

Navigating the Capitol's rapids

 by **Jeriel Clark**
Organizing Director

The Sneak Line.

For those of us who enjoy river sports, we know this term as the route you take on the river to avoid the turbulence of the rapids. For our legislative team at Western Colorado Alliance, this was the route we aimed for during the 2023 legislative season. Although it wasn't without its bumps, our team was able to maneuver this session, and our legislative priorities, without an overboard. For Colorado politics in general, this wasn't the case overall and the 2023 session ran with rapids all the way to the end.

In 2022, Democrats picked up more seats in both the state Senate and House. And with a Governor who mostly aligns with the majority party's agenda, this means the Democrats had an easy path to push through their agenda for the most part.

Republicans were left with virtually no options to move their own party agenda forward, and few options to slow the Democrats. In protest, they utilized the filibuster throughout session, which allows lawmakers to debate a bill for as long as they can talk during the final vote on the chamber floor and prevents other bills from moving forward. This created a backlog of bills moving through the legislature, as all other voting processes were held up until each filibuster ended and final votes were cast.

The filibuster tactic was utilized often mid-session and focused on legislation around gun restriction and abortion protections. As a result, and in an even

more unprecedented move, state Democrats invoked Rule 14 several times. That rule limits the length of time a bill can be debated on. This turbulence in the legislature led to numerous late hours and long weekends — not uncommon, but far more prevalent this year than in the past.

Despite this, the year was successful in many ways for our Alliance's goals. This year, our West Slope Youth Voice students traveled to the Capitol ahead of the rest of our members, with a focus on **House Bill 23-1003: School Mental Health Assessment.** (See page 5 for more information on HB23-1003.)

More Alliance members attended the Capitol a few weeks later with a focus on clean air and water, as well as affordable housing needs. And beyond our legislative committee and our lobby trips, members of our Alliance participated throughout the session by testifying on bills as they moved through committees.

Almost all of the bills we outlined as priorities this year passed, including **HB23-1011: Right to Repair Agricultural Equipment**, which will make it easier and more cost-effective for local farmers and ranchers to repair their farm equipment. **SB23-006: Rural Opportunity Office** also passed, which will



West Slope Youth Voice students were able to meet with **Governor Jared Polis** at the Capitol in Denver in February, as part of their annual lobby trip.

help rural communities better access resources for economic transitions and growth and development opportunities. And **HB23-1257: Mobile Home Park Quality**, which increases state revenue to create multiple programs to address water quality needs in mobile home parks, was successful.

While it was certainly a focus at the legislature, not all affordable housing bills survived, including a bill to repeal the prohibition on local residential rent control, which Polis's office opposed, and Gov Polis's own flagship affordable housing bill, **SB23-213: Land Use**, which would have required local governments' to adopt higher density codes and requirements in line with state. Affordable housing remains a clear need to address in the state legislature and will surely be back again in the next year, hopefully with more alignment in vision.

Where Western Colorado

Alliance hit rapids was with the environmental bills at the forefront of our work this year. While none failed, serious concessions were made to push them through. **SB23-016 the Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Measures**, **HB23-1242: Water Conservation in Oil & Gas Operations**, and **HB23-1294: Pollution Protection Measures** all passed. House Bill 23-1294 barely squeaked through and was a mere skeleton of the original intent of the bill. Originally, it would have tightened air-quality permitting procedures, but it was eventually pared down to form an interim legislative committee to study the issue, with restrictions that the committee couldn't directly introduce legislation next session. While disappointing, our Oil & Gas committee members who worked on the bill agree that even though it's just bones, the bones are good.

The fate of HB23-1294, along
Continued on page 8

Inside

Strategic focus and growth for our Alliance 2

Elections brings new faces and big changes to Grand Junction 2

Local farmers will see benefits from "Healthy Meals for All" 3

The challenge of Western Colorado water 4

Welcoming our Alliance's newest organizer! 4

District 51 School Board puts ideology over students' health 5

Deep listening continues 6-7

Arlo Miller: Getting ahead of the curve in the Grand Valley 8

Strategic focus and growth for our Alliance



by **Andrey Krieves**
Alliance Chair

If you joined us for the Western Colorado Alliance's Annual Conference last year (and I hope you did!), you might remember that we were ready to dive into a new strategic plan to guide our work over the next three years.

