DON’T SIT ON THE SIDELINES!

WEST SLOPE YOUTH VOICE
Every year, our state legislators make decisions on new laws that have a direct impact on us — high school youth — even if we can’t vote yet. But it doesn’t matter how old we are. What matters is how loud our voices are. West Slope Youth Voice has one goal — to harness the power of student voices and increase our participation in the decision-making process.

Yes, we’re talking about voting, and much, much more.

Just this year, our student group worked with a local state legislator to draft, run, and pass a bill that wrote students into the conversation when it comes to making decisions about how to support our mental health needs.

We’re a non-partisan group, so our agenda doesn’t focus on candidates. We want you to be engaged no matter what you believe. In Colorado, you can pre-register to vote when you’re 16 years old. And that means you don’t have to wait until you are 18 to start thinking about the impact you can make. Because the truth is there are lots of ways to get involved before you vote in your first election. Voting is the last step, not the first.

We’ve compiled this report so that you can better understand the legislative decisions that are directly impacting us, and help us guide elected officials to work on the issues that Western Colorado youth care about.

Read this. Get involved. Let’s go put out some fires.

JOIN THE TEAM!

West Slope Youth Voice is active in three counties and in ten high schools. We’re working to register and pre-register our peers to vote, as well as identify the issues that are most important to students in Western Colorado. If you’re interested in getting involved, please contact our program organizer Jeriel Clark at (970) 424-2670, or you can email Jeriel at: jeriel@westerncoloradoalliance.org.
West Slope Youth Priorities

563 students surveyed by their peers from 2019 - 2021

53% of all students surveyed said their favorite reason for living in Western Colorado was access to the outdoors.

They don't plan to stay citing lack of opportunity and a desire to experience new places as their main reasons for leaving.

57% Leave
30% Stay
13% Undecided

I would like to see more care towards younger people in the community, like holding more events for teens. —11th Grade

I would like to see more support for the environment. We have access to outdoor opportunities but we don't always support our environment. —12th Grade

Changes that would help me is maybe more mental health support for people like me going through tough things. —11th Grade

BIGGEST NEEDS

- More activities & opportunities for youth
- Access to affordable higher education
- Better job opportunities
- Mental health & peer-to-peer support
- Community connection

LIKES

- Outdoors
- Outdoor recreation
- Beauty of the area
- Calm/quiet

TOP

- Outdoors
- Outdoor recreation
- Beauty of the area
- Calm/quiet

DISLIKES

- Few activities for youth
- Drugs & addiction
- Unwelcoming community to young people
Who represents you in Denver?

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Western Colorado Legislative Districts

**SENATE**

Don Coram (R-6)  
Rancher  
Counties: Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, Montrose, Ouray, San Juan, San Miguel

Cleave Simpson (R-35)  
Farmer/Rancher  
Counties: Alamosa, Baca, Bent, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Custer, Huerfano, Kiowa, Las Animas, Mineral, Otero, Prowers, Pueblo, Rio Grande, Saguache

Kerry Donovan (D-5)  
Rancher  
Counties: Chaffee, Delta, Eagle, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Lake, Pitkin

Bob Rankin (R-8)  
Legislator  
Counties: Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt, Summit

Ray Scott (R-8)  
Business Owner  
Counties: Mesa

**HOUSE**

Judy Amabile (D-13)  
Entrepreneur  
Counties: Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Grand, Jackson

Marc Catlin (R-58)  
Legislator  
Counties: Dolores, Montezuma, Montrose, San Miguel

Julie McCluskie (D-61)  
Legislator  
Counties: Delta, Gunnison, Lake, Pitkin, Summit

Barbara McLachlan (D-59)  
Legislator  
Counties: Archuleta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, La Plata, Ouray, San Juan

Janice Rich (R-55)  
Legislator  
Counties: Mesa

Dylan Roberts (D-26)  
Deputy District Attorney  
Counties: Eagle, Routt

Matt Soper (R-54)  
Professional Researcher & Writer  
Counties: Delta, Mesa

Donald Valdez (D-62)  
Farmer/Legislator  
Counties: Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Huerfano, Mineral, Pueblo, Rio Grande, Saguache

Perry Will (R-57)  
Legislator  
Counties: Garfield, Moffat, Rio Blanco

*NOTE: Your legislators may change in 2022.*
How Colorado’s legislators voted on legislation that directly impacts Western Colorado youth.

