (The Economic Impact of Travel in Colorado, Colorado Tourism Office, 27Jun2025), Note that this is despite a 13% decline in Lodging tax revenues associated with noted by Mr. Ellison. That suggests a tourism spending growth of \$2M from 2024-2026 (\$25M - \$1.5M = \$21.5M = \$2M).
**1A
see page 22**

No New Taxes

Dear Editor:
The Colorado Legislature with the Governor’s signing, found another way for citizens to tax at a local level. Why would any Colorado citizen anywhere in Colorado vote yes on another tax?
Especially a tax revenue that will fluctuate greatly based on tourism, as already evident in past years, and one that could hurt the singled-out industry, one of the largest business income categories in Custer County, to do it: Lodging. That’s what we will be voting on with Issue 1A.
This state and this county have devolved into the only governance model the Dems know and do—tax the people to death. And if they can’t tax us, they call it a fee.
I have attended town hall meetings in Westcliffe regarding affordable housing here in Custer County. I heard: *we are LUCKY to have bought a house here and so many cannot afford housing, grant money is free money, and we are all collectively obligated to help these poor children and poor working people by subsidizing what they like to call affordable or workforce housing*. Let’s call it what it is: taxpayer funded housing.
That’s what Issue 1A represents, the Democrat model of governance. In my opinion, Custer County governance is following the Polis model of socialism all too well. We understand the county citizens are not being directly taxed, but sticking it to one industry (Lodging) thus stressing it to death, as well as the unforeseen ramifications spelled out by Charley Ellison (in his Letter to the Editor two weeks ago); could result in 1.5 million \$ loss in potential spending in the county.
Another overlooked ramification of this bill are the new layers of governance created by the taxpayer funded pet projects by the towns, SC and WC, a new housing director with a nice fat salary. This is stated as needed because SC and WC don’t want to manage their pet projects but want the taxpayer to fund it all. Did you know that Saguache County is housing workforce for Salida workers? (After all the Salida housing projects?) That could happen here with this program.
The big picture is the principle of the thing. If you want a socialist, heading-fast-towards communist state and county, vote yes. Until we the taxpayer says NO to every new tax on a ballot, we will continue to go broke. After all, a special session was called by Polis for a billion \$ deficit he blamed on Trump, when in reality, it was spent on illegals. During this special session the Dems would not revoke an 800-million-dollar bill for transgender surgery for illegals, preferring to tax Coloradans for it and forcing tax on tips, overtime and taking away the homestead tax relief for seniors. I could go on and on.... VOTE NO ON TAX!!
Laura Dale Dollarhide
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Recurring Events

Mondays
10 a.m. Pickle Ball (SCMP) Info: lizbrannen@gmail.com
6 p.m. Men’s Bible Study, FBC 6th St.
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
1-3 p.m. Caretaker Meet-up WCC Library
4:30 PM. Post 170 Auxiliary mo. mtg (yr-rnd) Cliffe Lanes
2nd and 4th Monday
6 – 7 p.m. Narcotics Anonymous
CU Methodist Church Fellowship Hall. Children Welcome. colobamanana@yahoo.com

3rd Monday of the Month
1-3 p.m. Caretaker Meet-up WCC Library

Tuesdays
9 a.m. Women’s Bible Study, FBC 6th St
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 CU Methodist Church, 204 S 6th St. Debbie Underwood (432) 553-7483.
9:45-11:45 a.m. The Posse Ladies Bible Study
Sept 24-May 13 @ Sangre de Cristo Fellowship, 120 Jerry Dr, Westcliffe. Free childcare 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.

Thursdays
5:45 p.m. Women’s Bible Study, FBC 6th St

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 Rm, Post Commander Burt Daniels 719-783-3050

Sundays
4:30 p.m. Wet Mountain Community Chorale – Rehearsals, **Ages 13 and up**, Sangre de Cristo Cowboy Church. Contact KMurrayJohnston@gmail for information

CCSO CO-RESPONDERS’ CORNER

The Profound Mental Health Benefits of Gratitude

by Jaclyn & Tom Manzione

Gratitude is more than just saying “thank you.” It is an important practice that helps people focus on the good things in their lives, which can greatly improve both mental and physical health. Studies show that having a grateful mindset can help with mental health problems and provide a strong way to cope with challenges in life.

Gratitude can be seen in different ways, such as an emotion, a habit, or a personality trait. At its core, gratitude means appreciating what is valuable and meaningful to us. This means gratitude can be a short-term feeling or a lasting characteristic.

One of the clearest benefits of gratitude is its ability to lower symptoms of depression and anxiety. A review of 70 studies with over 26,000 people found that those who feel more grateful tend to experience

less depression. Grateful people often report being more satisfied with life, having better social relationships, and feeling more confident. While individuals experiencing depression often find it challenging to practice gratitude, there is a connection between gratitude and a reduction in depressive symptoms. By focusing on what they appreciate, these individuals may begin to recognize and value the positive aspects of their lives.

Gratitude helps people see challenging situations differently. Instead of just focusing on the problems, it encourages them to think about lessons learned or positive results. This change in thinking can help break the cycle of negative thoughts common in depression and anxiety. Additionally, gratitude helps people recognize support from others, making them feel less alone and more secure.

Beyond reducing negative feelings, gratitude also boosts overall well-being and encourages positive emotions. It helps individuals enjoy good experiences more and makes those moments more memorable. This “savoring” effect can help people feel happier and more optimistic about life.

Gratitude offers a wide array of spiritual benefits, fostering a deeper connection with a higher power and enhancing one’s overall spiritual well-being. It encourages individuals to recognize and appreciate the blessings in their lives, even amidst challenges, leading to a more positive and fulfilling spiritual journey.

While research on gratitude is still growing, it is clear that practicing gratitude can lead to a healthier, more fulfilling, and resilient life.

Co-responders are available to assist at CCSO 719-783-2270 Option 1

Custer Senior Center Menu

Monday, October 20 #57 Lemon Baked Fish Scalloped Potatoes Spinach Salad w/Mandarin Oranges Malt Vinegar Banana WW Bread w/Butter	Tuesday, October 21 #39 Corned Beef Dinner Parsley Buttered New Potatoes Cabbage and Carrots Spinach Salad w/Mandarin Oranges Apple	Thursday, October 23 #96 Tahitian Chicken Seasoned Green Beans Brown Rice Salad w/Lite Italian Apple WW Bread w/Butter
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Cody Park Community Church 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Worship Tues. 8:30 a.m., Prayer Mtg. Wedn. 7 p.m. Bible Study 0157 County Rd. 27A Cotopaxi 719/942-3526 (719) 942-3462	Hope Lutheran Church 2 p.m. Worship 3:15 p.m. Bible Study 3rd & Powell Streets, Westcliffe Pastor Dan Kletke 719/783-2323 Lange Hall 719/783-2561	St. Luke’s Episcopal Church 10:30 a.m. Worship & Eucharist 11:30 a.m. Fellowship 8:30 a.m. Prayer Service, Thursdays 3rd & Rosita Streets, Westcliffe 719/783-2477	Valley Bible Fellowship 10 a.m. Worship 116 Hermit Lane, Silver Cliff 719/581-7572
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Cotopaxi Community Church 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 11 a.m. Worship 6 p.m. Wedn. Bible Study Pastor Steve Holcomb@gmail.com 20326 Hwy. 50, Cotopaxi		Sacred Heart Catholic Church Diocese of Pueblo Saturday Mass 4 p.m. Highway 69, Gardner Bldg. Mickey. 719/746-2037	Wetmore Community Church 9 a.m. Sunday School 10 a.m. Worship 699 County Rd. 395, Wetmore 719/784-0596

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Happy Birthday

Audrey Slater!



HAPPY Birthday Peyton Jaylen

Memorial Mass for George Gramlich

Everyone is Welcome

There will be a Holy Mass offered by Father Stephen Injoalu, Parish Priest of Our Lady of The Assumption, on Thursday, October 23 at 10 a.m. to pray for the eternal repose of the soul of Mr. George Gramlich, the late founding editor of the *Sangre de Cristo Sentinel* who was recently welcomed into the Catholic Faith. Our Lady of the Assumption Parish Church is located on the corner of Rosita and Fifth Street in downtown Westcliffe.

All are invited to attend this memorial Mass.

PRAY God's Word

Psalm 94 (*The Living Bible*)²⁰ Will you permit a corrupt government to rule under your protection—a government permitting wrong to defeat right?²¹⁻²² Do you approve of those who condemn the innocent to death? No! The Lord my God is my fortress—the mighty Rock where I can hide.²³ God has made the sins of evil men to boomerang upon them! He will destroy them by their own plans. Jehovah our God will cut them off.

God, direct our country's elected leaders to support and protect "We The People"!

SANGRE DE CRISTO SENTINEL

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SDC Sentinel Office
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Local Mountain News & Notices

October 7th School Board Mtg.

submitted by
a Meeting Attendee

October 7th CCSD
Monthly BOE Meeting

The Custer County C-1 School Board met Tuesday evening, in the school library. All remaining board members were present, although president Reggie Foster attended remotely and was visible on a giant screen broadcasting from Colorado State University due to a work conference.

As reported last week, the Board declared the vacancy of Director Jennifer Kriegh. Board member John Tillotson agreed to take over her position as secretary/treasurer of the board, stipulating that board members cannot participate fully while trying to take minutes, so the board agreed to hire someone to take minutes.

The board will replace Kriegh through the appropriate process. The deadline for applying for the board vacancy is November 19th. Interviews of eligible candidates will be December 2nd at 5:30 p.m. in the school library. (See school announcement on page 11 of this issue.)

The school plans to go all out for Veteran's Day this year due to the efforts led by Social Studies/English/HS Careers faculty member Kirsten Schubert. The students will assemble in the east gym, where ten or more veterans have agreed to attend to tell their stories. The students will be encouraged to dress in red, white and blue clothing. The Kids' Choir will perform and the students will raise money for veterans programs in the county.

Following on from the September meeting, the board mused about the future of the school's geothermal heating system.

The board appropriated the money for Trane Co. to repair the control system. This may or may not fix the problem, but unless the controls are fixed, there is no way to further diagnose and repair the system.

As Future Farmers of America rep, Foster reminded the board that the annual fruit sale is upon us. FFA members will have order sheets by the end of October to order fruit for the giving season. The FFA's most important fundraiser of the year is the annual Rocky Mountain Oyster Fry. This year the dinner will be Saturday, November 15th at 5 p.m. in the west gym of the school. Tickets are sold at the door.

Acting school superintendent Kyle Hebberd presented a letter from Commissioner Epp and Barry Keene from the workforce housing committee. Keene reached out to the Superintendent because he wanted to mention in their letter for the Request for Proposal (RFP) that the school has vacant lots in Silver Cliff that could possibly be developed. The board confirmed more than once that they were making no commitment of any kind to the housing committee, potential investors, or developers. As the information is public record, the board took no real issue with the lots being mentioned in the RFP letter.