Over the years, our Alliance has grown in size and influence, and today it is one of the most respected and influential community organizations in the region. Key to our work is our desire and ability to bring together people from diverse backgrounds and communities to work towards a common goal. We've been successful in building

a strong network of members and supporters who are committed to our work in promoting social, economic, and environmental justice in the region. We want to make sure that we move ahead with intention as we expand our work and our impact as a grassroots community organization.

Annual Conference attendees in 2022 got to take a first crack at brainstorming ideas, inspiration, and potential changes to consider as our Alliance looks ahead to the near future. We want to make sure we're on track to realize our mission of building grassroots power through community organizing and leadership development, as well as our vision to create a future where engaged

local voices are leading communities across Western Colorado that are healthy, just, and self-reliant.

With the mission and vision in mind, members and affiliate groups have come together in smaller meetings across the region over the past year to discuss what our Alliance needs to prioritize in the next few years.

The plan we've put together helps us to identify big, hairy, audacious goals for our Alliance that are based on your feedback and that are specific and measurable for the next three years. As our Alliance continues to grow, we remain committed to our mission and vision looking forward. We

also remain committed to you, our members, and the work that most impacts your community.

Looking to the future, our Alliance is well positioned to continue its growth. With our strong network of members and supporters, our focus on grassroots organizing and community building, and our partnerships with ally organizations, we are poised to be the leading voice for social, economic, and environmental justice in Western Colorado for many years to come. We're putting final touches on the strategic plan this summer and can't wait to share it with you at this year's conference on August 26.

Elections brings new faces and big changes to Grand Junction



by **María Luiza Pérez Chavéz**
Community Organizer

This spring, Western Colorado Alliance has seen many changes, including new organizers and a new headquarters — and in Grand Junction specifically, with the Grand Junction municipal elections!

Finally, it is happening! Over 30+ years, much effort has gone into getting a Grand Junction Recreation Center. It has finally passed thanks to the great community, the Grand Junction Recreation Center Campaign and volunteers, and those who worked tirelessly to pass Referred Measure 1A. We'd like to especially celebrate the work of our own Board Chair Andrey Krieves and our Organizing Director Jeriel Clark, who in their time away from Alliance work, put in countless hours on behalf of the Community Rec Center measure.

We'd like to welcome new faces

to the Grand Junction City Council — like Cody Kennedy, who ran for the District A seat, and Jason Nguyen who brings much needed diversity to our City Council and ran for the District B seat. We're also excited that a very active Western Colorado Alliance member, Scott Beilfus, won his race for the at-large City Council seat against former Chamber of Commerce leader Diane Schwenke, by more than 200 votes. Scott's expertise has been instrumental in the work of our Just Housing team and our Coordinating Committee, and we are extremely fortunate to see him take a spot in the City Council. We cannot wait to see what Jason, Cody, and Scott bring to the table!



Some of the candidates from our **March 18** Meet-and-Greet in Grand Junction. From l-r: **Greg Haitz, Jamie Porta, Jason Nguyen, Anna Stout, Sandra Weckerly, Cody Kennedy, and Scott Beilfus.**

On March 18, Western Colorado Alliance of Mesa County hosted a Meet and Greet where the community could meet the candidates, ask questions, and get to know who they were. We were grateful to have candidates Nguyen, Kennedy, Beilfus, and Schwenke, as well as Jaime Porta, Sandra Weckerly, Michael Duel, Greg Haitz, and Anna Stout in attendance.

Our Just Housing Team has worked

with the City Council on affordable housing issues, and we would like to see what we can do with the new Council. We have hopes to get more things done that could help our ever-changing community.

We know that our city is growing, and so are we here in Western Colorado Alliance! We're excited to work with the new City Council members to make Grand Junction a more healthy, just, and self-reliant community!



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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Our Alliance's Board of Directors

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UNCOMPAGRE VALLEY ALLIANCE
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WESTERN COLORADO ALLIANCE OF MESA COUNTY

Steve Allerton, Grand Junction

Director Emeritus

Peggy Rawlins, Grand Junction

Local farmers will see benefits from “Healthy Meals for All”



by **Nick Allan**
Regional Organizer

This past November, 56% of Coloradans agreed school meals should come at no cost to students. The passage of Proposition FF was a major win for Western Colorado Alliance. Our members select issues we wish to support every election year and last year, in support of this proposition and others, our Alliance sent out mailers, passed out literature, and knocked on doors.