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**THE BILLS WE TRACKED**

*as summarized by students*

1. **HB21-1119**
   *Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention*
   
   This bill expands Colorado's focus to suicide intervention and postvention, as well as prevention. It directs the state to provide comprehensive training for teachers and first responders to help themselves and students deal with the death of a classmate. It also creates a school safety resource center as a resource for any public, or charter school.

   **PASSED**

2. **HB21-1085**
   *Secure Transportation Behavioral Health Crisis*
   
   This bill creates a system to provide secure transportation services for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The county commissioners where the secure transportation service is based will issue a license to an entity (licensee), valid for 3 years, that provides secure transportation services if the minimum requirements set by rule by the state board of health are met or exceeded.

   **PASSED**

3. **HB21-1266**
   *Environmental Justice Disproportionate Impacted Community*
   
   This bill enacts a number of provisions to redress communities in our state which have historically seen greater impact from environmental inequities. These communities include census block groups where there are 40% or more low-income or minority residents; and any community with a history of environmental racism perpetuated through redlining, anti-Indigenous, anti-immigrant, anti-Hispanic or anti-Black laws.

   **PASSED**

4. **HB21-1108**
   *Gender Identity Expression Anti-Discrimination*
   
   This bill expands the definition of discrimination to include gender expression and gender identity. Gender expression is defined as an individual’s way of expressing their gender to the world, typically through appearance, dress, and behavior. Gender identity is defined as an individual’s innate sense of their gender which may not correlate with their sex at birth. These new definitions will protect individuals against discrimination in employment, housing, places of public accommodation, healthcare, and officer identification (profiling).

   **PASSED**
**HB21-1112**  
*School District Scholarship Programs*  
This bill establishes a district-wide scholarship program for graduates who receive a high school diploma. The program will be funded by revenue from property taxes or donors. The scholarships will be prioritized by students who qualify for reduced or free lunches, and restricted to use for tuition, books, supplies and transportation.

**HB21-1068**  
*Insurance Coverage Mental Health Wellness Exam*  
The act adds a requirement, as part of mandatory health insurance coverage of preventive health care services, that health plans cover an annual mental health wellness examination of up to 60 minutes that is performed by a qualified mental health care provider.

**HB21-1149**  
*Energy Sector Career Pathway Higher Education*  
The bill helps jobs in the energy sector (electromechanical generation and maintenance, electrical energy transmission and distribution, energy efficiency and environmental technology, and renewable energy production), by designing a career pathway for students studying these fields. Helps in Strengthening and Photovoltaic And Renewable Careers (SPARC) workforce development program in the Department of Labor and Employment.

**SB21-116**  
*Prohibit American Indian Mascots*  
This bill prevents any more sports teams, schools, clubs, etc, from using Native Americans as their mascots. The use of these mascots is derogatory and has served as motivation for students to bully people of Native American descent.

**SB21-083**  
*Higher Education Student Financial Assistance Funding*  
This bill requires that the state increases the amount allocated to student financial aid as the profit to institutions becomes higher.
MY VOTE WON’T COUNT!

THE TRUTH:

Your vote will count.

Millennials and Gen Z will be the largest share of eligible voters within the decade.

In 2014, they made up 21% of active voters and in 2020, they made up 31%. We’re growing, and our voice is more powerful than ever.

Leaders we elect include:

RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATIONS
Rural Electric Association Board Members

SCHOOL BOARD
School Board Members

CITY
City Council Members

COUNTY
County Commissioners
Clerk & Recorder
Treasurer
Sheriff
Surveyor
Coroner
Judges

STATE
Governor
State Representatives
State Senators
State Attorney General
Secretary of State
State Treasurer

FEDERAL
U.S. Senator
U.S. Representative
President

Note: The font size above indicates how big your vote’s impact can be. Generally speaking, the more local the race, the more impact your vote has in making change happen. To learn more about what these elected officials do, scan this QR code!