

INSIDE THIS ISSUE! SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE GUIDE PAGES 4-5



Even Yeti took the time to show his love for the pristine wilderness of the San Juan Mountains during the recent 24th Annual Ouray Ice Festival. Every man, woman, child and snowbeast will want to help support the new Colorado Outdoor Recreation & Economy (CORE) Act! (See page 3 for more!)

Grassroots Democracy

The People's Lobby Trip has taken off!



As many as 20 Western Colorado residents are poised to adventure into grassroots democracy as part of Western Colorado Alliance's 2019 People's Lobby Trip. They join community organizer Jeriel Clark on Sunday, February 24, to travel to the State Capitol in Denver, where they are meeting with Colorado legislators and tracking bills significant to Western Colorado.

The People's Lobby Trip is an annual event conducted by the Alliance to foster civic engagement and democratic involvement.

The People's Lobby Trip is free for all Western Colorado Alliance members and covers travel, lodging, and some meals.

To discover more about some of Western Colorado Alliance's legislative priorities, check out our Legislative Guide on page 4-5.

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San Juan Wilderness

Getting to the CORE of the matter



by Leah López
Community
Organizer

Over the noise of crampons crunching on snow and crowds cheering the expert moves of climbing competitors, Western Colorado Alliance members spoke with Ouray Ice Festival attendees about the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act (SJMWA). Our goal was to collect signed postcards to be delivered to Sen. Gardner and Rep. Tipton in a demonstration of broad local, state and national support. The Alliance was joined by Sheep Mountain Alliance, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, and Ridgway-Ouray Community Council volunteers.

While in Ouray, we learned the reintroduction of the bill would take place January 28. But this time it would have company. SJMWA champion Senator Michael Bennet and Congressman Joe Neguse introduced the Colorado Outdoor Recreation & Economy (CORE) Act that aims to protect approximately

400,000 acres of public land in Colorado, establishing new wilderness areas and safeguarding existing outdoor recreation opportunities to boost the economy for future generations.

The CORE Act unites and improves four previously introduced bills: the Continental Divide Recreation, Wilderness, and Camp Hale Legacy Act, the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act, the Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act, and the Curocanti National Recreation Area Boundary Establishment Act.

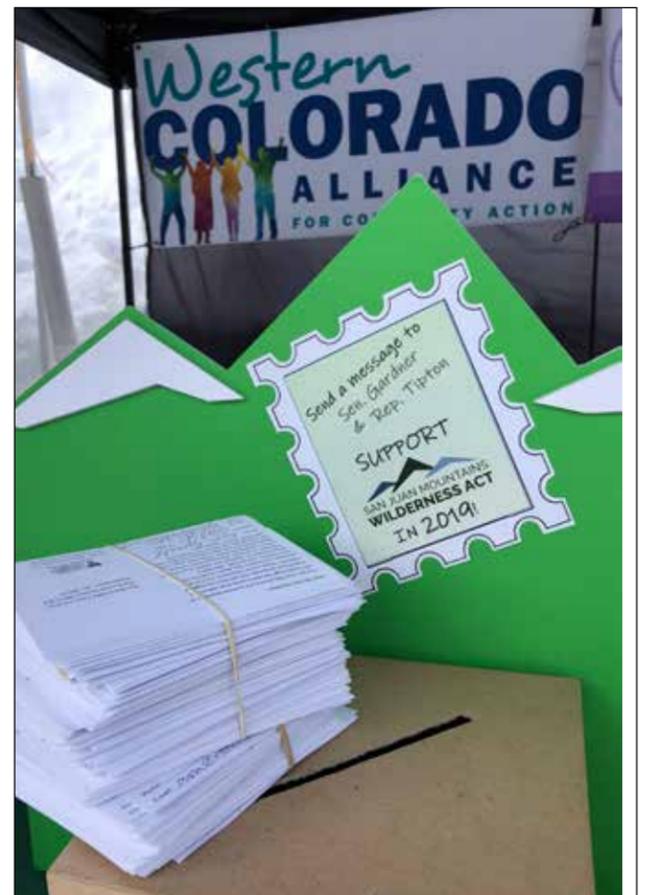
Alliance member Sherry Schenk says, "The CORE act is so exciting to me. If it is passed, it will protect in several different ways the most outstanding, beautiful, and unique areas in our state."

Colorado counties, in close coordination with businesses, recreation groups, sportsmen, and conservationists, helped write each element of the CORE Act over the last decade.

