

Our Alliance gets out the vote in three counties!



by Bianca Diaz,
Hanna Arauza &
María Luiza Pérez Chávez
Community Organizers

Understanding what issues are impacting our neighbors locally is key to our Get Out the Vote (GOTV) effort this year.

As we've heard across Mesa, Montrose, and Garfield Counties, people are struggling with issues like affordable housing, economic insecurity, substance abuse, addiction, safety, and support for youth. (See page 4 for more on our deep listening results.) Multiple upcoming regional and statewide ballot measures relate to these issues.

As the midterm election approaches, we're reaching out to folks we've listened to through deep canvassing, ensuring they are informed on those measures connected to the issues impacting them.

In our Alliance's case, deep canvassing helps people vote with their self-interest by breaking down partisan barriers, providing education around ballot measures, and allowing people to persuade themselves on an issue. We'll also use what we've heard to strategically endorse propositions in traditional GOTV canvassing.

For example, affordable housing is a concern in all of our communities. **Proposition 123: Dedicate Revenue for Affordable Housing Projects** was designed to address affordable housing problems across Colorado.

Prop. 123 would allocate funding for affordable housing programs by reserving a portion of state income tax revenue. Programs would include land banking, affordable housing development assistance, equity investments to benefit renters, home ownership and down-payment assistance



Western
COLORADO
ALLIANCE
FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

POSITIONS

These are the four ballot measures on which our Alliance is taking a position:

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
PROP. 123	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PROP. FF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PROP. GG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PROP. 121	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



Unexpected benefit of knocking doors and talking to neighbors — meeting their lovely pets!

programs, rental assistance and eviction protection to address homelessness, and grants to support local government planning departments. Prop. 123 is funded by reserving 0.1% of individual and corporate income tax and will have minimal impact on tax refunds for low- and middle-income earners. An individual making the state median of \$58,000 would contribute about \$12 to the fund.

Another statewide measure we will be talking about is **Proposition FF: Healthy School Meals for All**. Passing Prop.

FF would provide access to free meals for all public schools in Colorado. It would also increase compensation for those who prepare and serve school meals and incentivize offering local foods on school menus.

Funding for the program would come from reducing income tax deduction amounts for those earning over \$300,000 annually. The tax revenue generated by this is estimated at just over \$100,000,000. Last year there were over 886,000 children enrolled in Colorado public schools (preschool through

Continued on page 4

WESTERN COLORADO ALLIANCE
PO BOX 1931
GRAND JUNCTION CO 81502

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GRAND JUNCTION, CO
PERMIT NO. 134

Inside

Reflecting on gratitude and indomitable spirit 2

Mountainfilm returns to the Avalon 2

Understanding the IRA 3

What the IRA means for oil and gas bonding 3

What we've heard in our deep listening 4

Report from Mesa County 5

Many "Perspectives" shared during 2022 Annual Conference 5

Working to build a better future 6

Solar flares up on the Western Slope 6

Reflecting on gratitude and indomitable spirit



by **Andrey Krieves**
Alliance Chair

As the weather cools, the changing sights, sounds, and smells of fall surround us. The natural world shifts into a period of rest. It is a season of beautiful change here on the Western Slope, and we come together to welcome the transition with celebrations, traditions, festivals, and a sense of gratitude.

Here at the Western Colorado Alliance, this season is a busy one, but one that gives us tremendous gratitude for the opportunities to connect with our members and broader communities.

Moving into the fall, we are grateful to celebrate our deep listening and deep canvassing initiatives that started this summer. In this first year, alliance members have stepped out to listen to our neighbors and to build relationships with people we've never connected with. We've strived to identify and build on what connects us in a time when so many feel divided. While the deep

listening hit its stride across our Western Slope communities this summer, we're looking forward to continuing to listen as we transition the work to community meetings that bring people together for collective solution-finding.

One tradition that our Alliance looks forward to is the opportunity to participate in fall elections. Candidates and issues that will impact our lives, our communities, and the world around us are on the ballot across the Western Slope. We deeply value the opportunity and responsibility to make our communities more healthy, just, and self-reliant with our vote. While our alliance will be deeply involved with get out the vote (GOTV) efforts across the state, it doesn't start or end there. Members and organizers have been working throughout the year to hold elected officials accountable lobbying at the state legislature, organizing local and statewide initiatives, and participating in opportunities for public comment.