In his staff report, Superintendent Hebberd talked about the continued need to hire a third grade teacher, paras and custodial staff. He is looking for guidelines for coaches administering over the counter drugs such as Tylenol to students. There will be a Healthy Kids Survey in November. Permission slips will go home with students.

The Colorado Ballet will perform at the school. Fun for Halloween, on October

30th, is a chili cookoff in the multi-purpose gym at 6:30 and a carnival at 7:30 p.m.

When it came to "Actions Items" they lived up to their name. They were listed on the agenda as A – N, but "I" had eight items to vote on, "J" had seven, "K" had 23 items up for votes, "L" had eleven action items, "M" three. "N" stood alone.

"A" through "H" were regular housekeeping items, such as acting on the copier lease, the door lock proposal and the Johnson Control Fire Alarm, but when they got to the CASB items, following along became trickier.

CASB stands for Colorado Association of School Boards. One purpose of the organization is to offer policy development assistance to help boards create effective educational policies. In the evening's lineup, there were motions to authorize the adoption of CASB Model Policies with no local amendments, first and second readings, and CASB Model Policies WITH local amendments with first and second readings.

This part of the meeting went quite quickly, with 100% unanimous votes. The board is approaching the end of the 18 months long process of updating and properly formatting nearly 400 policies.

A very interesting observation about the school board meeting was that there were no parents or other concerned citizens at the meeting, and this is apparently how it is very often.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Custer County C-1 School Board will be Tuesday, November 11 at 4:30 p.m. in the school library. There are no special meetings or workshops on the schedule at this time.

Bobcat Football Update

Fowler 58 Custer County 6

by Coach Gerring.
CCSD-1

The Fowler Grizzlies showed up Friday night ready to play football. They brought their 2-3 record to face the 3-1 Custer County Bobcats.

The Grizzlies scored first and often. With a running clock in the first half the Grizzlies played their substitutes for the majority of the second half, as did the Bobcats.

"We knew who we needed to stop on their offense,"

said Coach Effle after the game. "We just failed to do it. But come Monday we will regroup and get ready for Crowley next week at their facility. One thing is for sure our young men are not quitters, and this season is far from over."



Harvest or Halloween Events

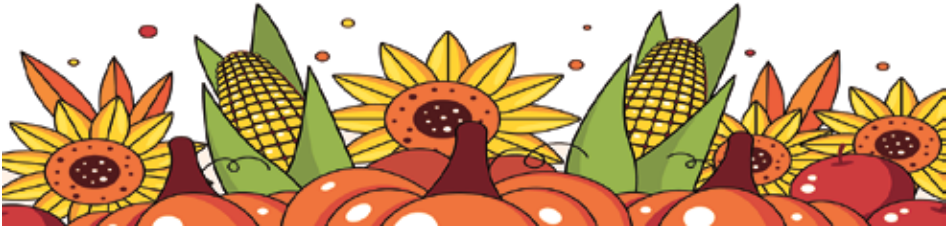
Wednesday, October 29th AWANAs
Kids Fall Festival 4:15-6 p.m.
(during regular meeting time)
FBC Westcliffe Youth Building

Thursday, October 30th
Custer County Schools
Halloween Carnival

6:30-7:30 p.m. MPR
Chili Cook-off
7:15 p.m. MPR
Costume Contest
7-8:30 in West Gym
Carnival

Friday, October 31st
OCR: Trunk or Treat
Set up 3 p.m.
Start at 4 p.m.
Set up on either side of Main St.
between 4th St and 7th St.

Friday, October 31st
Wet Mountain Fire
Auxiliary Harvest
Festival
Free Family Event
4:30-6:30 p.m.
Wet Mountain Fire Main Station
215 N 4th St., Westcliffe



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Friday, October 17:
9 am: MS & HS Cross Country: Southern Peaks League @ Monte Vista Golf Course
7 pm: HS Football @ Crowley County (away)
TBD: MS Volleyball WCL Tournament @ Cotopaxi

Saturday, October 18:
12 pm: HS JV Volleyball @ Monte Vista (away)
1 pm: HS Varsity Volleyball @ Monte Vista (away)

Friday, October 24:
7 pm: HS Football @ HOME vs Hoehne (Senior Night!)
TBD: HS Volleyball Tournament @ Sargent (away)
TBD: HS Cross Country: Jack-A-Lope Acres in Ignacio

Saturday, October 25:
11 am: HS JV Volleyball @ HOME vs Sanford
12 pm: HS Varsity Volleyball @ HOME vs Sanford

Friday, October 31:
7 pm: HS Football @ Sangre de Cristo Sentinel (away)
Saturday, November 1:
TBD: HS Volleyball Tournament @ Crowley County
TBD: HS Cross Country: STATE @ Norris Penrose Event Center

COME OUT AND SUPPORT YOUR
CUSTER COUNTY BOBCATS!

All games and dates are subject to change without notice.

BOBCAT SCOREBOARD

Wednesday, October 8:
MS Volleyball @ HOME vs Trinidad: A Team: 3-0, Win!

Friday, October 10:
4:30 pm: MS Volleyball @ Calhan (away)
HS JV Volleyball @ Calhan: Win!
HS Varsity Volleyball @ Calhan: 3-1, Win!
HS Football @ HOME vs Fowler: 6-58, loss

Saturday, October 11:
HS Varsity Volleyball Tourney @ Swink:
vs Swink: 0-3, loss; vs. Sangre de Cristo: 3-1, Win!
vs Vanguard: 0-3, loss
MS Volleyball Tri vs Merit Academy/Cotopaxi @ Paxi:
B Team, vs Cotopaxi: 2-0, Win! 1st game: 25-20, 2nd game: 25-23; A Team vs Cotopaxi: 2-0, Win! 1st game: 25-5, 2nd game: 25-16, & vs Merit: 2-0, Win! 1st game: 25-15, 2nd game: 25-13

Tuesday, October 14:
HS JV Volleyball @ La Veta: 2-1, Win!
1st game: 23-25, loss; 2nd game: 25-20, Win! 3rd game: 17-15, Win!
HS Varsity Volleyball @ La Veta: 2-1, Win!
1st game: 25-16, Win! 2nd game: 20-25, loss; 3rd game: 25-16, Win!

Local Mountain News & Notices

Custer County School District Board of Education Vacancy

Note from Editors:

Following is the information referenced on page 10 of this issue in the October 7 School Board Meeting column. This information is being printed as a courtesy for all who may be interested in filling the current School Board vacancy.

###

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes § 22-31-129 (2), the Custer County School District C-1 Board of Education must declare a vacancy in the school director office and appoint a person to fill the vacancy within sixty days after the vacancy occurs. In accordance with state law, the Board declared a vacancy at a Regular Board Meeting on October 7, 2025, due to a resignation of one at-large director seat on the District’s Board of Education.

Beginning October 7, 2025, any person who meets the qualifications and who desires to be considered for the appointment is invited to submit a letter of interest, including a biographical statement, to the Board of Education at the Custer

County School District’s Administration Building, 709 Main Street, Westcliffe, Colorado 81252. Upon submission of the letter of interest, applicants will be asked to fill out a sworn affidavit attesting to the qualifications for office. All documentation must be submitted by noon on Wednesday, November 19, 2025.

To be eligible for appointment, an applicant must reside in Custer County School District and must have been a registered elector of the Custer County School District for at least twelve consecutive months prior to the date of appointment. The applicant must be 18 years or older and have never been convicted of a sexual offense against a minor.

The Board will interview prospective candidates on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, during a public session of a Special Meeting of the Board at 4:30 p.m., in the library. The Board of Education plans to appoint the person to fill this vacancy at its Special Board Meeting. The term of this appointment shall be until the next regularly scheduled Board of Education election in November 2027.



BOBCAT ATHLETE OF THE WEEK!



Abbie Hemsath with Johnny Winton

Volleyball
Abbie Hemsath
for Varsity!
Layna Jones
for JV!

Football
Offense:
Agi Thomas
Defense:
Brayden Baker



Brayden Baker with Johnny Winton

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Jesus said

“What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin?
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without your Father knowing it.

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flock of sparrows.”

Matthew 10:29-31 NLT



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BOBCATS CROSS COUNTRY & N



MIDDLE SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL



Sentinel Photos by Aundrea McCormick; Layout by Katherine Brenchley

OCTOBER 8th BOCC
from page 4

Terrill met DOLA’s request by creating three strategies from which the Commissioners could choose. Terrill first presented the financial support strategy which read, “A program will be adopted during the grant period on how to utilize any new revenues generated that are specific to supporting and or expanding childcare and coordinated with CCKC with the BOCC as the fiscal agent. If a new local funding stream gets approved, like the one on the ballot, then the Commissioners would support [Terrill] in adopting a program and in utilizing those funds specific to childcare.”

The second childcare strategy is Terrill’s reason for writing the DOLA grant in the first place. It read, “During the grant period of this DOLA local government childcare planning grant program, A Custer County childcare and early childcare needs assessment will be done utilizing a third party contractor that specializes in early childhood and childcare areas. With this assessment action, plans and policies can be looked at and implemented to promote childcare development to families in Custer County.” According to Terrill, the main reason she wrote and submitted this grant was for funds to hire a third party to do a Custer County focused and specific childcare needs assessment which would provide the county a baseline of information and need(s) requirements.

The final strategy written and presented by Terrill was; “The CCKC, with the support of the BOCC, will commit to attending quarterly the Custer County planning and zoning committee meetings to ensure that there are no regulatory barriers to the creation or expansion of home based childcare.” This third strategy is specifically to address any potential barriers to home childcare within Custer County.

DOLA needed an official commitment from the BOCC on one or more strategies in order for the grant to continue through the process. When asked which strategy was the most important to Terrill, she replied, both 2 and 3. Strategy one can’t be determined until after the Vote on November 4, and the grant will be awarded before that day.

Terrill has requested \$20K of the \$75K available from DOLA. She believes that the county data substantiates the need for such a large percentage of what is available

to complete a needs assessment. There has been no childcare needs assessment since the inception of CCKC. Terrill clarified that other philanthropies and CCKC’s fund under the WMVCF will be the sources of the required matching funds.

Slater highlighted that Strategy number one directs the funds if the ballot initiative is passed but the BOCC has not yet determined what would happen with the dollars gained if ballot initiative 1A passes. Epp motioned to adopt strategies 2 and 3 as discussed in support of CCKC going after the DOLA grant. All were in favor.

Resolution 25-38 was presented to accept the deuce and a half which was donated to the Sheriff’s Office into the County’s fixed assets. Minutes later the Commissioners voted to sell the unique deuce and a half, along with a 2016 Dodge Durango, two 2017 Dodge Durangos, and a very well driven chevy van for a total of \$49,500 back to the county.