Of the land protected, about

73,000 acres are new wilderness areas, and nearly 80,000 acres are new recreation and conservation management areas that preserve existing outdoor uses, such as hiking and mountain biking. The bill also includes a first-of-its-kind National Historic Landscape to honor Colorado's military legacy and prohibits new oil and gas development in areas important to ranchers and sportsmen.

The SJMWA was closer than ever last year but was pulled from the list of public lands bills headed to the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee. Colorado (R) Senator Cory Gardner, a member of this committee, expressed 11th-hour concerns with the bill despite giving Western Slope residents and elected officials assurance of his support throughout 2018.



The SJMWA proposal has been created through collaboration by a vast number of user groups over the past decade and does not close any current motorized trail. We will remind Gardner that he is the only Colorado Senator that has not sponsored a wilderness bill in over 50 years.

New name, same goal: Contact Senator Gardner and Representative Tipton and tell them it's time to take care of Colorado communities that depend on public lands. Ask them to support the CORE Act in 2019!

Our Alliance 2.0: Strategic Plan and Membership Restructuring



As part of our ongoing work to strengthen our Alliance and grow our grassroots power, we are making some changes to our membership system. In consultation with our county based affiliate groups, we have agreed that:

- Full membership dues will now be retained by the main office.

- Affiliate groups will contribute an annual institutional fee to help contribute to the organizing, training, and communication support provided by Alliance staff.

- We will create a non-dues paying supporter category for people who contribute to and engage in the work of our organization via their time and effort, but who have not yet made a financial contribution. These are our future members who we

will work to develop as leaders and donors within our organization!

These decisions come after years of input, conversation, and reflection with members, affiliate group leaders, and Alliance Board members. We are grateful for all the thoughts and ideas our members have contributed to this process. If you have any questions about these changes, please contact the Western Colorado Alliance office.



brings people together to build grassroots power through community organizing and leadership development.

Our Alliance's vision for the future is one where engaged local voices are leading communities across Western Colorado that are healthy, just and self-reliant.

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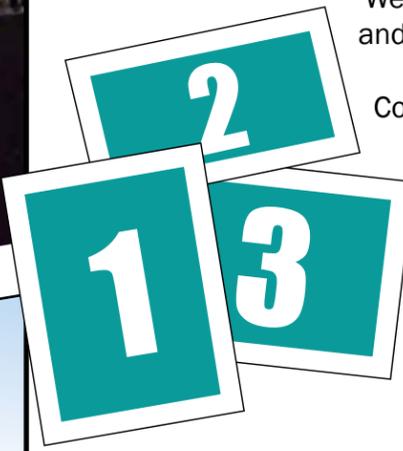
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Colorado Conservation Community's legislative Reception 2019



Western Colorado Alliance Staff Director Emily Hornback and Community Organizer Leah López traveled to Denver in early February for the 2019 Colorado Conservation Community's annual Legislative Reception. While there, they also took the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB19-1113, a bill which will protect water quality from adverse impacts from mineral mining.

1. Governor **Jared Polis** addresses attendees. **2.** Representatives **Dylan Roberts** and **Barbara McLachlan** hear testimony on HB19-1113. **3.** From left to right: Community Organizer **Leah López** with Representative **Barbara McLachlan** and Western Colorado Alliance Staff Director **Emily Hornback**.

A "full house" makes for a winning hand



by **Steve Allerton**
Alliance President

Western Colorado Alliance is a forward-looking organization and one that is passionate about creating a western slope that is healthy, just, and self-reliant. It is an organization that continues to evolve and refine itself over time. Without the efforts of many people, past and present, WCA would not be where it is today.

Regardless of position or tenure, I am grateful for the contributions and presence of those staff, board members, and members that have made a difference in the evolution of this organization.