Proposition FF, also known as Healthy School Meals for All, provides no-cost breakfasts and lunches to public school students and is funded by reducing income tax deduction amounts for those earning \$300,000 or more.

There are multiple benefits to this program for students. The program will remove the bureaucracy required to track student food debt. That means more resources can go to the students.

Healthy Meals for All also reduces the stigma brought upon students who receive free or reduced price lunches. There are accounts of students who have avoided free meals for fear of being labeled as “poor.” Offering Healthy Meals for All means some students will no longer feel socially isolated based on their lunch selections.

All of these benefits will help in student health and educational outcomes. But there’s another

major advantage to the new law: It offers the opportunity to revolutionize local food.

Starting in 2024, school districts will be incentivized to purchase from local growers. Currently, many school districts already participate in local food purchases at a limited scale. Products can include seasonal apples in the fall or milk from local dairy providers.

But what if we could feed our students year-round with locally sourced-food? That is a goal of Western Colorado Alliance’s Local Food and Agriculture Committee. Our vision for a food-sovereign Western Slope starts in our schools. The additional funding decided by voters will be the mechanism to begin this process.

This May, Western Colorado Alliance Local Food and Agriculture Committee met with School District 51’s head of nutritional services. District 51 serves around 20,000 students in the Mesa County area. We discussed the importance of creating early contracts for farmers to expand their contracts. On the Western Slope, several farms are ready to expand. Thanks to FF funding, school districts can provide farmers guaranteed



Western Colorado Alliance Member and Farmer **Michael Lobato** on his farm, Lobato Farms. Photo by Jessica Plance of Western Organization of Resource Councils.

contracts, providing the security to expand their operations. The more local food we grow, the better outcomes we’ll see for our students and our community.

And local food is a positive to our planet and its people. Our food often travels long distances. Lettuce from Arizona and peaches from Georgia travel hundreds of miles. Those miles are traversed by gas-guzzling semi trucks emitting large amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Meanwhile, the food loses nutrients during the time it takes to travel. As a result, consumers have to eat more to feel full. Local food means more nutritious, filling food for consumers.

On the Western Slope, we are lucky enough to have farms in driving distance from our homes — no semis needed for the freshest produce possible.

Local food is key to having a healthy, just, and self-reliant Western Colorado. Our Alliance believes in creating a food-sovereign Western Slope, wherein our communities can feed themselves. It will take time to reach this goal but there’s no better place to start than our schools. We now have the opportunity to give our students the healthiest meals possible, change our local food economy, and our community health. The Alliance is working to make it happen.

March and April were energized by clean tech events!

Western Colorado Alliance has been busy on the clean and renewable energy front this quarter!

On March 14, over 70 community members gathered to hear from groups interested in promoting sustainability here in Mesa County including **Solar United Neighbors**, **Cleantech Business Coalition**, the City of Grand Junction’s Sustainability Department, and our Alliance.

Community members brought seven different electric vehicle models to demonstrate, and a local ebike company, **Colorado E-Bikes**, brought several models attendees could check out and test ride.

And on April 30, our Alliance joined with our friends at **Clean Energy Economy for the Region (CLEER)** to host the Experience Electric Road Show at Grand Junction’s Lincoln Park Barn. Once again, electric vehicles were on display and available for “ride & drive” sessions. Attendance was brisk!



The challenge of Western Colorado water



by **Brian Williams**
Regional Organizer

We're running out of water.

For most folks who call Western Colorado home, this isn't news. We've watched with numb terror as Lake Mead's water level has steadily declined. Behind closed doors, Congress has tried and failed to broker an agreement with state officials from Wyoming to California as they negotiate who gets how much of what little water is left of the overburdened Colorado River.

At a time when the specter of devastating cuts looms large over the West, it makes little sense to continue using fresh water to extract oil and gas, which is partially responsible for the worst drought in our region in over a millennium. During this year's legislative session, our Alliance helped pass a key piece of legislation, HB 23-1242, which will require operators to report their water use and increase the amount of recycled water used throughout the production process.