The SO was only temporarily out five vehicles, as Chief De Laurentis, stepped up with his negotiated list of replacements from the Lake Mary, Florida Police Department. The Florida department made a fair deal for two 2017 Ford Explorer’s. One will be the Undersheriff’s ride while the second, which is equipped with an approved transport cage, will become a transport vehicle. De Laurentis said they also scored an unmarked AWD pickup which goes to Road and Bridge. The county detective will get a nice 2017 Ford F150 supercab, while a 2017 Ford Taurus, will be the administrative wheels for Chief. There isn’t much more undercover than a 2015 Ford Fusion. The good news is that the SO is now absent a handful of 100k mileage vehicles which have been replaced by a few good sets of wheels with 60K miles or less. The goal in managing vehicles this way is to save the county money in the long run. With outfitting costs of law enforcement vehicles rapidly increasing, being able to acquire the already outfitted Lake Mary police vehicles is a financial help to our county.

Copper Gulch was mentioned as the most traveled road in Custer County, with all the looks and feels of being such. So, the Commissioners voted unanimously to adopt resolution 25-39 for Road and Bridge Fund appropriation to move \$19k from the cash reserves to the budgets line for the purpose of trying a new product to harden up a mile of Copper Gulch past where the chip seal ends. The meeting was adjourned.

The History of Custer
County’s Tourism Board
and Lodging Tax Part III

Collaborated by Laura Vass
and Charley Ellison

I have been collaborating with others, principally, Charley Ellison, as a volunteer researcher and have interviewed him at length to create this series on Tourism in Custer County. We chose Ellison because of his understanding of the vacation rental business and his serving as a Westcliffe Trustee in the past and two years spent on the county’s tourism board. We’ve asked Ellison to continue this series to its completion.

This is the third article in a series on Custer County’s Tourism Board (CCTB). Its history, including its legal basis, creation, revenues and spending priorities, is obviously relevant and timely given Custer County Ballot Question 1A, a request to triple the Lodging Tax paid on all stays at motels, vacation home and RV park rentals of less than 30 days.

In case you missed it, Part II of our series contained a summary of recent legislation that expanded the permissible uses of voter approved tourism funds. HB-22-111 expanded the allowable use of funds to include: “HOUSING AND CHILDCARE” and other broadly defined uses. This year, HB-25-1247 increased the lodging tax limit from 2% to 6% and further expanded uses that include categories that match up with what constitutes the majority of most any county’s budget.

When voters are asked to increase an existing tax, they want to know how funds have been spent. More importantly, what were the results? What checks and balances are in place?

With those questions in mind, CCTB’s budget documents for 2024 and 2025 offer a high-level view of CCTB’s priorities. At this writing we do not have access to accounting reports, just documents presented in open meetings. Excluding a Colorado Tourism Grant of \$25,000 in 2024, that year’s budget was \$89,000. Contract Labor, Professional Services and Content Development, lumped together due to similarity, was nearly half (47%) or \$42,000 . Third-party

Advertising was 38% or nearly \$35,000. The Lodging Fund took in about \$90,000 from 4.5 Million in short-term (less than 30 days) rentals at motels, vacation homes and RV parks. This was 13% less than the previous year.

CCTB’s 2025 budget was \$100,000. The Contract Labor/Professional Services category dropped to \$30,000. Third-party Advertising was \$54,150, \$27,000 of which was for “WMV Literature and Main Street Banners.” Spending 25% of last year’s budget on paper collaterals and banners underscores the shift to “visitor experience”. Lodging Tax receipts were at \$55,555 through September, continuing the previous year’s downward trend. November is when July through September collections find their way to the county treasurer.

The October 8, 2025 edition of the other local paper carried an educational piece written by the CCTB titled, “What is a Lodging Tax?” (The same was printed in The October 3 issue of the *Sentinel* as “Tourism on Lodging Tax”. The statement piece assures readers that its funds are used to promote, advertise and market tourism in Custer County. Further, nearly two-thirds of CCTB budget is for “Third-party Advertising” (40%) and “Contract Labor” (22%).

Included in the list of sub-categories to “Third-party Advertising” are “WMV Agricultural Market Place Promotion”, sure to be part of the \$100,000 grant mentioned in Part II of this series. About \$5,000 is slated for National Public Radio (non-ad) sponsorships and Ads in the other local paper. Social media falls within the Third-party Advertising bucket.

CCTB’s October 14 meeting included a proposal by a recently organized Social Media Committee. Bianca Trenker, owner of Raven’s, heads the committee which also includes Lauren Austin, owner of Westcliffe Suites, and Katie Roosendaal, owner of the Hidden Peak Tiki Lounge.

TOURISM
see page 21



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Colorado State News



High Court Ruling: Legislature On Tax Hike Notice

by Mark Hillman,
CompleteColorado.com

During its August special session, the Colorado legislature passed several bills to raise tax revenue and partially fill the growing chasm between federal tax policy and progressive Democrats' insatiable spending.

Although the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR) in our state Constitution requires a public vote on any "tax policy change directly causing a net tax revenue gain," lawmakers believe that a Colorado Supreme Court decision from 2018 allows them to raise tax revenue by closing so-called "loopholes."

Specifically, the high court ruled in *TABOR Foundation vs. RTD* (2018) that the language of TABOR is "best read to exclude legislation that causes only an incidental and de minimus tax revenue increase." Justices arrived at this conclusion by analyzing a 2013 bill that removed some sales tax exemptions and added others to make Regional Transportation District (RTD) and state sales tax collections uniform.

Although legislative staff predicted a 0.6% increase in revenue,

justices disagreed with TABOR Foundation's argument that this triggered the constitutional requirement for a public vote.

However, the court added in a footnote, "We do not suggest that TABOR allows districts to raise revenue by increasing taxes without voter approval so long as they do it in small enough increments; while such measures might be de minimus, they would not be incidental."

Translation: If a legislative purpose is to increase revenue, then it really doesn't matter that the amount is relatively small.

Lawmakers conveniently ignored that footnote in August when they passed several such bills, including:

- Requiring Colorado taxpayers to increase their state tax liability by adding back a 20% deduction allowed under federal law for business income received from partnerships, sole proprietorships and certain corporations. That bill is expected to increase tax revenue by \$97 million in 2025-26. In the bill's "declaration," sponsors professed that because they were simply extending tax policy which would have expired in 2025, this was not a "tax policy

change" and will not cause a net revenue gain as defined by TABOR

- Reducing a tax deduction for insurance companies that keep at least 2% of their employees based in Colorado, resulting in an estimated \$90 million increase in tax revenue. Sponsors declared this bill's primary purpose was to "better align" Colorado tax policy with other states, that any revenue gained was "incidental" and "de minimus," and so voter approval is not required.

Barely 10 days later, the Colorado Supreme Court unanimously struck down two tax increases by the City of Lakewood. In doing so, justices raised issues that cast doubt on "hocus pocus" incantations relied upon by legislators during the special session.

"[A] taxing district (including the state) cannot exempt itself from TABOR's restrictions and requirements simply by declaring that a legislative change has a purpose other than revenue generation," wrote Justice Richard Gabriel.

This should be a cold shower for lawmakers who think they can alter reality with a legislative declaration. Passing a bill that

declares, "up is down," doesn't make it so.

Further, the court found, "it was obvious when each (Lakewood) Ordinance was enacted that it would have the effect of raising revenue," later adding, "although revenue generation may not have been the only purpose ... revenue generation was not merely incidental."

On this matter, Lakewood's standing was more solid than the two bills passed in August. While Gov. Jared Polis meticulously avoided mentioning "raising revenue" in his order to re-convene the legislature, he repeatedly said the converse, lamenting "revenue loss," "significant revenue shortfall," etc.

If lawmakers intend to fill a hole in the state budget, they will do so with revenue – not cotton candy.

Moreover, lawmakers publicly justified these bills as changes in tax policy, a broad description that falls outside the boundaries of Supreme Court permissiveness.

Joint Budget Committee member Rep. Emily Sirota (D-Denver) said the business deduction is "not good tax policy," while House Speaker Julie McCluskie

(D-Dillon) described eliminating tax breaks and loopholes as consistent with broad changes her caucus has considered.

For years, the Supreme Court avoided drawing bright lines to illuminate boundaries that trigger a public vote on a tax increase, but it's recent decision and the legislature's bold defiance, raises certain questions:

- If extending a tax that was set to expire is not a tax increase under TABOR, can local governments and school districts also extend mill levies and sales taxes without asking voters as they have done heretofore?
- Can the legislature curtail existing tax deductions in a way that consistently raises revenue and credibly claim that raising revenue was merely "incidental"?

We won't know until someone with legal standing challenges these new state laws in court.

Mark Hillman represented the Eastern Plains in the Colorado Senate from 1999 to 2005.

Please see: <https://completecolorado.com/2025/10/08/colorado-high-court-legislature-tax-hike-notice/>

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FIX IT or FUND IT
from page 1

County leaders shared an update with residents on their position September 29th.

Not just political noise—the statute at the center

A little-known state law, C.R.S. § 29-1-304.5, is central to the counties’ position. Passed in 1991, the statute states that when the State of Colorado increases the level of service required by law, it must also provide adequate funding. If it fails to do so, counties may legally consider those mandates optional.

Daniel echoed that in a recent statement about the growing coalition. “Under C.R.S. § 29-1-304.5, if the State requires a service but doesn’t fund it, that mandate is considered optional for local governments.”

Pueblo County put it even more plainly in its formal letter: “If it does not [fund the mandate], such mandates are not binding—they are optional.”

Mesa County’s own letter, dated July 29th, confirmed that staff had been instructed to begin treating several mandates as optional under the statute. That language has since appeared in letters and resolutions from counties across the political spectrum, including Delta, Archuleta, Teller Grand and Crowley.

One spreadsheet. Thirty-six counties.

As of October, 36 counties had formally submitted letters to state leadership, with at least six more preparing to follow suit. Some modeled their letters after Mesa County’s. Others crafted versions that reflected their unique fiscal environments and infrastructure challenges.

Daniel told fellow commissioners, “We have over 30 counties that have sent letters... and each county is sending different concerns reflective of their unique situations. But the real

exciting thing is counties are joining together to communicate that this is a real problem.”

Commissioner Cody Davis emphasized that the effort wasn’t partisan. “It’s not just a Republican-Democrat thing,” he said during the same meeting. “We’ve got everybody who recognizes what unfunded mandates do to counties. Because we have to take those from somewhere. They come from our sheriff department, health department, our roads. They come from

and thousands more for bond hearings, child fatality reviews and risk assessments.

The Sheriff’s Office faces more than \$2 million in mandates ranging from bodycam costs and MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) in county jails to weekend court services and document retention rules.

The IT Department is absorbing \$1.25 million to comply with cybersecurity and digital accessibility laws.

Facilities and Parks, Human

“This is not a symbolic gesture. It is a deliberate and lawful step rooted in the statute.”

somewhere.”

Mesa goes public with the cost of compliance

In early October, Mesa County published a department-by-department list of unfunded mandates and their associated costs. The total tab? More than \$8.3 million.

The line-item breakdown lays bare how deeply unfunded mandates are embedded in core county operations.