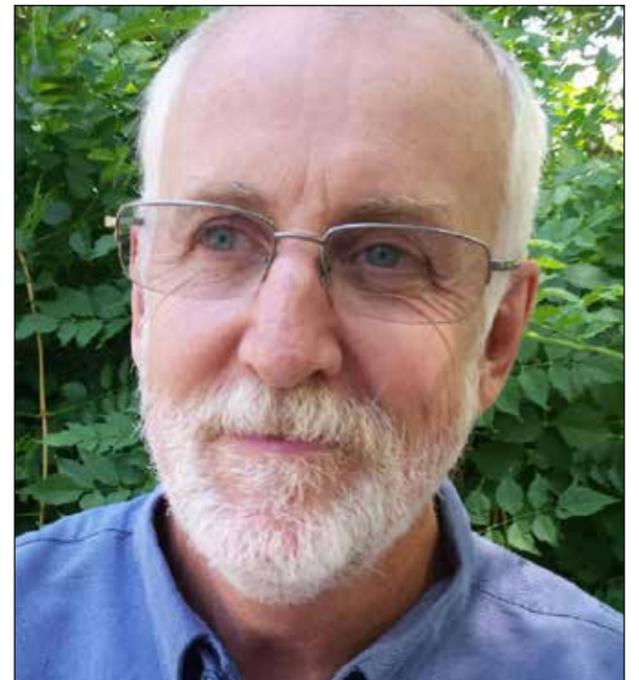
Today, WCA's office is experiencing a "full house" and efforts are underway to secure a new and expanded office space. As you'll read in these pages our organizers and staff are making the best of a crowded situation while continuing to get "it" done!

With your support, we have experienced successful fundraising efforts. Many thanks to the Board and staff for reaching out and engaging our members as together we create a more secure financial foundation.

I am excited about the prospects and promise of 2019. The legislature is in session and our lobbying team will once again

trek over the mountains to make western slope voices known at the Capitol. Our organizers are actively engaging our members and allies alike, inspiring and supporting the work our members care about.

Finally, with kind regards to H.D. Thoreau, I look forward to experiencing and appreciating actions and interactions that recognize the genius in each of us. Onward!



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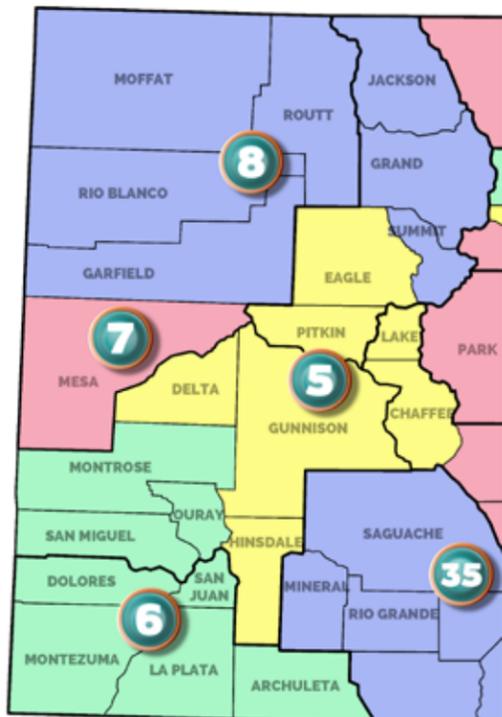
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7	RAY SCOTT (R)
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Gov. Jared Polis (D)

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Note: Contact information is from Colorado's legislative website which can be found at www.leg.state.co.us. The information is accurate as of February, 2019. This website is also a good source for the current status and language of proposed bills.

For more info, visit:
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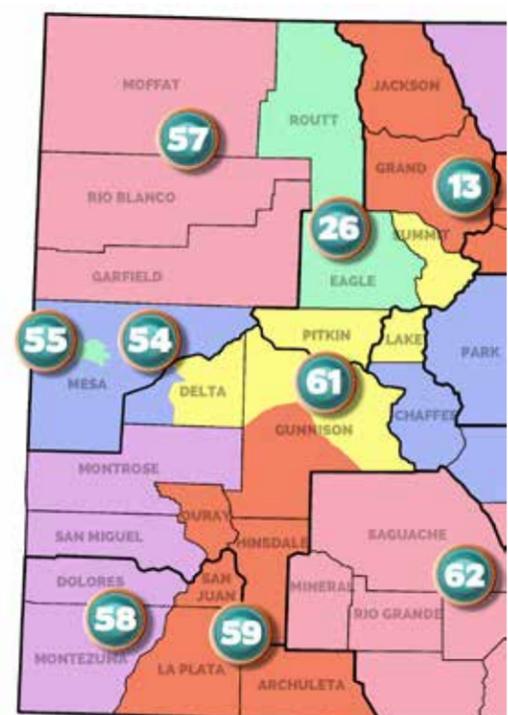
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Putting a community center on the ballot



by Jeriel Clark
Community
Organizer

It's been a long time coming, but on April 2, 2019, residents of Grand Junction will finally get to vote on whether or not they think it's time for a community center. Several members of Western Colorado Alliance - Mesa County have championed this effort and lead it from a hope in 2015 to a reality today. For us, a community center holds different meanings based on the user. It's an amenity sorely needed in Grand Junction, and one most of our Western Slope communities are already benefiting from. So what will be on the ballot?