Western Colorado Alliance
Chair Andrey Krieves

Fall is also the time we share in festivals and other opportunities to come together to share our gratitude for the abundance that surrounds us. One of my personal favorites is our Alliance's annual MountainFilm on Tour – this year on Sunday, November 13 at the Avalon Theater in Grand Junction. This annual film festival brings us together to share in films that inspire and uplift us.

This year's film collection centers around 'the indomitable spirit,' and while we'll certainly feel impacted and inspired by the power of storytelling through the films, we'll be reminded of the impact of our own work and the indomitable spirit of our own members and communities as we connect in solidarity and reflect on our shared efforts over the last year.

Mountainfilm returns to the Avalon



by **Arn McConnell**
Communications
Coordinator

For the first time in three years, a Grand Junction live audience will come together for spectacle and

inspiration, when Mountainfilm on Tour - Grand Junction returns to the Avalon Theatre on Main Street.

This year, the adventure starts at

3 pm on November 13. (Doors open at 1:30 pm.) This year also marks the return of Western Colorado Alliance's annual Silent Auction. Bidding will begin at 1:30 pm. After making your first bid on some fantastic items, enjoy happy hour with music by Tim + Richard.

This year, along with stunning footage of skiing, hiking, gliding, and mountain biking, films will feature the "indomitable spirit" of people who overcome great obstacles to live their passion. The one thing you can count

on: You'll see heart-stopping adventure and heart-warming inspiration combined as only Mountainfilm on Tour can do!

(Parents should note: There is some NSFW language in some of the films.)

This year, the festival is a free event, although a \$15 donation at the door is encouraged. We're excited to see you on Sunday, November 13, at the Avalon Theatre for Mountainfilm on Tour - Grand Junction!



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.

Our Alliance's Staff

2481 Commerce Blvd., PO Box 1931
Grand Junction CO 81502
(970) 256-7650

WesternColoradoAlliance.org
info@WesternColoradoAlliance.org

Emily Hornback, Executive Director
Jeriel Clark, Organizing Director
Joel Dyar, Political Director
Nick Allan, Organizer
Hanna Arauza, Organizer
María Luiza Peréz Chavéz, Organizer
Bianca Diaz, Organizer
Brian Williams, Organizer
Alicia Lucero, Finance Administrator
Arn McConnell, Comms. Coordinator

Our Alliance's Board of Directors

Officers

Andrey Krieves
Chair, Grand Junction

Kevin Kuns
Vice Chair, Montrose

Bill Wellman
Treasurer, Crawford

Adriene Moline
Acting Secretary, Grand Junction

At-large Directors

Gabriel Otero, Fruita
Rodger Steen, Steamboat Springs
Haley VanCamp, Grand Junction
Barbara Vasquez, Cowdrey

Local Affiliate Directors

GRAND VALLEY CITIZENS ALLIANCE
Betsy Leonard, Battlement Mesa
RIDGWAY-OURAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Ames Risch, Ridgway

UNCOMPAGRE VALLEY ALLIANCE
Kevin Kuns, Montrose

WESTERN COLORADO ALLIANCE OF MESA COUNTY

Steve Allerton, Grand Junction

Director Emeritus

Peggy Rawlins, Grand Junction

Understanding the IRA



After a perilous journey through Congress and surviving multiple near-death experiences, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA) has been signed into law. The IRA invests \$369 billion in environmental policy reforms that are designed to lower America's greenhouse gas emissions.

Though more work remains to be done, the IRA has been projected to cut some 6.3 billion metric tons of emissions in the next decade, preventing thousands of premature deaths from pollution in vulnerable communities, and taking a major step towards meeting the United States' climate goals. Here's a breakdown of some of the major provisions of this historic climate package:



What effect will the Internet Reduction Act have on....

...the Oil and Gas Industry?



by Brian Williams
Regional Organizer

Perhaps the most contentious segment of the climate package within the IRA is its treatment of oil and gas production. Though the IRA has made substantial improvements, many concessions were made to the oil and gas industry to secure the vote of West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin, who straddles the partisan divide in Congress.