The District Attorney’s Office is absorbing \$3.5 million, including \$2.9 million in felony prosecution staffing, \$238,420 for crime victim notifications

Services, Public Works and the Clerk’s Office are each absorbing six-figure or high five-figure burdens as well.

A full breakdown is published at Mesa County’s Fix It or Fund It webpage:

See <https://www.mesacounty.us/resident-resources/fix-it-or-fund-it-unfunded-state-mandates>

“It’s like the state going out for a lavish dinner, ordering everything on the menu, and then slipping out the back door,” Daniel told the *Daily Sentinel*.

Daniel also pointed to a proposed landfill regulation that could

require Mesa County to spend \$9 million up front and another \$1 million per year—a cost that is not yet reflected in the current list.

La Plata County, facing similar pressures, estimated an \$8 million deficit tied to unfunded mandates in its 2026 budget. In a letter to state leaders, commissioners called the situation “an untenable and unsustainable financial burden.”

What Senate Bill 3 would cost Mesa County

During the September 29 meeting, Commissioner JJ Fletcher flagged Senate Bill 3 as an example of a single bill with outsized impact.

“Mesa County would be on the hook for about \$300,000 a year just in training of our sheriff’s deputies and the implementation of the policies that go along with the new gun control laws,” Fletcher said.

Daniel confirmed the \$300,000 estimate referenced by Fletcher. But that figure represents only a fraction of what Mesa County’s sheriff’s office is projecting in total unfunded mandates. According to the county’s Fix It or Fund It breakdown, the office faces more than \$2 million in annual costs tied to state requirements—ranging from body-worn camera mandates and weekend court staffing to medication-assisted treatment in jails and mandatory in-service training.

A lawful refusal, not a protest

Mesa County’s letter, like many others, included a clear warning:

“This is not a symbolic gesture. It is a deliberate and lawful step rooted in the statute.”

That sentence appears nearly verbatim in letters from Delta, Archuleta, Saguache, and Teller counties.

In its official resolution, Crowley County commissioners directed staff to evaluate new mandates and only implement them if sufficient state funding is available.

Grand County’s letter noted that their Sheriff’s Office would require \$130,000 annually just to comply with one firearms regulation. The letter also pointed to the broader imbalance counties face, stating, “Rural counties simply do not have the same budget capacity as the larger metropolitan counties.”

Across all letters, counties are requesting similar changes: that all proposed mandates come with accurate fiscal notes, that funding is attached and that the state stop shifting costs downward while claiming progress from above.

A coalition preparing for legal clarity

Mesa County’s legal framework may be tested in the months ahead, particularly if lawmakers continue to advance bills without cost accommodations.

Commissioners Daniel, Davis and Fletcher have emphasized that Mesa County is committed to solving problems collaboratively but will defend its statutory interpretation if necessary.

“When the state hands down new rules without paying for them, local dollars get pulled away from services that you count on,” Daniel said. The statement appears in a video posted on Mesa County’s Fix It or Fund It page.

Letters were provided by these counties: These letters were provided to Rocky Mountain Voice and will be updated as new ones are received. Mesa County, Archuleta County, Boulder County, Crowley County, Delta County, Garfield County, Grand County, La Plata County, Logan County, Montezuma County, Pueblo County, Saguache County, Summit County and Teller County.

(Sentinel editor’s note: **Custer County BOCC letter: see page 17**)

Please see: <https://rockymountainvoice.com/2025/10/08/fix-it-or-fund-it-inside-the-361-million-standoff-over-colorado-unfunded-mandates/>

Mesa County department Annual fiscal estimate	
Assessor	\$50,000.00
Clerk and Recorder	\$149,786.10
Community Development	\$325,000.00
District Attorney	\$3,527,905.00
Facilities and Parks	\$15,000.00
Human Services	\$751,000.00
Information Technology	\$1,250,000.00
Public Works	\$200,000.00
Sheriff	\$2,073,170.44

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Text of Custer County Commisioner's Letter

September 10, 2025

The Honorable Jared Polis
Governor of Colorado
136 State Capital Denver, CO 80203

The Honorable James Coleman
President, Colorado Senate
200 E. Colfax Ave. Denver, CO 80203

The Honorable Julie McCluskie
Speaker, Colorado House of Representatives
200 E. Colfax Ave. Denver, CO 80203

Re: Bipartisan Action Regarding
Unfunded State Mandates

Dear Governor Polis, President Coleman, and Speaker McCluskie:

We, the undersigned Chairs of Boards of County Commissioners from across Colorado-and from both sides of the political aisle-write with a shared concern: the increasing number of unfunded mandates imposed by the State on Colorado’s counties. These unfunded mandates, issued without the financial support required to implement them, place an unsustainable burden on local governments and the citizens we serve and undermine both fiscal responsibility and the principle of local control.

That’s why Custer County is taking a stand. We voted at the September 10, 2025 Custer County Board of County Commissioners Meeting to send a formal letter to the Governor and legislative leadership notifying them that we will treat unfunded mandates as optional under Colorado law unless they come with adequate resources.

Colorado Revised Statutes§ 29-1-304.5 plainly states that when the State increases the level of service required by law, it must also provide adequate funding. If it does not, such mandates are not binding-they are optional. As elected officials representing communities of diverse political perspectives, we are united in our commitment to uphold this statutory protection and exercise it with discretion.

Recent mandates that are estimated to result in substantial, uncompensated costs include:

- SB23-166 & SB24-005: Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code
- SB25-003: Semiautomatic Firearms & Rapid-Fire Devices
- HB21-1286: Energy Benchmarking & Building Performance Standards
- HB21-1250: Demographic and Contact Reporting
- HB21-1236: Colorado OIT Compliance

And numerous others that have been enacted and proposed. They require Custer County to dedicate staff time, upgrade systems, or implement new procedures-none of which come with state funding.

We respectfully urge the General Assembly to reconsider the volume and scope of unfunded mandates. Additionally, we urge Governor Polis to exercise his veto power over unfunded mandates. We ask for an open dialogue on solutions, including funding mechanisms or revisions to the statutory frameworks requiring compliance.

Finally, we are instructing our respective staff to begin treating those unfunded mandates listed above, as optional pursuant to C.R.S. § 29-1-304.5(1). It is our sincere hope that this does not lead to unnecessary litigation, however, om County Attorneys are prepared to defend our exercise of statutory remedies if necessary.

This is not a symbolic gesture. It is a deliberate and lawful step rooted in the statute.

We remain committed to collaboration and problem-solving. However, we also recognize that the tension between state directive and local autonomy may, at times, require clarity from the courts. If that clarification becomes necessary, we are prepared to stand behind our interpretation and execution of the law.

Counties continue to be indispensable partners in delivering essential services across Colorado. We invite you to join us in a candid conversation about the true cost of these mandates and the path forward. Our offices stand ready to coordinate a meeting at your convenience.

Respectfully,

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Courtesy Announcement

NOTICE OF COORDINATED ELECTION
NOVEMBER 4, 2025
OFFICE OF THE CLERK & RECORDER
CUSTER COUNTY, COLORADO

In accordance with §1-5-205(1) C.R.S, notice is hereby given that a Coordinated Election will be held by Mail Ballot Election process, in the County of Custer, State of Colorado, on Tuesday, the 4th day of November 2025.

Mail Ballots – Ballots will be mailed starting October 10, 2025, to all active registered voters in the county. If you have recently moved and not updated your physical and/or mailing address, you can either come into our office to update your address or go online to govotecolorado.gov. Ballots cannot be forwarded.

Voter Service and Polling Center (VSPC) – You may obtain a replacement ballot, drop off your ballot, update your voter registration, register to vote, or vote using a voting machine at the Custer County Clerk’s Office located at 205 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe, CO. Dates and hours of operation are:

October 27th through November 4th
Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Saturday, November 1st, 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Election Day, Tuesday, November 4th, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
A voting machine will be available at this location only, starting Monday, October 27th.

Ballot drop-box locations – A 24-hour ballot drop-box is located at the rear entrance of the County Building, 205 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe, CO; and at the Wetmore Community Center, 95 County Road 393, Wetmore, CO.

Sample ballots may be obtained at the Custer County Clerk’s Office located at 205 S. 6th St., Westcliffe, CO; or my emailing your request to countyclerk@custercounty-co.gov.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto, set my hand and affixed the seal of the County of Custer this 2nd day of October 2025.

Kelley S. Camper
Custer County Clerk and Recorder

SMALL ANIMAL AND HAY AUCTION
FRIDAY OCT 31, 2025 6PM
Consignments Welcome!

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90 CR 241 WESTCLIFFE CO 81252

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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.

Leftist Judges' Lawfare Hitting SCOTUS Wall

When lower-court judges start giving anonymous interviews about the Supreme Court “undermining” them, you know the lawfare machine is fighting back. SCOTUS has repeatedly stayed or reversed trial-bench roadblocks aimed at kneecapping the Executive Branch. In Los Angeles, a district judge barred immigration officers from making reasonable-suspicion stops if they considered factors like language, location, or type of work. SCOTUS put that on ice, with Justice Kavanaugh reminding everyone that policy calls belong to the elected branches, not chambers with lifetime tenure. The three socialists on the Court usually dissent, but the practical result is simple: federal law enforcement can do its job while the case proceeds.

Same story on the separation-of-powers front. Lower courts tried to force President Trump to keep members of independent agencies whom he'd removed. First it was National Labor Relations Board and Merit Systems Protection Board members in *Trump v. Wilcox*; then came the Federal Trade Commission, where Chief Justice Roberts issued an administrative stay allowing the dismissal of Commissioner Rebecca Slaughter to remain in place. You don't have to love every personnel decision to see the constitutional point: Article II vests executive power in the President, and courts shouldn't micromanage who wields it on his behalf while litigation grinds on. These orders don't decide the ultimate merits, but they do stop the gamesmanship—using preliminary injunctions as a veto pen—dead in its tracks.

The justices also tackled the lower courts' favorite bludgeon: the “universal” injunction. In *Trump v. CASA*, the Court said nationwide injunctions against presidential actions aren't part of the traditional equitable toolbox. Relief should be tailored to the parties, not converted into a one-judge national policy. That ruling matters because it removes the go-to tactic for freezing an entire administration's agenda based on a single district court's say-so. Pair that with emergency-docket stays—like the one permitting the Defense Department's transgender service policy to take effect pending appeal—and a pattern emerges. The High Court is telling the trial bench: apply the law, respect the Constitution's allocation of powers, and stop trying to run the country from your courtroom.

Cue the chorus of anonymous robes lamenting that SCOTUS offers “little explanation” and is somehow “political.” Irony alert: accusing the Supreme Court of politics because it overturns their political rulings are a self-indictment. If your order exceeds your equitable authority, rewrites Article II, or substitutes your policy preferences for elected ones, don't blame the umpire for calling foul. The emergency docket exists to prevent irreparable harm while law catches up with reality; it's not pretty, but it's lawful and necessary—especially when trial courts swing for the fences. We need judges, not activists. As is written Isaiah 33:22, “For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us.” Of course, if they don't believe in God or God's law, how can they uphold law derived from God? Obviously, they cannot.