The proposal contained in ballot measure 2C is based on community input gathered during a 2018 independent feasibility study and is supported by in-depth analysis conducted by the City of Grand Junction and the Parks and Recreation department. The proposal

includes three main components to ensure services for different areas of town and makes use of existing city resources:

"This is a quality of life issue." – Andrey Krieves

- **A 98,000 square foot community center located at Matchett Park.** It will include warm water, lap, and leisure pools (with play features), a 3-court gymnasium, an indoor elevated walking track, 3 multi-purpose meeting rooms and 2 pool party rooms, gathering spaces for young adults and seniors, a bouldering wall, fitness areas, child supervision services, and a tenant lease space.

- **75 acres of park development at Matchett** including 7 multi-purpose fields (soccer, lacrosse, football, etc.), walking paths, a plaza area, 2 playgrounds, 3 restroom/shelters, a skate park, a pond, 4 basketball courts, 12 pickleball courts, and 8 tennis

courts.

- **A renovation of the existing Orchard Mesa pool, gymnasium, and adjoining facilities** to serve as a 32,000 square foot satellite Community Center. This will include a new social zone with a food/snack bar, family/special needs dressing areas, 2 multi-purpose rooms, a pool party room, and a new pool spa.

The new Community Center, the partial Matchett Park development, and the renovation/expansion at Orchard Mesa will cost approximately \$79m to construct. If approved by voters, it will be funded by a 0.39% (or 39 cents for every \$100 spent) sales tax increase in the City of Grand Junction. This less-than-half-a-penny sales tax will cover the cost of construction and ongoing operations and maintenance for all facilities included in the proposal. The tax would not apply to the sale of unprepared

food/groceries, gas, prescription medication, or services.

Advocates from the GJ Community Center Campaign (GJCCC) suggest that building a Grand Junction Community Center where everyone belongs will promote health and wellness, social connections, involvement in recreation, and activities for all ages - children through seniors. "This is a quality of life issue," suggests Andrey Krieves, chair of the GJCCC steering committee. "A Community Center serves a need and strengthens our entire social fabric by offering a variety of amenities that bring people together. From creating spaces for events, to bridging the gap between our generations and giving our young people a safe place to grow up strong, the end result is a more resilient and dynamic community."

For more information, visit www.gjcommunitycenter.org.

Bob Arrington: Climate justice activist



by Troy Redding
Community
Organizer

Bob Arrington is a full-time activist who has dedicated himself to fighting against climate change.

An engineer by trade, Bob has spent countless hours using his expertise to support our work here at the Western Colorado Alliance. However, he hasn't limited his support to his techni-

cal expertise. Bob has helped our Alliance in a number of ways such as serving on our board of directors and inspiring others to join the fight for climate justice. Many of our members have probably heard Bob talking about the need to protect the climate for our children.

Bob reminds us that the fight for our climate is the fight for our future. The Alliance is proud to have an astounding activist like Bob Arrington as a member of the Western Colorado Alliance family.

When Bob isn't fighting for



Bob Arrington

climate justice, you might hear him explaining the intricacies of *Star Trek* to anyone who has a few minutes to chat. He is an avid supporter of renewable energy and is passionate about science. His knowledge of various scientific fields is

impressive. One moment Bob might be explaining the mechanics behind seismic activity and the next, he could be talking about how various chemicals interact with one another. With Bob around, we never lack for fun and engaging conversation!

**Members in
the Spotlight**

Thank you! Alliance members help raise \$64k!



We had very ambitious goals — but thanks to you, we met them. In the final days of 2018, we asked you to help us in the new year to:

- **Expand access to local food throughout Western Colorado**

- **Protect wildlands in our national forests**
- **Ensure we all have clean air**
- **Protect our public lands from irresponsible oil and gas drilling**
- **Help both the health of our lands and the workers displaced by declining coal markets**
- **And build a grassroots blueprint for diverse and resilient local economies**

And you stepped up. In a big way!

Thanks to you and our member-led movement across Western Colorado, we turned \$30,000 into \$64,000 through our matching challenge grant.

Thank you for your help. Thank you for being a hero. Thank you for coming through again. Our Alliance enters 2019 strong and ready to make change happen. Let's do it together!