Unfortunately, navigating the political environment in Denver required significantly diluting measures within the bill before it could be passed. Such was also the fate of HB 23-1294, another piece of legislation that our Alliance helped pass, which will work

toward improving air quality for those living near oil and gas extraction. Though both pieces of legislation will help Colorado achieve its climate goals, our members know that there is still much more to be done.

For our community's agricultural workers, the existential threat posed by our changing climate is immediate. Farmers and ranchers who have worked the land for decades have watched what little water used to reach their crops and livestock trickle away, forcing impossible decisions as they watch their way of life evaporate before their eyes.

"I've lived here 60 years now," said Don Lumbarly, a rancher who lives in White-water. "We had [no water] for the last two years. Last year was a killer, and it just about sunk me financially".

When it was clear that he would not be able to secure enough water for his cattle, Don made the painful decision to sell his livestock. "I live frugally—that's all I can afford. If it weren't for my pension as a former Colorado state employee, I don't know what I would do", said Don.

Unfortunately, stories like Don's are becoming all too common throughout the West. As our days become hotter and dryer, Coloradans must

rise to the challenge and do our part to conserve water and reduce the amount of heat trapping greenhouse gases we release into the atmosphere.

Two rulemaking processes critical to the future of Colorado will take place this year: The Cumulative Impacts Rulemaking in the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC), and the Intensity

AQCC's intensity rulemaking will focus on how we measure the pollution oil and gas infrastructure is emitting—and keeping oil and gas executives honest about the amount.

By understanding how much we pollute and the totality of the impacts that pollution has on our communities and environment, Colorado will be better positioned to take responsibility



Verification Rulemaking in the Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC). Both rulemakings aim to address the environmental and public health risks posed by oil and gas operations—and both have implications for how likely we are to achieve our state's targets for reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

The COGCC's cumulative impact rulemaking will determine where the agency will allow oil and gas wells to be permitted, accounting for the existing harm being done by oil and gas activity in the area. The

and fulfill our role in the global fight against climate change.

Water is life. It is the blossoming of Palisade orchards with the promise of peaches and wine; it is the tall stocks of sweetcorn that rise to greet the vast Olathe sky; it is the sun-kissed joy of sharing a Cedaredge apple with a friend. Water is what makes possible our mode of being in this arid arcadia we call home. "If people don't get it into their heads how important our resources are, they can't sustain life," said Don. "I don't know what kind of future that will look like."

Welcoming our Alliance's newest organizer!



by **Arn McConnell**
Communications
Coordinator

Western Colorado Alliance is proud to announce the hiring of Laura Bloom, our new regional organizer specializing in oil & gas work.

Laura was born and raised in Grand Junction. She grew up exploring Western Colorado on trips with her family where she learned about many of the towns, the value of land and water, independence, and energy sources.

She holds a Bachelor's of Science in biology and a Master's of Science in integrated sciences. Her education lends several key skills to her new role at Western Colorado Alliance.

She spent a good amount of time between degrees working for a

non-profit non-governmental organization that advocates for evidence-based policies and healthcare in Washington, DC.

Laura is excited to bring that experience to the Western Slope, integrating with the

culture and priorities at Western Colorado Alliance.

Laura believes in finding ways to connect topics and issues and multimodal solutions; this can help effect stronger changes and bridge community divides.

Laura operates from the core tenants of respect, recognition, and communication. She looks forward to building her skills at Western Colorado Alliance and becoming an asset to the people of Western Colorado.

When she isn't working, Laura enjoys spending time with her family (especially her husband and dogs), baking, reading, and hiking.

Laura takes over Oil & Gas work from Brian Williams, who is remaining with our Alliance, but who is moving over to become our Alliance's new Membership Coordinator.

Laura can be reached at laura@westerncoloradoalliance.org. We hope you'll join us in wishing her a warm welcome. We're excited for what Laura will bring to our Alliance!



WSYV students help secure mental health services for students

At the beginning of this year's session, West Slope Youth Voice students chose **House Bill 23-1003: School Mental Health Assessment** as a bill they wished to support and for which they would lobby.