--Bill Wilson Dailyjot.com Printed with permission.

See Sources at <https://dailyjot.com/leftist-judges-lawfare-hitting-scotus-wall/>

The Colorado River

Part 1: “Harris Water Time” and the Colorado River Compact's Century of Lessons

by Steve Harris, Guest Commentary, Rocky Mountain Voice

Any good water management effort, process or project takes what I like to call “water time”—if you expect a water negotiation to take one year, add a zero because it will more likely consume 10! This I now officially and publicly trademark as “Harris Water Time,” patent pending.

Yet somehow the sturdy Colorado River Compact seems to turn my “water time” on its head—a complex, controversial interstate compact was negotiated in a year and has withstood over 100!

To explore this confounding story, my young friend suggested I write a series of articles on the Compact's 100-year anniversary since: “You were alive when it was negotiated, weren't you?”

Close but not quite. I have been in the water business in southwest Colorado since 1973—half of the Compact's life—during which I have watched this four-page agreement gradually increase in importance, especially during the last 20 years of drought.

And as this quote from the first meeting of the Colorado River Compact Commission (“Commission”) reflects, the need for negotiations to resolve water issues was just as important then as it is now:

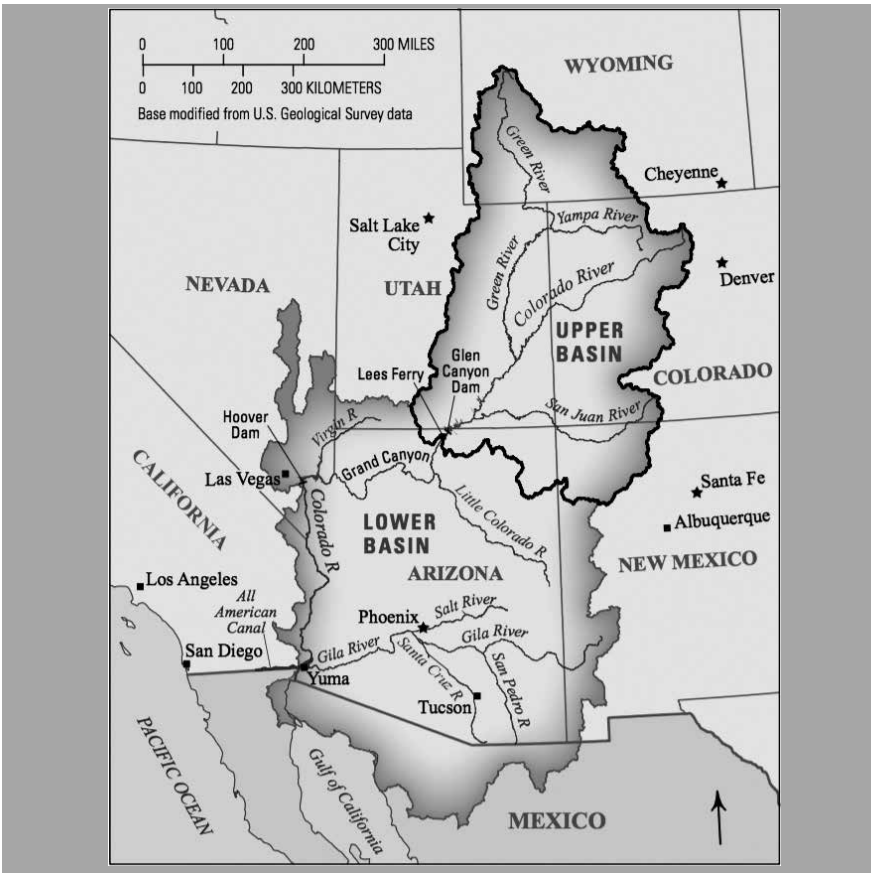
“It is hoped that such an agreement may be arrived at by this Commission as will prevent endless litigation which will inevitably arise in the conflict of state rights, with delays and costs that will be imposed upon our citizens through such conflicts.”

So what was the need for a Colorado River Compact in 1922?

If the “first in time, first in right doctrine” were used, California would have dibs on most of the river's flow. California was developing faster than Colorado, and would be able to put Colorado River water to use and therefore claim priority. Colorado realized this and initiated negotiations to ensure a water future for the late blooming Upper Basin. Why did California (and Arizona to a lesser extent) engage the Upper Basin states when they had the upper hand? They needed upper Basin support to secure a reservoir at Boulder Canyon (what we now know as Hoover Dam) to control flooding and provide storage for irrigation, primarily in southern California.

Who were the major players?

The Commission was established in 1922, with representatives from the seven basin states and the federal government, to agree on distribution of the Colorado River flows. Herbert Hoover, an engineer and soon-to-be president, was the Commission Chair. Colorado's representative to the Commission was Delph Carpenter, a water attorney and the principal advocate for a compact (more about Colorado's compact father and visionary negotiator in a future installment).



The Colorado River Compact split the basin into Upper and Lower regions, shaping water rights for seven states. Photo source: U.S. Geological Survey



Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover and delegates from seven Western states sign the Colorado River Compact in 1922.

Photo source: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

If the Compact was negotiated in 1922, what is this 1928 date I hear about?

The Commission met in January 1922 in D.C. In March, they toured Boulder Canyon in Phoenix. In April, they met at Denver's famous Brown Palace. Finally, consensus was reached at Bishop's Lodge near Santa Fe in November. (By the way: Bishops Lodge is now a high-end resort and spa north of the Santa Fe square and, as I have verified, is still a good place to negotiate water issues.)

All seven basin states later ratified the Compact (although Arizona didn't ratify until 1944), which was approved by Congress in 1928. So the question has arisen: should water in use before 1922 or 1928 be considered pre-compact, and therefore unfettered by compact obligations? I'll let the lawyers sort that out.

How does this affect Harris Water Time?

Well, it did take six years to get the Colorado River Compact ratified by the states, approved by Congress, and another 100 years to develop the related agreements, treaties, and operations that make up today's complex “Law of the River” that supports it, so I'm doubling down on Harris Water Time.

Stay tuned: Future installments will address the Upper and Lower Basin split at Lee Ferry, the flow data the Colorado River Compact Commission used, the impact of the Compact in southwest Colorado, and the La Plata River Compact also finalized at Bishops Lodge.

COLORADO RIVER Part I
see page 20

Rewilding at a Cost

From the Common Sense Institute - Colorado

Introduction

The reintroduction of gray wolves in Colorado, initiated under ballot measure Proposition 114 and implemented beginning in 2021, has brought approximately 25 wolves into the state over the past two years, and calls for the introduction of an additional 10-15 wolves between late November 2025 and February 2026. As Figure 1 shows, these wolves now roam across an estimated 29 counties, representing both rural agricultural regions and more densely populated areas such as Boulder and Jefferson Counties. While the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) program was designed to restore ecological balance, the widespread range of the introduced wolf population has resulted in unintended consequences for livestock producers, particularly in areas where grazing lands intersect with known wolf activity zones.

As documented by CPW, between December 2021 and May 2025, Colorado ranchers and farmers have suffered financial losses from 49 confirmed cases of gray wolf depredation. These cases — incidents in which wolves inflict physical trauma resulting in injury or death to livestock — happened in Pitkin, Gunnison, Eagle, Jackson, Routt, Grand, Rio Blanco, and Elbert counties. As of August 2025, at least 65 animals have died or been harmed. Affected livestock include sheep, ewes, cattle, calves, yearling heifers, four herding dogs, and one llama. Cattlemen and producers are left to question why CPW chose to release wolves with known histories of depredation into areas proximate to active livestock operations, raising questions about the agency’s risk assessment protocols and the prioritization of agricultural interests in the reintroduction strategy.

The reintroduction program was initially projected to cost about \$800,000 per year. Instead, it has consumed roughly \$8 million in taxpayer funds since operations began in 2021 – this includes

\$3.5 million in 2024–25 – as expenses for “conflict management” and depredation reimbursements have surged. In 2024 alone, claims for wolf-related livestock losses exceeded \$600,000, though the actual payouts were lower. Figure 2 below reports the cost level by fiscal year. The current budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26 is estimated at approximately \$2 million. Relative to FY 2023-24, actual costs have increased by nearly 119%.

Colorado’s Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund, enacted through Senate Bill (SB) 23-255 signed in 2023, was designed to provide financial restitution to agricultural producers experiencing losses due to wolf-related livestock depredation. The fund’s budget was set at \$350,000, however compensation claims from Coloradan ranchers have far exceeded this amount, indicating the compensation framework has severely underestimated the actual economic damages. One example is compensation claims from ranching operations out of Grand County. In this county, approximately 1,800 head of cattle have been exposed to gray wolves since the wolf reintroduction and research indicates CPW assessments undervalue the true economic losses by an average of

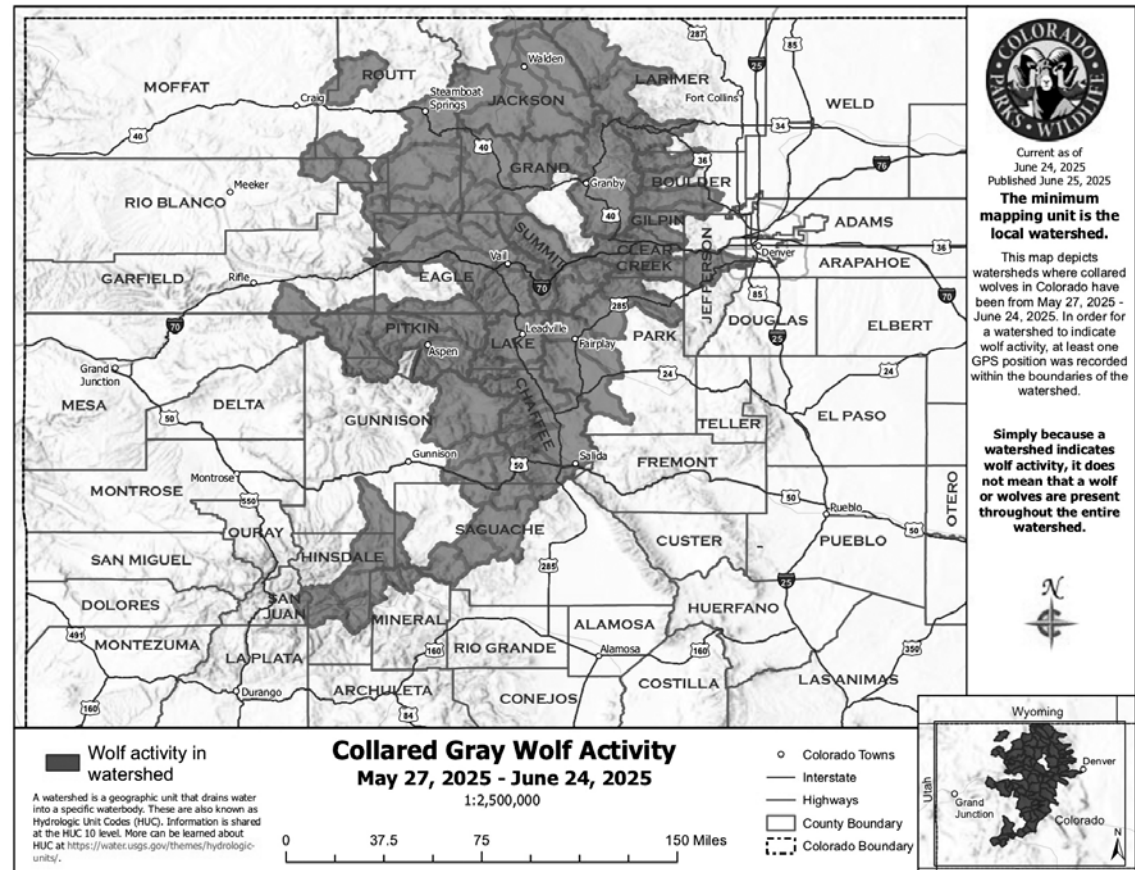


Figure 1

43.3%. Many ranchers may accept compensation out of economic necessity rather than adequacy.