One of the key reforms of this package is an improvement in our system to leasing our public lands to oil and gas operators. The IRA increased the royalty rate taxpayers are compensated for the minerals extracted from 12.5% to 16.67%. It also established a \$10 minimum bid per acre on parcels, raising it from the \$2 minimum established decades ago. These modernized rates

Continued on page 7

...Homegrown Prosperity?



by Nick Allan
Regional Organizer

The IRA will play a vital role in the evolution of Western Colorado's coal communities to new, healthy economies.

Our Alliance is presently working in Craig and the West End to support current and former coal-dependent communities' transition to new economies with a focus on community justice. Western Colorado Alliance sees an opportunity to increase funding to these communities with the new funds

Continued on page 7



...Clean and Renewable Energy?



by Tyler McDermott
Regional Organizer

One of the highlights of the IRA is how it seeks to make clean energy affordable and available to your average person, with an emphasis on individuals earning less than the median income, those experiencing environmental racism, or those impacted by the transition from fossil fuels.

The IRA extends the tax credit for residential clean energy through 2034 and applies a 30% credit for clean energy projects started within the next 10 years, with the credit decreasing to 26% in 2033 and 22% in 2034 to incentivize early adoption.

Not only are there tax credits to increase the affordability of clean energy projects, but the Department of Energy is also

Continued on page 7

What the IRA means for oil and gas bonding



by Brian Williams
Regional Organizer

Though the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 did improve some aspects of the federal government's oil and gas program, the legislation fell short of achieving many necessary policy reforms.

In particular, our requirements for bonding — when an operator sets aside money to clean up after themselves before drilling a well — remain inadequate to ensure that wells are cleaned up after production. Though

bonding reform was an initial component of the IRA, those provisions did not survive the parliamentary process.

Throughout the United States, there are estimated to be anywhere from 700,000 to over three million abandoned oil and gas wells. These wells leak a constant stream of methane and other hydrocarbons that contribute to climate change, and leak poisonous chemicals that threaten all manner of life within their vicinity, including people living near them.

They also have the potential to contaminate groundwater when the unmaintained casing within the wellbores inevitably begin to corrode.

Despite the danger these wells pose, the Department of Interior (DOI) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have failed to establish modernized bonding regulations that would ensure wells are cleaned up in a timely manner once operators conclude extraction. As it is, bonding levels are so low that many operators find that it is

simply cheaper to abandon the bond that they post, and leave taxpayers to foot the bill to clean up after them.

One of the key issues with our current bonding regulations is the allowance for operators to post a "blanket bond" that covers an unlimited number of oil and gas wells nationwide for as low as \$150,000. Nationally, the average cost of plugging just a single well is approximately \$20,000—to both plug the well and reclaim the land on which

Continued on page 5



What we've heard in our deep listening

by Bianca Diaz,
Hanna Arauza &
María Luiza Pérez Chavéz
Community Organizers

On June 1, 2022, Western Colorado Alliance's organizing team held our first public Deep Listening training not knowing what the summer had in store. We were excited to take a step into the unknown. Our team taught interested Alliance members the art of hearing different viewpoints while asking questions to truly understand communities who typically aren't heard.

No one has engaged in this type of work on the Western Slope before, and few organizations across the nation have truly deeply listened in their communities.

Four months later, our team knocked over 1,000 doors across Mesa, Montrose, and Garfield Counties, engaging over 200 people in conversation. We have been blown away by the positive responses from people who are willing to share their stories with us.

MONTROSE AND OLATHE

Over the summer, in the cities of Montrose and Olathe, we heard repeated concerns about issues like addiction and substance abuse, affordable housing, neighborhood safety, lack of activities, and diminished community connection.

Montrose County has undergone a huge growth spurt the last ten years, and the county is definitely feeling the growing pains. One-on-one conversations are already underway

with residents who are interested in our neighborhood meetings. We are ready to work with these passionate community members who want to see a Montrose that works for everybody.

MESA COUNTY

In Mesa County, we have talked to people in cities from Orchard Mesa to Palisade. Some of the issues that concern our community are affordable housing, low wages, mental health, and community safety. The stories we have heard are inspiring — and heartbreaking.