This bill created a mental health assessment program for students in grades six through 12, to coincide with dental and vision health assessments that are already offered in many schools.

The bill passed soundly and complements the work that the students are focusing on here in Western Colorado to protect and expand school-based health centers for high school students.



West Slope Youth Voice students met up with legislators like **Representative Dylan Roberts** during their first lobby trip of 2023 in February.

District 51 School Board puts ideology over students' health



by Tyler McDermott
Regional Organizer

&



Maya McDaniel
Mila Stepan
WSYV Members

The District 51 School Board in Mesa County recently shut down the proposition to place a school-based health center in the new Grand Junction High School despite space having been already made in the building plans to accommodate it at no additional cost.

MarillacHealth would have paid rent to operate the facility, and numerous studies and examples including Central High School's Warrior Wellness program, have demonstrated the immense positive impacts school-based health clinics offer students.

School-based health centers make healthcare and resources more readily available to those who may not otherwise have access to them for a variety of reasons including health care cost to families, lack of transportation, lack of a mental health care facility nearby, privacy, and many others.

Unfortunately, the school board has readily ignored this fact to instead offer alternate 'options' that fail to meet student's needs for many reasons.

School Board President Andrea Hartz stated during the discussion that her proposed alternative option places the clinic outside of the school "across the street" (though it is not truly across the street but many blocks away), which would allow for not just

students but the community at-large to access this resource.

Board Member Will Jones agreed with this idea to place the health center outside the school building and that it should be a community health center rather than school-based, stating that Grand Junction High School students already have to walk across a busy street and to other buildings off campus grounds, while ignoring the fact that the current unsafe environment of students walking off campus and through dangerously busy intersections are among the major reasons for building the new campus.

Jones also expressed concern over the conveniently-timed notice of a pending lawsuit against Marillac regarding the use of funds for Central's Warrior Wellness program, saying that he could not vote to approve the clinic while this was out there. Meanwhile, little to no information has actually come out surrounding the allegations and their veracity remains in question.

Western Colorado has seen suicide rates among youth (and suicide rates in general) far higher than the national average. Students in crisis can face waiting times of over three months to gain access to a mental health crisis facility, with some needing to drive to Montrose or Glenwood Springs just to get the help they need, an often impossible barrier for many of our students.

Anyone who has experienced a mental health crisis or had a

family member experience one knows that waiting for help for three months can be a matter of life or death. When a person needs mental healthcare, they need it NOW, not later, and school-based health centers make this possible for thousands of students in an environment where they spend 40+ hours a week and have both peer and faculty support. School-based health centers have been shown to reduce suicide rates in student populations by 30%, and Central High School can boast that they have not experienced a single student suicide since placing the Warrior Wellness Center in their school in August 2020, while nearly every other high school in the valley cannot say the same — especially GJHS.

School District 51 has a higher than average number of students living in poverty (16%) or on Medicaid (54%), meaning a large portion of our student body has limited or no access to any health care service. This is where school-based health centers have the largest and most profound impact.

In just two years, Central's Warrior Wellness program has seen over 2,000 students and nearly 5,000 visits, with 3,000 visits for physical health problems and nearly 2,000 for mental/behavioral health reasons. Over 1,000 depression screenings have been performed.

Students are stressed by so many factors: Social media, academic and social pressures, family issues, drug use, athletics, jobs, and more. Many of the clinic's detractors argue that students

should get this help through their parents. However, they fail to recognize the massive gaps in health care access a majority of our district's students face.

During the vote to approve or deny the GJHS health center, Board Member Doug Levinson asked a clarifying question about whether the vote would have any impact on the successful and already in-place health center at Central High School, to which Board Member Angela Lema said, "Not yet." This current board apparently wants to not only prevent our students attending Grand Junction High School from getting access to this critical health care resource, but to take it away from those who are already lucky enough to have it.

We would ask the Board to remember the reason they are in that office — to protect our kids and give them the opportunity to learn and grow into successful adults. By shutting down the GJHS health center, they have done just the opposite.

School outcomes and health outcomes are correlated. If kids are depressed, anxious, sick, and scared, they will not perform to the degree they are capable. Our kids have asked for this health center, and we should be listening to them.