Not only do payments fall short of covering the full market value of affected animals, they

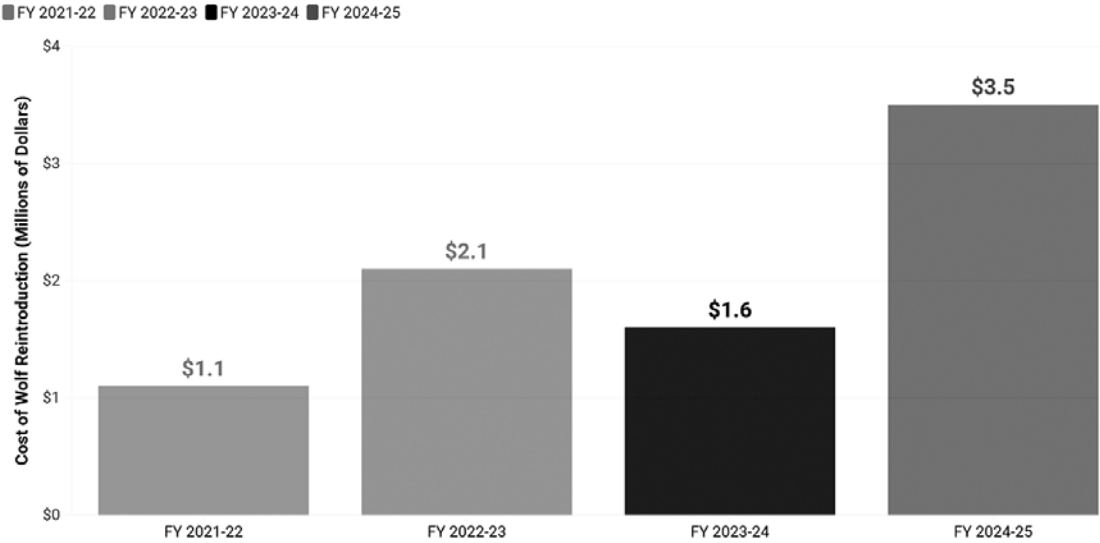
also systematically exclude indirect losses such as stress-induced weight reduction, decreased reproductive rates, and operational disruptions. Notably, since the program’s inception in 2021, the average live weight of

Colorado cattle has declined by at least 3-5%, suggesting broader systemic effects of predator-induced stress on herd productivity.

Claims also require extensive documentation and reimbursement is subject to per-animal value caps, up to \$15,000, regardless of actual market or reproductive value. Additionally, payments from claims have nearly broken the CWDCF’s modest budget in 2025, with just two claims accounting for more than \$340,000 in payouts, leaving minimal funds available for new cases. Ranchers also report difficulties navigating the reimbursement process, including long delays, paperwork burdens, and uncertainty regarding indirect loss coverage. These structural issues contribute to sustained financial hardship for livestock producers operating in wolf-active regions.

There are now three new livestock depredation claims across three ranches in Grand County totaling approximately \$580,000.

Government Spending on Colorado's Wolf Reintroduction Program by Fiscal Year



Source: Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Figure 2

REWILDING
see page 20

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Liberty Vote Acquires Dominion Voting Systems

October 9, 2025
Press Release (emphasis in original):

LIBERTY VOTE ACQUIRES DOMINION VOTING SYSTEMS IN HISTORIC DEAL; WILL NOW BE 100% AMERICAN OWNED

Scott Leiendecker, Founder & Chairman, Leads Charge to Restore Confidence, Transparency, and Trust in U.S. Elections

ST. LOUIS, MO – As of today, Dominion is gone. Liberty Vote assumes full ownership and operational control.

In a bold and historic move to transform and improve election integrity in America, Liberty Vote, led by nationally recognized election reform advocate Scott Leiendecker, has acquired Dominion Voting Systems.

Leiendecker, founder and chairman of Liberty Vote, brings over 25 years of experience in election modernization and reform. His mission is clear: to restore public confidence in the electoral process through transparent, secure, and trustworthy voting systems, including the use of hand-marked paper ballots.

“Liberty Vote signals a new chapter for American elections-one where trust is rebuilt from the ground up,” said Leiendecker. “Liberty Vote is committed to delivering election technology that prioritizes paper-based transparency, security, and simplicity so that voters can be assured that every ballot is filled-in accurately and fairly counted.”

Liberty Vote will set and exceed the benchmark for delivering elections voters can trust with commitment to:

100% American Ownership: Liberty Vote is committed to domestic staffing and software development.

Paper Ballot Focus: Leveraging hand-marked paper ballots enabling compliance with President Trump’s executive order, and ensuring election security and compliance with federal standards.

Third-Party Auditing: Incorporating rigorous, industry-leading third-party auditing standards to verify election integrity at every step.

Simplified, Transparent Systems: Designed for election officials and voters alike, with an emphasis on clarity and accountability.

Liberty Vote is an election technology company dedicated to securing the democratic process through innovation, transparency, and wholly American ownership. Founded by election reform leader Scott Leiendecker, the company champions reforms designed to ensure every American’s vote is protected and counted accurately.

REWILDING from page 19

Approval of these claims would exhaust the existing balance of the CWDCF and send it into a deficit, raising concerns about the long-term fiscal sustainability of the program and its broader implications for public resource allocation and a thriving agricultural sector. CPW has stated they plan to continue the program for at least the next five to six years.

This study evaluates the economic effects of the gray wolf reintroduction initiated in Colorado in December 2021. It evaluates the true economic impacts of the program and attempts to quantify costs to the agricultural sector while also assessing indirect economic effects on the entire state.

Key Findings

- Over the last two years, approximately 25 wolves were introduced in Colorado. CPW plans to introduce an additional 15 wolves in 2026. These wolves roam across an estimated 29 counties, including both rural agricultural regions and more densely populated areas like Boulder and Jefferson counties.
- Relative to FY 2023-24, actual program costs for gray wolf introduction have increased by nearly 119%.
- The State of Colorado has spent \$3.5 million in the past year (between May 2024 and August 2025) on wolf reintroduction efforts – more than triple the amount initially communicated to voters during the 2020 ballot measure campaign. That spending included \$1.6 million for staffing, \$900,000 for operations, \$410,000 for compensating ranchers whose livestock have been preyed upon by the wolves, and \$85,000 for “conflict minimization.”

- Each adult wolf is associated with roughly 2 confirmed depredation cases per year.
- CSI estimates each case costs ranchers and farmers approximately \$32,000.
- Between 2026 and 2030, the cumulative cost of livestock depredation com-pensation is projected to total approximately \$35.1 million.
- By 2030, when the wolf population is expected to reach a self-sustaining level of 200 wolves, CSI estimates that annual costs will be \$12.5 million per year.
- Modeling using REMI forecasts suggests that wolf reintroduction results in substantial economic disruption, including a projected loss of nearly 400 jobs statewide and 170 in areas outside of Denver Metro and South Denver during 2030 alone.
- Between 2026 and 2040, the Coloradan reintroduction program is expected to cost the entire state:
 - Over \$334 million in GDP;
 - Over \$611 million in lost output from businesses;
 - More than \$333 million in forgone personal income; and
 - Roughly \$267 million in forgone disposable personal income.
- Cumulatively, by 2040, gray wolf reintroduction is estimated to cost rural Coloradans:
 - Over \$200 million in GDP;
 - Nearly \$400 million in lost output from businesses;
 - Roughly \$140 million in forgone personal income; and
 - Over \$120 million in forgone disposable personal income.
- Compensation claims from

ranchers out of Grand County – where approximately 1,800 head of cattle have been impacted since the wolf reintroduction – indicate that CPW assessments undervalue the true economic losses to ranchers by an average of 43.3%.

- Since the program’s inception in 2021, the average live weight of Colorado cattle has declined by at least 3%, suggesting broader systemic effects of predator-induced stress on herd productivity.
- At least 65 animals have been harmed or killed as a result of the wolf reintroduction as of May 2025, resulting in an estimated direct cost of \$8.15 million.
- While it’s still too early to publish definitive data on deer and elk population declines in Colorado, historical patterns from other states show that wolf reintroduction typically results in a 50% reduction in big game populations such as deer and elk. If similar trends hold, both ranchers and outfitters could face additional substantial long-term economic consequences.
- To date, only the Yellowstone region and the Smoky Mountains have experienced notable economic benefits associated with wolf reintroduction programs. From an economic perspective, this may be attributed to the relatively low population density in areas such as Eastern North Carolina and Yellowstone, which reduces the likelihood of conflict with agricultural and recreational land uses.

(Sentinel Editors Note: *As space allows, we will print more of this study. You can find the whole thing at the the link below.)*

Please see: <https://www.common.senseinstituteus.org/colorado/research/energy-and-our-environment/rewilding-at-a-cost>

COLORADO RIVER from page 18

Steve Harris is a distinguished water engineer based in Durango, Colorado, with a career spanning over 50 years that has significantly shaped water policy and resource management in the region. As president of Harris Water Engineering, Inc., he has led major projects such as the Dry Gulch Reservoir and played a guiding role in local and state water planning initiatives. Harris is widely respected for his advocacy of water conservation and xeriscaping, serving on the Animas Basin Roundtable and the Colorado

Interbasin Compact Committee, and has worked closely with legislators to promote the sustainable use of water resources. His leadership and technical expertise have influenced landmark legislation, while his public outreach—such as the “Lawn Gone” campaign—underscores his commitment to balancing municipal and agricultural needs in Colorado’s water management.