For instance, we heard this from a man identifying as part of the LGBTQIA+ community:

“[You wouldn't know] by looking at me because I am a white male, who looks fairly 'normal,' but I fear that we have no safety within our community.” He told us about his friend from China who was insulted and threatened at gunpoint, and expressed that the safety of our community is in danger, and that gun violence needs to be prioritized. He stated, “I want to get involved but don't know where to do that.” And we exclaimed, “That's us! You can get involved and volunteer with us to do more!” He was grateful we came to his door, appreciating that we spoke to him. His willingness to share and get involved is



Some residents are wary until they learn we're safe to talk to. This local business owner was keeping an eye out for his HOA, but ended up giving us great contacts!

what truly inspires this work.

RIFLE

Residents of Rifle have opened up about their financial struggles and the challenges presented by a rapidly increasing cost of living, shortage of affordable housing, and being forced to commute for jobs that pay a living wage. Additionally, the community is concerned about limited resources for youth, including childcare, K-12 education, and programs outside of school to ensure youth are engaged and supported. Community members express a strong desire to come together and address these issues, but worry that their long hours working,

commuting, and parenting will present an insurmountable hurdle to organizing. However, our Alliance is committed to accommodating the needs of our neighbors so we can work together for a better future.

Deep listening has humbled us and we are grateful for those who have shared their personal stories with us. The deeper understanding of the issues that impact our communities locally and the relationships we've built through this process are invaluable to our mission of building healthy, just, and self-reliant communities across the Western Slope. And this is only the beginning!

Our Alliance gets out the vote in three counties!

Continued from page 1

12th grade). Ensuring all these children are fed alleviates financial and temporal strains on parents and guardians, removes stigma and barriers for students currently eligible for free and reduced meals, and helps kids keep their focus on their education. We will also

look at local measures on the ballot. In Grand Junction, for example, there is a 1% increase to the city's 6% lodging tax to fund affordable housing, and an 8% tax on short-term rentals to fund affordable housing.

Informing the community on issues that relate to them gives them power to make changes

they want to see. Our last method for deep canvassing is neighborhood meetings.

We intend to facilitate small neighborhood meetings beginning in late October, bringing together residents to meet their neighbors, discuss local issues, and begin to develop potential

solutions for those issues.

We will share information about these statewide propositions and any relevant local measures with the group and discuss their benefits. The small setting allows for in-depth conversations about the measures, providing another avenue to deep canvass with County residents.

Report from Mesa County



by **María Luiza Pérez Chavéz**
Community Organizer

Here's a key takeaway from the results of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) survey released earlier this year: "Infrastructure & Water" and "Affordable Housing" have risen to the top of Mesa County residents' concerns.

We have been monitoring the Grand Junction ARPA Committee's decisions by staying in contact with committee members and attending City Council meetings. They originally decided to accept proposals on the topic of "Homelessness." Western Colorado of Mesa County has shared the survey results with all committee

members and included them in the process along the way. Now, an update on the Grand Junction municipal website states they would be receiving proposals for not only "Homelessness," but "Affordable Housing" and "Mental Health," as well.

The change allowed for more organizations to submit proposals to be decided upon by the City Council. We intend to share this information with those who took the survey.

Meanwhile, as "Affordable Housing" has risen to the top of our community's concerns, a recent project by an outside developer called Richmark inspired our Alliance of Mesa County to start a "Just Housing" committee. Richmark has bought the old City Market building on

Rood Avenue and asked the city to assist them in waiving development fees. The Just Housing Committee, as decided by the members, worked hard to get letters to the editor published, and has attended several City Council meetings in order to speak on the topic of Richmark.

We have also talked to City Council members to gauge their opinion on the Richmark project. Although the vote for Richmark passed 4-2, the Just Housing Committee wants to continue to fight for safe, affordable, sustainable, and equitable housing.

Toward that end, an Open House was held in October to let people know we are here, that we want to work with other organizations, and we want to inform the

community on what is happening with housing. The Just Housing Open House told our community that the first step in achieving "just housing" is a vote for what you feel is just on the ballot.

Western Colorado Alliance of Mesa County is not slowing down! We have signed onto Solar United Neighbors' solar co-op once again to bring clean energy to Mesa County. The launch was September 27, and will deliver information for all and allow community members to apply for affordable solar panel installation.