Grassroots Democracy Municipal elections



by **Jeriel Clark**
**Community
Organizer**

Raise your hand if you're already counting the days until the 2020 General Election.

With our sights often set on our representatives in Washington DC, it can be easy to lose focus on the elections happening in our own front yards that impact our everyday lives every bit as much as those who represent us in Congress. In the Spring and Fall of this year, ballots will mail for dozens of local Western Slope elections, containing within them pivotal local ballot issues and races from city council to county commissioner to school boards.

These elections are the most meaningful act a citizen can provide in service of our democracy. While local positions like county commissioner come with salaries that exceed those of our state legislators, many more like our school board and council candidates work at no cost or exceedingly little. Local elections

are unique because local elections are about local people. The folks make big decisions for our hometowns and are also our neighbors who live and contribute to our local communities. There's little chance for these candidates to hide behind big-money marketing schemes or far-away legislative schedules. It all comes down to community organizing and citizen power and we're proud to see Western Colorado Alliance members answering the call.

Just as important as the candidates on our ballots are the issues referred to a citizen vote. With TABOR requiring many local governments to seek tax approval from residents, local ballot items determine the quality of the services we receive, the durability of the roads we drive on, the education our schools can provide for our children, and the ways we chart the future of our rural areas. A fantastic example of local ballot issues is the community center effort which will go to a vote in Grand Junction on April 2nd. This municipal ballot measure, involving several Western



Photo by **Dodgerton Skillhouse**.

Colorado Alliance members, is a citizen-initiated and lead effort that is a direct result of grassroots organizing at it's finest. Read more about it on page 6.

Aside from building a ballot measure from the ground up, consider running for office yourself and start building the foundational blocks you would need for success now. Join prominent local boards, run for a position on your local electric association board or

possibly serve on a water board. Build name recognition and experience in local government, and then help us build a more just and sustainable, and self-reliant communities as a representative.

The biggest way to make a change right now? Stay informed about the local elections happening in your town, and vote. And whether your candidate of choice wins or not, show up and make your voice heard.

New staff hires crowd Alliance office



Arn McConnell

With success comes growth. And Western Colorado Alliance is growing! The new year sees two new staff members join our ranks.

Arn McConnell has joined our Alliance as full-time Communications and Marketing Coordinator. Arn was most recently a creative services producer for Gray Television, but his career includes

more than 35 years of experience in broadcast media, online advertising and branding in both Western Colorado and New York City. He is a four-time Colorado Broadcast Award winner and has also won

multiple Colorado Press Association Awards. (Trivia buffs, be advised: Arn was the original editor of MTV's **Beavis and Butthead** and directed the late actor James Gandolfini in his film debut.)

Also newly hired (but not new to the organization!) is Joel Dyar, who joins the Alliance as organizer for clean and renewable energy.

A 15 year veteran of community organizing in Colorado and six countries, Joel has worked to help social movements and everyday citizens discover their power and make their voices heard on a broad spectrum of sustainability, social, and legislative issues.

Joel brings a Masters of Community Development and graduate studies in renewable energy and green business to his work on behalf of our energy future.

McConnell says he's happy to be a part of an organization devoted to helping local communities be healthy, just and self-reliant., "I'm thrilled

to be a part of a group helping bring meaningful change to our communities — even if it has made the Alliance office awfully crowded."

That problem may see a solution in the near future, as the Alliance actively looks at other office space possibilities.



Joel Dyar

Schools gain greater buffer from oil and gas facilities



by **Troy Redding**
Community Organizer
& **Emily Hornback**
Staff Director

Last December, the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) voted unanimously to increase the setback distance for oil and gas operations near schools. This rule closes a loophole that formerly allowed oil and gas activity to occur near school playgrounds and community sports fields, as long as it was 1,000 feet from the school building.

New wells are now required to be at least 1000 feet away from school buildings. In addition to setbacks away from school buildings, the new rule requires wells to be at least 1000 feet away from child care centers, and outdoor areas. Outdoor areas include things like play-

grounds and athletic fields next to schools. This new rule recently went into effect on January 30.

“Finally, after three years of effort, the COGCC is responding to the concerns of impacted schools, parents and residents,” said Leslie Robinson, chairwoman of the Grand Valley Citizens Alliance, a local affiliate of Western Colorado Alliance. “We should not put children at risk for a privately owned company’s bottom line. Everyone is a champion when we protect children’s health and safety and we hope that this rule is the beginning of more significant changes in Colorado’s oil and gas industry.”