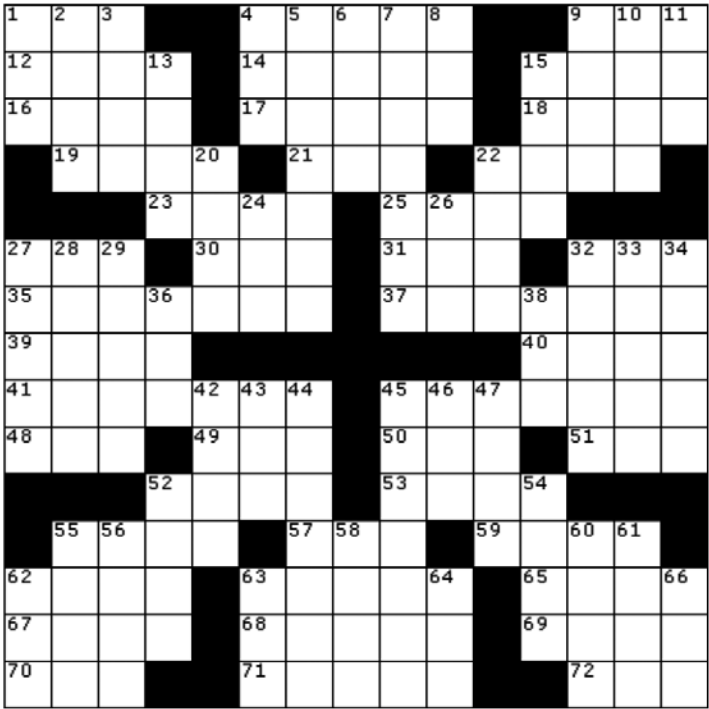
RMV Editor’s note: These articles were first published in 2022 for the Colorado River Compact’s 100-year anniversary. At a time when basin negotiations remain fraught and the river’s future uncertain, RMV is running

the series to give readers both context and clarity through Harris’s seasoned perspective.

Opinions expressed in commentary pieces are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the management of the Rocky Mountain Voice or the SDC Sentinel, but even so we support the constitutional right of the author to express those opinions.

Please see: <https://rockymountainvoice.com/2025/09/23/harris-water-time-and-the-colorado-river-compacts-century-of-lessons/>

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

- 1 Night bird
4 Measure
9 Tribe of Israel
12 Scallion
14 Publicist
15 Faith, ___ and charity
16 Hindu goddess, consort of Siva
17 Holy book
18 Adam's son
19 ___ James Version
21 Luau dish
22 Desert condition
23 Display
25 Thy word is a ___ unto my feet
27 Children's game
30 American Cancer Society (abbr.)
31 Samuel's mentor
32 Affirmative
35 Widen
37 Aged in nature

- 39 Gets older
40 What horses eat
41 Caulk (2 wds.)
45 Palestinian body of water
48 Tree
49 Bad (prefix)
50 Choose
51 Strive
52 Jesus turned water into wine here
53 Country in SE Asia
55 Last word of a prayer
57 Volume (abbr.)
59 A land flowing with ___ and honey
62 Robed
63 Sounds
65 Desire
67 Peel
68 Filthy ___
69 Asian dress
70 Noah's boat
71 Tip
72 Smite

DOWN

- 1 Ancient
2 7 days
3 Tribe of Israel
4 Chat
5 Fat
6 Convexity
7 Italian astronomer
8 Compass point
9 Mongolian desert
10 Imitated
11 NJersey's neighbor
13 Love is patient, love is ___
15 David's musical instrument
20 Hiking equipment
22 Among
24 Microgram
26 Entire
27 Torment
28 Heavenly being
29 Glitter
32 Leaven
33 Organic compound

- 34 Analyze properties
36 American sign language
38 Cain fled to this land
42 Asian nation
43 Group admirer
44 British spelling of flavor
45 Bucks
46 Environmental protection agency (abbr)
47 Speck
52 Give
54 Transgressions
55 Like a wing
56 A Gospel
58 Fairy tale opener
60 Sister of Rachel
61 Lotion brand
62 Accountant
63 Tender loving care
64 Rent
66 Dah's partner

Key on page 23



The Second Amendment Corner

2025



Liberty’s Line in the Sand

“All That Is Necessary for the Triumph of Evil Is That Good Men Do Nothing”— Edmund Burke

FORCE B1: The Straight-Pull Rimfire Rifle From Hammerli Arms

by Ammoland
Editors & Staff

Hammerli Arms has been known as a legendary competitive powerhouse for more than 160 years. With the launch of the Force B1, this tradition continues through bold innovation of historic products that build upon the Hammerli Arms legacy. In line with the brand’s history, the features of this rifle unleash confidence within any shooter, in any situation, at any time.

“The Force B1 combines capabilities from competitive shooting with outdoor enthusiasts who spend time in the field, withstanding nature’s elements. The mechanical features make this firearm resilient, while building confidence with every shot,” said Jens Krogh, vice president of marketing and product development. “This rifle is the perfect survival tool, and encourages shooters to tap into their natural instincts. They’ll never have to miss out on relentless functionality when faced with the ever-changing demands of the environment.”



Walther Hammerli Arms Force B1 .22LR Rifle

- Featured capabilities:
- **Quick-Change Barrel System:** A toolless and field-ready transition between barrel lengths and calibers – from the nimble .22LR to the potent .22WMR.
 - **Straight Pull Bolt Action:** Swift precision and silent execution from the toggle-style mechanism, ensures lightning-fast follow-up shots, a rock-solid lockup for enhanced accuracy, and is an ideal companion for those who prefer the stealthy

- touch of suppression.
 - **Adaptable Magwell:** Utilizing the Hammerli adapter system, seamlessly coordinated caliber changes with the correct Ruger® magazine creates a flawless fit.
 - **Tailored Ergonomics:** Adjustable stock allows each shooter to customize length of pull and comb height for comfort and control.
 - **Versatile Muzzle:** Equipped with a threaded barrel to embrace

a variety of muzzle devices and suppressors, the Force B1 can roar or whisper as needed.

- **Magazine Mastery:** Ruger® rotary-style magazines secure shooter accuracy with a smooth and efficient feeding system that stands up to the rugged challenges of the wild.
- **Precision Optics, Custom Triggers:** The Picatinny Optic Rail provides a sturdy platform, enhancing field of vision. The Trigger Group, compatible with Ruger® 10/22 style trigger groups, allows for easy customization and more control in each shot.

When the world demands resilience, answer with the Force B1 by your side, ready for anything the wilderness throws your way.

Please see: <https://www.ammoland.com/2025/10/force-b1-the-brand-new-straight-pull-rimfire-rifle-from-hammerli-arm>



FORCE B1: The Brand New Straight-Pull Rimfire Rifle From Hammerli Arms

TOURISM from page 14

The team proposed spending \$20,000 out of the 2025 budget to build a social media platform, leveraging existing content. The board unanimously approved \$10,000 with the intent to approve the second half based on results.

This initiative represents a shift to paid social media advertising, in contrast to a focus on CCTB’s current information ecosystem, e.i. their Website, Facebook and instagram accounts, with some paid boosting of posts on those accounts. Ms. Roosendaal has considerable social media expertise and as the youngest in the room has already created a presence on Tik Tok, very popular with the under 30 crowd.

The table below is for reference. Charney requested details for the highlighted items.

CUSTER COUNTY TOURISM - 3RD PARTY ADVERTISING FY26		
Yes/No	Description	Amount
	Colorado Life 1/4 pg 3x & full page	\$4,200.00
✓	Colorado Living	\$3,500.00
	Colorado National Park Journal	\$6,000.00
✓	Colorado Public Radio - KCFR & KRCC 20 spots each	\$2,800.00
✓	Colorado Public Radio - KRCC 24 spots	\$768.00
✓	Colorado Vacation Directory	\$300.00
✓	CTO Miles Sponsored Article Renewal FY27	\$3,500.00
✓	Mail Chimp \$135 + \$25.50/mo per additional 1,000	\$2,250.00
✓	Social Media Campaigns	\$2,000.00
✓	WM Tribune Ads	\$2,000.00
✓	Royal Gorge Visitors Guide	\$1,500.00
✓	Destination Off Season Marketing	\$5,000.00
✓	WNV Agricultural Marketplace Promotion	\$5,000.00
✓	Fresh Opportunities	\$10,000.00
	Total	\$38,618.00

Meanwhile, a new set of light-pole banners are being created by the boards. The new theme is non-profits. The selection criteria was the top recipients of last year’s Spirit Campaign, plus a couple non-profits deemed vital by the CCTB Chair, Deb Adams. The creative process included a couple new logos, most prominently for Wet Mountain

Fire Protection District. Such expenses apparently are to enhance visitor experience.

The research underlying this series has been limited to information presented in public meetings. As a result of changes in author/researcher roles, we anticipate greater cooperation with requests about the nature of vague budget items in the 2026 Budget.

Beyond such clarifications, the Part IV in this series will explore the legal framework that, from a layman’s reading, requires a separate fiduciary panel responsible for administration of the Lodging Funds. The BOCC recently started their due diligence on this matter.

Firewood Bank Applications Now Open – Limited Supply Available

Veterans Rescue Ranch has opened applications for the VETS (Veterans Emergency Timber Support) Firewood Bank Program, which provides firewood to Custer County residents and veterans in need of heating assistance. This year’s supply is very limited — approximately twelve cords — and will be distributed on a qualifying-need basis. Applicants must reside in Custer County, use wood as their primary source of heat, and demonstrate financial hardship. Veterans must have a discharge status other than dishonorable.

Due to limited resources, delivery cannot be guaranteed, and applicants should plan to arrange pickup. The available wood is mixed pine and aspen, and while the Ranch strives for 20% moisture content or below, levels may vary depending on weather and demand.

The Veterans Trust Fund (VTF), administered through the American Legion Post 170 and VFW Post 12063, serves as the primary source of firewood assistance for veterans and widows of veterans.

Applications for the Firewood Bank are available online at www.VeteransRescueRanch.org/vets-program. For questions, contact GSchram@VeteransRescueRanch.org.



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Letters to the Editor Cont'd

Just My Opinion

Dear Editor and to the people of Custer County,

This is just my opinion and I have a right to express it. If you have data or facts that disprove my opinion, I'm happy to hear it. In fact, let's have a conversation.

I've lived in Custer County for 30 years now and I know that the recent information card we all received in our mailboxes explaining a YES VOTE and a NO VOTE on the proposed lodging tax that will support 'workforce housing' and 'childcare' is just what all tax-promoting ideas are, propaganda. They begin with...Recent comprehensive studies show that Custer County is losing the prime working age population blah, blah, blah. In the 30 years I've lived here it has always been this way so please don't try to tell me anything has changed in "recent years". The Valley is not a place young people stay and work and need government providing their every need in order to stay here. If they go off to college in a larger city they see the excitement of theaters, bars, restaurants that stay open long after eight pm. They see crowds of people their own age hanging out, discussing ideas, going to places they can dance the night away and meet people their own age. Can you remember when you were 18-30-40? Did you want to live in a sleepy little town where the sidewalks rolled up at 8:00 or is this the place you dreamed you would retire to? Or maybe this is the place you visited in

order to hike, hunt, explore and then go back to the city to tell tall tales of?