We will continue to listen to our community, grow our member base in a more diverse and equitable way, and work to campaign for our community's needs.

Many "Perspectives" shared during 2022 Annual Conference



by **Arn McConnell**
Communications Coordinator

Western Colorado Alliance held its 42nd Annual Conference on August 20, 2022, at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Grand Junction. "Perspectives" was the theme of the conference this year.

A lot of attendees showed up early enough to stroll through the tables populated by Alliance ally groups such as the Hispanic Affairs Project, Action is Safer, and Grand Junction Mutual Aid. Alliance staff members were thrilled to be able to interact personally with members and friends for the first time since 2019. (Although this conference also marked our first hybrid live/Zoom conference, so attendees who couldn't be present in person were still able to attend.)

Our Alliance's annual business meeting kicked off at 10 am. Members ratified minor language modifications to our platform and re-elected Andrey Krieves and Bill Wellman to Board Chair and Treasurer, respectively.

This year, the Worley Award (named after celebrated activists and Alliance co-founders Chuck and Betsy Worley, and given out each year to a volunteer who has significantly contributed to making Western Colorado communities more healthy, just, and self-reliant) went to Robyn Cascade for her long-time work in both local foods and public lands.

Meanwhile, the Rising Star Award, given to one or more volunteers new to our Alliance who have made a real difference in the past year, went to Adriane Moline, who has stepped up as a

volunteer in local foods and also become a Board member, and Julia Pérez-Chavéz, who has made

significant contributions to our Deep Listening campaign and other work in Mesa County. This award is accompanied by a pledge to pay up to \$200 toward education for the recipient's personal development as an organizer.

The Board announced they will add a new award starting next year, to be named after long-time Board member and tireless volunteer Peggy Rawlins. The Rawlins Award will go



to an Alliance member who has shown "determination and grit and fearlessness in speaking truth to power."

The keynote speech was delivered this year by Paul Getsos, long-time movement leader and co-author of **Tools for Radical Democracy**.

Most of the feedback we've received on this year's Annual Conference was very positive. We'll be happy to see you at next year's event!

What the IRA means for oil and gas bonding

Continued from page 3

it was drilled, the average cost is \$76,000.

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, an estimated 99.5% of all wells for which federal bonds are held have insufficient funds to reclaim them. Unfortunately, the longer the

federal government waits to take action, the worse the problem will get. Modern oil and gas wells use horizontal drilling techniques that make the plugging and reclamation process more expensive — some new wells can cost several hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars to plug and reclaim. Meanwhile, abandoned oil and gas wells throughout the

country continue to languish unplugged, threatening the health of nearby communities and delicate ecosystems that have been disturbed by the drilling — all latent costs which we continue to bear for as long as the federal government fails to act.

For this reason, our Alliance is teaming up with other

affiliates of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) to submit a petition to the DOI and the BLM to demand that rulemaking be initiated. Because the federal rulemaking process takes years, It is critical to begin this process under the auspices of a relatively environmentally friendly administration.

Working to build a better future



by Tyler McDermott
Regional Organizer

As fall is fast approaching, the students of West Slope Youth Voice (WSYV) are turning the page with a new focus for the school year which gives us a great chance to reflect on the summer's successes and look forward to the ones ahead. While the summer months are often a time for students to kick back and take it easy, WSYV was hard at work preparing ways to encourage their peers to get involved with democracy at all levels.

As part of their planning, students met to come up with a theme for this year's issues report that represented their mission well and chose to go with Building a Better Future — including hard-hats, hammers, and everything in between! The students chose the layout and design elements for the yearly issues report, and spent time parsing out the results of the bills we tracked and for which

we lobbied during the 2022 legislative session. They then wrote up a bill summary in their own words to explain the importance and status of each piece of legislation to students on the Western Slope and across Colorado.

Along with the issues report, the students also wrote a script for and recorded the annual WSYV video that seeks to highlight the importance of young people participating in democracy and making their voices heard. The video debuted at Western Colorado Alliance's 2022 Annual Conference.

View it yourself using the QR code on this page!