It's time we truly equip and empower students for a limitless tomorrow. It's time for a school-based health clinic at the new Grand Junction High School, and to promise the students at Central High School that they will continue to have access to this incredible, life-saving resource.

Our deep listening continues...



by **Hanna Arauz**
Community Organizer
&
Bianca Diaz
Community Organizer

You may have heard that last year our Alliance's community organizers led an innovative door-to-door deep listening campaign, but did you know this listening campaign is ongoing?

It has taken a different form. It's slower, more still, and reaches a new level of vulnerability. Community organizers are now facilitating issue identification conversations to ensure we continue to truly understand our communities while building power. (You may hear them referred to as house or neighborhood meetings, they are the same thing!)

During these meetings, groups of five to eight people gather for an hour to share the personal impacts of local issues and explore the commonalities in their lived experiences through storytelling. From a grassroots organizing standpoint, the neighborhood meetings serve to identify issues and leaders that will inform future campaigns. But from a personal standpoint, they shine light on the emotional aspect of community organizing.

These issue-oriented conversations can't exist without the expression of pain and frustration felt by those impacted by the issues. Participants have been willing to be honest and vulnerable, at times shedding tears. In truth, it's very difficult to facilitate these emotional conversations. But through the acknowledgement of pain, comes understanding and empathy.

Whether the participants knew each other before walking into the room, we've watched community members find common ground in their lived experiences and realize that they are not alone. Participants are coming into these spaces from different backgrounds and places in life, but they are walking away with a renewed sense of community and hope.

In order to alleviate barriers that would prevent participation, our Alliance prioritizes accessibility. Organizers have provided a multitude of services and accommodations such as dinner, childcare, meetings conducted exclusively in Spanish, and offering interpretation when needed.

The meetings have been attended by a diverse array of participants, connecting community

members across a broad range of cultures, ages, professions, and lived experiences. We will continue to commit to accessibility because we cannot create healthy, just, and self-reliant communities without everyone.

As for the issues surfacing in these meetings, each county is telling a slightly different story. In Mesa County, immigration and healthcare services for the Latino community are rising as top issues. In Montrose County, the issues raised are in line with what we heard at residents' doors. Affordable housing, economic concerns, development and infrastructure, and community connectedness remain prominent concerns. Meanwhile in Garfield County, conversations have dominantly revolved around

housing, healthcare, childcare, education, and transportation. The differences in top issues county-to-county illustrate the need to keep campaigns relevant by approaching issue work through a local lens.

Our organizers will continue to hold neighborhood meetings through the warm months even as we transition our focus from listening to taking action. Authentic community engagement is an ongoing mission of ours. If you are interested in joining one of these conversations, or hosting a neighborhood meeting with your own friends and family in attendance, please reach out to your local Western Colorado Alliance community organizer. We're looking forward to hearing from you!



Some questions about

The CLARION



Western Colorado Alliance is giving thought to how best to serve our members via our quarterly newsletter, **The Clarion**. Toward that end, we are collecting data on our members' experience with **The Clarion**. Thank you for taking a couple minutes to share your opinions. (Most of these questions are simple multiple-choice questions regarding **The Clarion**, but you will be invited to optionally offer additional thoughts at the end of the questionnaire.)

1. Do you find **The Clarion** informative?

 Very!

 Somewhat.

 Not much...

 Not at all!

2. Roughly how much of each issue of **The Clarion** do you actually read? (Choose the answer which best describes your typical behavior.)

 I read the whole thing!

 I read most of the stories.

 I read a few of the stories.

 I skim but don't read much.

3. My favorite parts of **The Clarion** are (Select all that apply):

 Updates on issue campaigns

 Stories about our members

 Information on upcoming events

 Analysis of decisions impacting our area

 Other _____

4. Would you prefer **The Clarion's** current format of tabloid-sized newspaper, or one of these alternatives?

 Current format

 Magazine format

 Digital only

 Other _____

5. Optional: Do you have any other thoughts, comments, or suggestions regarding **The Clarion**? (Use a separate piece of paper if necessary.)

Please clip your answers and mail to:
Western Colorado Alliance
PO Box 1931, Grand Junction, CO 81502

Or save postage and tell us online at: bit.ly/clarion-questions

Data compiled by:
Hanna Arauza
Community Organizer

What we're hearing...