Robinson was especially pleased to see Garfield County support the inclusion of child care centers in the rule, which the Commissioners had originally opposed. “Children deserve to



Leslie Robinson heads for a COGCC hearing.

be protected wherever they learn and play, including in western Colorado. We are glad the Garfield County Commissioners agreed with us in the end.”

This decision is the direct result of Western Colorado Alliance’s negotiations with industry leaders, the legislature, and the

COGCC. After several years of efforts, we were able to pressure the oil and gas industry and the COGCC to increase protections for Colorado schools and child centers and the residents they serve. Thanks to the hard work of our Alliance, Colorado students living near oil and gas production sites will be safer and healthier.

North Fork gas leasing temporarily shelved



by **Troy Redding**
Community Organizer
& **Emily Hornback**
Staff Director

After years of political deadlock, Western Colorado Alliance and our allies are championing an oil and gas reform bill at the Colorado Assembly that, if successful, will usher in a new era of regulatory change to better protect our public and environmental health and safety.

As of this writing, the bill has not been introduced, but House Speaker Representative KC Becker is committed to introducing it in the “next few weeks.” Although the exact bill details are still being worked out, we understand the bill will be focused on the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, looking to overhaul the dysfunctional agency that has long prioritized industry extraction over the health and safety of Colorado residents. Our Alliance is hopeful that the bill will revise the mission statement of the COGCC to prioritize public and environmental health and safety rather than to “foster” the oil and gas industry within the state and create mechanisms through which the agency can deny applications (there has only been one application denied in the past 20 years). We also anticipate the bill will settle the issue of local

government control over oil and gas siting. Of course we have a laundry list of other reforms we would like to see in the bill and we eagerly await the bills’ release so we can start lobbying for the policy Western Colorado landowners and residents need.

Many changes are required to fully protect the landowners and communities from the impacts of oil and gas development and ensure balanced representation of residents in oil and gas decision making. However, this bill opens a door that has long been shut under the Hickenlooper administration for future reform and a voice for impacted people at the decision-making table.

As we await the introduction of this bill, the fate of the latest drilling proposal in Battlement Mesa hangs in the balance. In the eleventh hour of the Hickenlooper administration, the COGCC partially approved 24 new natural gas wells and an associated toxic waste water injection well within the community.

The A Pad, as it is known, is possibly the worst location in the state for a number of reasons. It’s located near the Colorado River, the wastewater treatment plant, the water treatment plant, and a mobile home park community. It will also be necessary to cut into a 90-foot hill in or-

der to build the sight. The approval of this pad demonstrates the need for COGCC reform. Human health must take priority when the COGCC decides whether or not to approve drilling in residential neighborhoods.

The timing of this approval by the COGCC is somewhat concerning. Governor Polis promised that under his administration oil and gas development would be handled in a responsible manner. Unfortunately, this irresponsible proposal from Ursa Resources is the very first pad approved by the COGCC under the Polis administration. This approval seems to have been rushed through before Governor Polis had even had time to appoint his director of the COGCC. Governor Polis has since appointed long time local community and local government attorney Jeff Robbins as the new COGCC Director.

Because the COGCC approved this controversial proposal before Director Robbins was given an opportunity Alliance affiliate groups Grand Valley Citizens Alliance (GVCA) and Battlement Concerned Citizens (BCC) have asked that the COGCC review and reverse their decision, requesting a full hearing. This would have given Director Robbins an opportunity to review the proposal under the direction of

the new governor. Unfortunately, the COGCC has denied the citizens groups request to review Ursa’s proposal. Additionally, Garfield County has also refused to use their authority to request that the COGCC review this irresponsible decision. The final decision on A Pad will be precedent setting and set the tone of the Polis administration’s approach to the long controversial of “residential drilling.”

However residents decided they could not wait for legislative reform to determine the fate of A Pad. On February 14, BCC and GVCA filed suit against COGCC to request the court intervene on the controversial proposal.

“We have maintained for years that A Pad presents a significant hazard to the entire Battlement Mesa community. We have tried every avenue open to us to challenge this proposal, but the Colorado Oil and Gas Commission has given us no other option than to bring the matter before the courts,” said Dave Devanney, Chairman of Battlement Concerned Citizens.

GVCA, BCC and Alliance members remain committed to the best outcome possible for Battlement Mesa while simultaneously working for the public health and safety of all Coloradans.