As we near the general election, WSYV is beginning classroom



Scan this to watch the new West Slope Youth Voice video!

presentations wherein the students speak in front of their peers, show the video they created, explain what bills they tracked and lobbied for and why, issue the new and improved student survey to collect data on student issues for next year's report, and offer the chance for every student to register to vote.

The students also plan to partner with other local, student-led organizations to host voter registration events on separate days throughout the year to promote voting and participation in every election, big or small.

The students will knock on doors in the lead up to the November 8 elections in support of Proposition FF (the Healthy School Meals for All initiative),

which the students strongly encourage you to support!

WSYV is now preparing for the 2023 legislative session. The students are eager to engage on important legislation at our 2023 Lobby Day in February, and maybe even run a bill of their own! This year, the students have a unique opportunity to work with West Slope elected officials to craft legislation aimed at combating the youth mental health crisis that has plagued Western Colorado for far too long. Keep an eye out for updates as WSYV fights to bring much needed legislation regarding this topic to the Governor's desk next year.

WSYV is a student-led organization for high school aged-youth across the Western Slope seeking to make a difference. If you have any questions, or know someone who you know would like to get involved or support West Slope Youth Voice, please reach out to Tyler at tyler@westerncoloradoalliance.org.

Solar flares up on the Western Slope



by Tyler McDermott
Regional Organizer

Anyone who has spent any amount of time on the Western Slope knows we have an abundance of beautiful scenery, kind people, and a LOT of sunshine, and while the plentiful sunlight has historically powered our agriculture and a world-class outdoor recreation industry, it will soon also be powering more of our homes due to three new utility-scale solar projects that have gained approval in three different counties in just the last few months. Each of these projects are in line with the work Western Colorado Alliance has participated in to gain more local energy production and control, and move us towards the climate action targets set by the Governor and state legislature.

Nannie Blaine Solar Array

Grand Junction and the Mesa County Commissioners unanimously approved in August the Nannie Blaine Solar Array, named after Grand Junction's first school teacher who taught

in the 1880s. (There is a dispute over whether the 'e' in Blaine should be there or not, but for our purposes I will leave it in.) Solar Array, named after Grand Junction's first school teacher who taught in the 1880's. This project, managed by SolarGen, is located just north of I-70 near the airport and just east of the Grand Junction Motor Speedway. When completed, the solar array will cover 151 acres of desert land that is currently not in use and will remedy a perennial problem of illegal dumping and trespassing that is commonplace in the area today, while supplying 48 megawatts of power, or enough for about 7,500 homes.

Garnet Mesa Solar Array

Located in Delta County to the northeast of the city of Delta, the Garnet Mesa Solar Array gained unanimous approval by the County Commissioners in August after a small fight over the land use code going back to March of this year. In March, the County Commissioners voted 2-1 to deny the conditional permit for the solar array due to a debate

about the use of the land for energy production rather than the county's historical agricultural background and culture. Commissioners reversed course in August however after backlash from the community over the denial and the applicants for the project, Guzman Energy, Citra Power, and the Delta Montrose Electrical Association (DMEA), proposed a first-in-the-West-Slope idea of pursuing agrivoltaics, or the mixing of agriculture/farming with energy production by irrigating underneath the solar panels and grazing 1,000 sheep on the land. Once this project is completed, it will cover two separate lots of land on Garnet Mesa and supply over 194,000 megawatt hours of electricity each year powering 18,000 homes in the DMEA service area, as well as significant jobs, tax revenue, and reaches DMEA's goal of 20% local energy production.

Parachute Solar Array

To be located just south of Parachute in Garfield County, the Garfield County Commissioners have approved the 90

-acre solar array and power storage facility that will be built by AES High Mesa Solar and provide power to the Holy Cross Energy service territory. While significantly smaller than the previous two solar arrays, providing just 32,000 megawatt hours of electricity per year supplying about 4,400 homes (about 2.5% of the total energy need of Holy Cross Energy), this project still gets Holy Cross one step closer to achieving their goal of 100% renewable energy production by 2030.

It is our view that this is just the beginning; the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 is about to unleash a massive investment in solar power as well as many other forms of clean and renewable energy production and storage — and these are just three solar infrastructure projects among many more to come as our sunbathed-western Colorado makes the transition from a small part of a globally controlled gas and oil economy to clean and renewable energy that is locally produced and managed.