The following statistics and quotes are representative of the feedback we are hearing in our community meetings. ("1st Time Engagers" means new supporters with no previous engagement with our Alliance.)

It feels like there is no future here.

I've never lived in a place where there is so much animosity.

I live in fear of a medical bill.

MESA COUNTY

TOTAL MEETINGS	3
TOTAL ATTENDEES	26
NO. OF 1st TIME ENGAGERS	9

Three (or 100%) of all Mesa County meetings were conducted fully or partially in Spanish.

MONTROSE COUNTY

TOTAL MEETINGS	3
TOTAL ATTENDEES	19
NO. OF 1st TIME ENGAGERS	18

One (or 33.3333%) of all Montrose County meetings were conducted fully or partially in Spanish.

GARFIELD COUNTY

TOTAL MEETINGS	4
TOTAL ATTENDEES	19
NO. OF 1st TIME ENGAGERS	17

No Garfield County meetings were conducted fully or partially in Spanish.

Arlo Miller: Getting ahead of the curve in the Grand Valley



by Arn McConnell
Communications
Coordinator

Grand Junction resident (and Western Colorado Alliance member) Arlo Miller hasn't seen 30 yet, but already he's thought about how history might look back on his work on local issues with Western Colorado Alliance of Mesa County:

"If we can spend the next five to ten years focusing on density, multi-use zoning, sensible water use, and building a transit and bike network that allows all that to exist without creating traffic like other communities deal with, we can make the Western Slope an even better place to live for decades to come."

Miller, a Grand Junction native who attended Grand Junction High School and who works as an industrial sewing machine repairman and outdoor gear designer, has been very active this year with our Alliance. "His help has been instrumental to advancements of our Alliance in Mesa County and our Just Housing group," says Alliance



Western Colorado Alliance member **Arlo Miller** enjoys a hot beverage and a conversation with Alliance organizer **María Luiza Pérez Chavéz**.

Regional Organizer María Luiza Pérez Chavéz. "He has facilitated meetings and emcee'd multiple events including the Grand Junction City Council Forum [which our Alliance hosted on March 18]."

Miller's efforts like these have been hugely helpful as Western Colorado Alliance of Mesa County has ramped up its efforts to address the local housing problem. "And Arlo

has not only been involved with the Just Housing team, but is willing and eager to join in all Western Colorado Alliance efforts," says Chavéz.

Miller says he derives inspiration from "seeing my generation and folks younger than me get serious about improving Grand Junction." When asked, "Why work with our Alliance?" Miller says, "Western Colorado Alliance's

values match my own, and we're really out here getting work done! I'm stoked to be involved with a group that's taking such an active hand in the community."

Chavéz, for one, is happy to have Miller's commitment to our Alliance's values, and his willingness to work in their support. "With his intelligence and dedication to the group, we see great things coming our way with his leadership!"

Navigating the Capitol's rapids

Continued from page 1

with several other bills our Alliance tracked this year, was undetermined up until the last hours of the 120-day session before lawmakers adjourned at 10 pm on May 8.

With hours to go, the turbulence of the session continued to the last moments as Republicans staged a walk-out in protest of **SB23-303: Reduce Property Taxes & Voter Approved Revenue Change**. With all Republicans missing from the House chambers during the vote, the bill still easily passed and will refer a measure to the ballot in November that seeks to approve a plan that would reduce property taxes over ten years and allow the state to retain more tax revenue to pay for the plan.

Despite all House members being up for re-election in the fall, the Democratic majority is expected to hold, which

begs the question: Will the waters of this session become the new status quo? With much work to do in-between, we'll find out next year.

So if at the end of this, you're picturing a strong boned skeleton rafting the sneak line on the river past the capsizing boats on the rapids, then hopefully I've done my job of painting this year's legislative sessions picture for you! is expected to hold, which begs the question: Will the waters of this session become the new status quo? With much work to do in-between, we'll find out next year.

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UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

Board Meeting
Friday, June 2
12 noon - 1:30 pm

Annual Conference
Saturday, August 26
9 am - 4 pm

Board Meeting
Saturday, February 3, 2024
12 noon - 1:30 pm