People, let's get real, where is this big workforce going to work? Where is the big restaurant or factory or company that needs service workers? The only younger persons I think would want to come to Custer County are entrepreneurs and these people are not going to look to the government to take care of them. They see a need and they push to make it work, they are willing to live on the short side of personal pleasure to build their dream. And let's take a look at childcare; the best child-care is the mother of that child OR a woman with a dream of making her home into a childcare facility. Why don't you encourage the business sense of a woman to open a nursery for children, plant the idea of going into business and letting the person or persons work to make that a reality. Instead we trot out the same tired old idea that the government can do it when the government isn't "inspired" to do it. Success is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration, at least it was when I was a young person, and perspiration is what young people love and need! God didn't provide them with all that energy just to be told go sit on the couch until I tell you what you can do. It's uninspiring, boring, pathetic and it isn't freedom to pursue happiness.

I built several businesses (in a big city) and it was a personal JOY to do it. I was

driven to build something I had control over. Nowadays the government gives you money, tells you how to do something they want done and the person receiving the gift of another person's money via taxes is uninspired to do anything. It's not American, period. You know what it is? It's the shameful statement the an uninspiring President told the people of this country; "You didn't build that". At the time I thought, well you don't want to know what I thought. People NEED to build things, people NEED to be unleashed from their old, stale, government leaders ideas so they can dream and think about their own future, not what old, government, leaders think they need.

I guess you can tell I'm a NO on raising anyone's taxes. Can you also smell the fear in Colorado that because we are a state that's not following government regulations regarding sanctuary cities and that we may be facing some money shortages? It's probably good for us as a state, we need the government out of our lives, releasing wolves, telling you where you can and cannot trod and that you must pay for a permit to pick up a shed antler. Are we going to continue letting bureaucrats tell us what we can do in the forests that we own? I'm a strong NO because it's un-American, it's just da**ed UN-American.

Respectfully,
Lisa Frank, Rural Custer

1A
from page 5

To me, though, the critical fact is my undying faith that Custer County, the Wet Mountain Valley, and the

Sangre de Cristo mountains are a truly unique and desirable tourist destination, and will remain so regardless of the new tax revenue. In fact, if I were to predict, rather than losing tourism dollars, the investments

from this revenue will support an increase in tourism revenue in the long term. Believe in our beauty, vote YES on 1A.

James Gilbert
Chair, Custer County
Democratic Party

My Friend, George

Dear Editor,

I'm writing to tell you about my friend, George.

George Gramlich was one of the first people I met when I moved to Custer County in early 2018. I quickly found myself among a group of liberty and civic-minded locals and somehow found myself in the conference room of the Sentinel one afternoon across a table from George, listening to him pitch me on the idea of running for county Commissioner. Never one to mince words or waste time, he peppered me with all kinds of pointed questions about my values and beliefs in what became one of the most memorable introductions I've ever experienced with another person. For a multitude of reasons, we mutually arrived at the conclusion I wasn't a good fit for the position, but the seeds of a splendid friendship were sewn as a result of that conversation.

George and I shared many values and personality traits, a fact which tickled both of us considering the 35 years between us. I have always been drawn to crusty elders who call the shots as they see them, without hesitation. Throughout my life, I have frequently been described as feisty or as having moxy, adjectives which also suited him to a tee; so, when we also established our mutual love of liberty, truth, justice, and country, we quickly developed a dynamic which usually only emerges between two friends who have known each other for much longer.

Over the subsequent seven and a half remaining years of George's time in this

life, we shared countless emails, good-natured yet profound conversations, laughs, meals, books, and all other things friends with mutual interests share. My husband and I were honored to be regular guests at his Christmas parties, Fourth of July celebrations, and other gatherings. George was an immensely generous person, whether it was thoughtful gifts he knew the recipient would enjoy, or something as substantial as providing housing and other necessities to individuals in need. His generosity was truly selfless as he never did it with an expectation of receiving anything in return, or even praise and recognition since many of his good deeds were only known to those close to him.

One aspect of our friendship I valued the most was how, despite him and I disagreeing on many things, he never showed anything but respect for me and genuine curiosity as to the basis of my perspectives. I deeply admired his commitment to his own values and beliefs and how he never wavered, cowered, or apologized for any of them. He was one of the purest embodiments of the ethos of courageous defense of liberty and faith I have ever met, and he will forever serve as a role model for me in that regard. I miss him dearly and would give anything to see that impish grin he always wore just one more time.

Cheers to you, George. You fought the good fight, and I will proudly carry on the legacy of your spirit while you rest in peace for eternity.

Becky OlsonLubbock, Texas
Former full-time Custer County resident

Vacationer on Lodging Tax

Dear Editor,

As a regular visitor who rents vacation homes in Westcliffe, I was disappointed to learn about Ballot Question 1A, which would raise the lodging tax in Custer County by 300%. Westcliffe has always stood out as one of Colorado's last affordable mountain destinations — a place where families like mine can enjoy the beauty of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains without the high prices of other resort towns.

If passed, this measure would add another 4% tax on every short-term rental, motel, and RV stay,

bringing the total lodging tax close to 10%. That may not sound like much on paper, but it will make a big difference to visitors choosing where to stay — and to local businesses that rely on tourism.

According to estimates, this tax could shrink Custer County's economy by about **\$1.5 million a year**. The county might collect around **\$170,000 in new taxes**, but after lost tourism and reduced sales tax revenues, the net gain would be only about **\$70,000**. That's a steep price for a small benefit — especially at a time when lodging

revenues are already down double digits for two years in a row.

Tourism is the lifeblood of Westcliffe's small businesses. Raising taxes on visitors will only drive them elsewhere. I love this town and want to see it thrive, but Question 1A risks doing more harm than good. Please consider the broader economic impact before casting your vote.

Sincerely,
Jason and Charis Guy
Frisco, TX

Frequent Visitor and
Short-Term Rental Guest
in Westcliffe



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Liberty Rocks - 2025

Tuesday, October 21st

Tony's Steak & Tavern

Tony's Mountain Pizza's Full Menu will be offered
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Meet & Greet and Dinner begins at 5:30 pm
Presentation begins at 6pm

Come eat, discuss, engage, and learn
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Presentation by: Custer County EMS
Open Mic

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Facebook: Liberty Rocks in Custer County

Democrats Vote To Keep Government Shuttered For Eighth Time In Row, Two Weeks In

by Adam Pack, Reporter



—October 14, 2025

Almost all Senate Democrats voted down a bipartisan effort to reopen the government on Tuesday as the funding lapse hit the 14-day mark.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and the vast majority of his caucus rejected a clean funding measure, arguing Republicans must address rising healthcare costs in the government funding bill. Republicans have consistently argued that they will not negotiate unrelated healthcare policy until Schumer supplies the votes to end the shutdown.

The failed vote was the eighth time that Schumer has led his caucus in rejecting the House-passed continuing

resolution (CR). The clean CR contains no partisan policy riders and largely extends government funding at current levels.

Still, just two Democratic caucus members — Democratic Nevada Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto and Independent Maine Sen. Angus King — joined Republicans in voting for the measure that would advance a bill to reopen the government on Tuesday. Democratic Pennsylvania Sen. John Fetterman, who has consistently voted to reopen the government during the shutdown, did not vote. Just one Republican, Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, opposed the measure. Republicans need a total of 60 Senate votes to clear the upper chamber's filibuster and end the shutdown.

Despite Schumer voicing confidence that Democrats will benefit politically from a prolonged shutdown, the party does not appear to be experiencing a bump in polling yet.

A spate of polling suggests that voters still trust GOP lawmakers and the Trump administration more on economic issues. Recent surveys have also found that more respondents blame Republicans rather than Democrats for the shutdown.

Republicans and the Trump administration hold a 4-point advantage on the economy compared to congressional Democrats, according to a Harvard CAPS/Harris poll surveying 2,413 registered voters.

An October survey from the Democratic polling firm Navigator Research found that Republicans have a 2-point advantage on inflation and cost-of-living issues and that voters favor Republicans on “getting things done” by an 11-point margin.

Please see: <https://dailycaller.com/2025/10/14/democrats-vote-government-shutdown-two-weeks/>

WMVO Mtg. #3
from page 1

created to support outdoor and community projects.

The Mission Statement created during the second meeting was revealed as:

Our vision for the Custer County community is to ensure that the land and community we love are enjoyed for generations to come, including:

- Our scenic beauty, agricultural lands, and waters;
- Our forests, wildlife, and outdoor recreation; and
- Our rural heritage and community livelihood.

The three focus areas outlined above served as the basis for conversation at the third meeting and will define the work of the WMVO's Action Teams moving forward.

During the meeting, participants could choose among the three “Action Team stations,” or rotate between them. The attendees were asked to share their thoughts and ideas on post-it notes and then to discuss those identified strengths, challenges, and opportunities within each small group.

Scenic Beauty, Agricultural Lands, and Waters

Residents highlighted solitude, trails, and strong private land stewardship as local strengths. One participant noted that those who take care of the land best are the individual landowners, farmers, and ranchers. Concerns included invasive weeds, algae in Lake DeWeese, the health of waterways, and the protection of our valley from development. Ideas

included watershed cleanup, water and noxious weed education, nutrient monitoring in the valley as well as holding strong on current zoning, especially on the valley floor.

Forests, Wildlife, and Outdoor Recreation

Strengths included the abundance of trails and public lands, strong Search and Rescue operations, and uncrowded outdoor spaces. Suggested improvements ranged from better trail maintenance and wildfire mitigation to expanded recreation opportunities such as snow shoeing and cross country skiing. Participants also discussed balancing outdoor tourism with conservation and ensuring local control over land management decisions.

Rural Heritage and Community Livelihood

Attendees expressed pride in local history and landmarks like the Beckwith Ranch and All Aboard Westcliffe museum. Ideas for strengthening this area included more youth education about rural life, a “Day in the Life of a Ranch” program led by Centennial families, creating an Agricultural Marketplace, and building a community center

At the close of the meeting, participants were invited to join one of the three Action Teams. These teams will meet several times in the coming months to refine the best ideas into actionable projects. The public will have an opportunity to vote on these projects through a survey ahead of WMVO's 4th community meeting scheduled for January 20th. If you would like to join an action team contact WMVO by email; getoutdoors@wmvo.org



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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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Correction:

In our coverage of the WMVO, a staff report titled “Unpacking the WMVO: The Volunteer Teams”, we said that “Board member Shelly Larson owns Jo Studio which received grant funds for WMVO’s Communication and Public Relations effort.” We erred in identifying her as a Board member. Shelly Larson owns Jo Studio, Inc. which receives grant funds as a consultant for WMVO’s Marketing, Public Relations and Communications efforts.

The online version of the article has been changed to reflect that she is acting as a consultant