The IRA's effect on the Oil and Gas Industry

Continued from page 3

will help ensure that Americans receive fairer compensation for the privilege of operating on our public lands.

The IRA also requires all parcels to be leased through a competitive process, eliminating the non-competitive leasing that has been driving speculative behavior from Wall Street and encouraging operators to pad their portfolios with leases that are unlikely to yield economically viable production, and tie up land that could be put to beneficial use for the public.

Another feature of the legislation creates a royalty for all gas produced from federally leased parcels. This will disincentivize operators from venting and flaring away unwanted natural gas during production, which contributes to the overall carbon emissions driving climate change.

Overall, the IRA is projected to reduce the domestic consumption of oil by 13% and natural gas by 9% by 2030, as well as reduce the price shocks that energy consumers experience due to the volatile price of natural gas.

The real price of electricity is

estimated to be reduced by 5- 7% over the next decade, primarily due to an increase in clean energy production in that timeframe.

While these changes are encouraging, the legislation also contains problematic components, such as a provision requiring the Bureau of Land Management to hold an oil and gas leasing sale and offer two million acres of public lands before wind and solar projects can be authorized on federal lands, and truncating the time that development projects have to be challenged in court due to environmental concerns.

The IRA also expedites the Mountain Valley pipeline, which will be used to transport natural gas from West Virginia to Virginia.

Though imperfect, the IRA is projected to eliminate at least 24 metric tons of carbon emissions overall for every additional ton produced within the oil and gas sector. This is encouraging, but the need for more work to be done is clear — particularly to address federal bonding of oil and gas wells, which is discussed elsewhere in this issue of the *Clarion*.

The IRA's effect on Homegrown Prosperity

Continued from page 3

granted through the IRA.

As coal extraction and coal power plants disappear, Craig and the West End are looking for ways to fill the tax base which will be absent in their wake. The IRA investment of \$60 billion in clean energy manufacturing brings an opportunity to introduce new industries into these communities. In addition, the IRA focuses on project implementation being conducted by workers with higher wages, allowing the investment to compound for the populace of our communities.

Finally, a highlighted need in these changing communities

is affordable housing. It has become a truth that in America it is difficult to obtain housing, no matter where you live. In western Colorado's communities, there can be no homegrown prosperity if people can't live where they grew up and where they work.

The IRA provides \$1 billion in funding toward assisting in making affordable housing more energy-efficient. Any investment in affordable housing will help assist in alleviating the massive need. Our Alliance sees a real opportunity for the IRA to assist in the Just Transition of western Colorado.

The IRA also assists our local food producers. Farmers and ranchers are part of the solution

to the climate crisis, and the IRA recognizes this fact.

To address the water crisis caused by climate change, the IRA is contributing \$4 billion for drought resilience in the Colorado River Basin, an investment championed by Senator Michael Bennet and other western senators.

In addition, there is \$20 billion allocated for agriculture environmental impact reduction. This money will go to programs including those assisting in better water and soil practices. Our country is seeing increases in drought and the prices of fossil fuel-enhanced products like fertilizer. Agriculture producers know the time to make changes

is now. The IRA gives us an opportunity to make investments in our farms for both improving the economic benefit to the producers and climate assistance to the world.

With our work fostering homegrown prosperity, the IRA creates the potential for a crucial advance in Western Colorado Alliance's goals. We are committed to supporting our agriculture producers in their conservation efforts. These efforts create a win-win situation for our communities. We are committed to making sure Western Colorado communities are not left behind while switching from coal power. The IRA can be a launching pad for the Western Slope's justice-focused economic future.

The IRA's effect on Clean and Renewable Energy

Continued from page 3

offering \$4.5 billion through 2031 for grants to implement a high-efficiency electric home rebate program providing up to \$14,000/ per household for heat pumps, water pump heaters, electric appliances, electrical panels, wiring, and/or insulation. These programs, among so many others, bring clean and renewable energy right to your front door, and improve the efficiency and comfort of your home at a fraction of the cost it would have prior to the passage of the IRA.

The cost of clean and renewable energy has been prohibitive for many, but the IRA seeks to

ensure equitable distribution of federal dollars to resolve or mitigate the wrongs of environmental racism and to address the threat that clean, affordable energy is only available to those with means or in more affluent parts of their town, city, or state.

For a start, the EPA will have \$2.8 billion to issue 3-year grants that are available to tribes, local governments, universities, community groups, and more to address issues related to air pollution, climate change, heat risk mitigation, resiliency, community engagement, and indoor pollution reduction. The Federal Housing Authority

(FHA) will issue another \$3 billion of grants to improve transportation access, safety, and environmental impacts with a focus on stormwater run-off, urban heat islands, air quality/emissions, and tree canopy coverage with \$1.1 billion set aside specifically for disadvantaged communities with the grant potentially covering 100% of the project's cost.

The IRA offers a few important wins for locally produced clean energy including several billion dollars of direct aid to rural electric cooperatives which supply electricity to over 42 million Americans, including hundreds of thousands here on

the Western Slope. One such program is an innovation tax credit offered to co-ops that are seeking to deploy new energy technology and help them afford to do so, creating parity with their for-profit industry counterparts and increasing small rural co-op's' ability to compete and access the market.

Further, the IRA offers \$9.7 billion of loans through 2031 to rural electric co-ops to buy or build clean energy systems up to an amount not exceeding 25% of the total project cost, increasing the ability for rural America to afford to modernize their grid and create a clean and reliable power supply.

Building PEOPLE POWER in Western Colorado

2022 has been a year of growth and transformation for our Alliance. With the support and leadership of members like you, we have not only emerged from the past two years of crisis and upheaval stronger, we are also re-energized and inspired to continue our work to build grassroots power across Western Colorado.

With a full organizing team and volunteers across three counties, we launched our greatest outreach effort yet, knocking on thousands of doors of every-day folks to understand how these historic times have affected our neighbors and what is on their hearts and minds. We know that through genuine relationships building and collective understanding of the issues affecting our lives, we can create shared analysis, find common-sense solutions and work together to build a brighter future.

This year we have already accomplished so much together:

- Our grassroots democracy interns across Western Colorado worked with Western Slope lawmakers to pass HB 1052: Promoting Crisis Services To Students, which **puts crisis hotline information on all student IDs in Colorado.**
- We passed Senate Bill 86: the Homestead Exemption And Consumer Debt Protection Act to raise bankruptcy and debt seizure protections for all Coloradans, **protecting the most vulnerable from the predatory seizure of their assets.**
- Led educational and outreach efforts to small scale farmers and ranchers throughout the Grand Valley to **learn about regenerative agriculture, soil health, and community supported agriculture.**
- Worked with labor unions and other partners to pass legislation and gain \$15 million in new funding for the Colorado Office of Just Transition, which focuses on **supporting local governments, workers and communities in communities reliant on coal mining to transition away from fossil fuel extraction.**
- Won new protections at the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission **requiring operators to set aside the full cost of plugging and reclaiming abandoned oil and gas wells,** resulting in the cleanup of 10,000 wells in Colorado alone.
- Organized with ratepayers and rural electrical coop boards in Montrose, Delta and Mesa counties to **bring 128 megawatts of locally produced clean renewable energy to Western Colorado.**

Behind each of these victories are hundreds of human stories and members like you, rolling up your sleeves and doing the work to affect positive change in our communities. Through every action we take, we boldly proclaim our vision for healthy, just, and self-reliant communities across Western Colorado, now and into the future. While the road is long to get there, we know we will arrive there together.

COMMUNITY FIRST FOUNDATION



December 6, 2022

Thank you for making our Alliance what it is today. Help keep us strong, financially independent, and ready to face whatever challenges lie ahead. **Please consider a donation to our end-of-year fundraising drive so we can hit the ground running in 2022!**

Make your donation at **westerncoloradoalliance.org**

or mail it to
**P.O. Box 1931
Grand Junction, CO 81502**

Western Colorado Alliance Financial Statement

Statement of Financial Position

Total Assets	\$992,957
Total Liabilities	\$62,442
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$930,515

Statement of Financial Activities

Total Revenue	\$766,560
Total Expenses	\$621,064
Total Net Assets (End Of Year)	\$319,280

\$176,309 Management/General
\$62,106 Fundraising
\$382,649 Program

