

# CLARION

Vol. 44 No. 4 Winter 2024



**GETTING OUT  
THE VOTE  
IN 2024**



**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.**

601 N. 1st St.  
 P.O. Box 1931  
 Grand Junction CO 81502  
 (970) 256-7650  
 info@WesternColoradoAlliance.org  
 WesternColoradoAlliance.org

## Inside

From the Chair: Comparing then and now .....	2
Your ultimate guide to voting up: demystifying this year’s epic ballot .....	3
Farm tour wrap up .....	5
What Grand Valley Power users really want.....	6
State’s cumulative impacts and enhanced practices rulemaking falls flat .....	7
The big screen adventure of Mountainfilm returns to the Avalon .....	8
West End members tackle healthcare access .....	9
Affiliate updates .....	11
Western Colorado’s BRIGHT future .....	14

## Our Alliance’s Staff

Emily Hornback, *Executive Director*  
 Jeriel Clark -Dyar, *Organizing Director*  
 Nick Allan, *Lead Organizer*  
 Hanna Arauza, *Community Organizer*  
 María Luiza Pérez Chavéz, *Community Organizer*  
 Bianca Diaz, *Community Organizer*  
 Tyler McDermott, *Regional Organizer*  
 Arn McConnell, *Communications Coordinator*  
 Shanna Shepherd, *Office Administrator*  
 Brian Williams, *Membership Coordinator*

## Board of Directors

### Officers

Kevin Williams, *Chair, Montrose*  
 Adriane Moline, *Vice Chair, Grand Junction*  
 Dee Wernette, *Treasurer, Grand Junction*  
 Haley Van Camp, *Secretary*

### At-large Directors

Rodger Steen, *Steamboat Springs*  
 Barbara Vasquez, *Cowdrey*

### Local Affiliate Directors

**Grand Valley Citizens Alliance**  
 Betsy Leonard, *Battlement Mesa*

### Ridgway-Ouray Community Council

Dan Kigar, *Ridgway*  
 Al Lowande (Alternate), *Ridgway*

### Western Colorado Alliance of Mesa County

Ario Miller, *Grand Junction*

### Uncompahgre Valley Alliance

Melissa McKelvey, *Montrose*

### Director Emeritus

Peggy Rawlins, *Grand Junction*



# Comparing then and now

As your new board chair, and with 40-plus years as a member under my belt, I decided to devote my first column to the past, present and future.

Western Colorado Alliance recently celebrated its 44th anniversary, and what a history it's been. Our Alliance was born in April 1980. At its inception, the "Founding Humans" set out goals for the fledgling organization and outlined potential issues including: air and water quality, full employment, energy conservation, community self-determination, public land management, agricultural land conversion, alternative transportation, and a sustainable economy. Does any of this sound familiar today?

Like most nonprofits over the years, our Alliance has experienced ups and downs. Through the dedication and perseverance of our members, leaders, and staff we have fought for utility consumers, promoted responsible land use, protected our air and water resources, championed renewable energy, safeguarded our public lands, and encouraged responsible oil and gas development. We went toe to toe with Colorado-Ute Electric Association, Louisiana Pacific Corporation, Umetco Minerals Corporation and the U.S. Forest Service, and won.

Fast-forward to the present, and there is much to be thankful for and excited about. Western Colorado Alliance is financially sound, a respected voice at the State Capitol, and building a diverse and inclusive base of members and supporters. West Slope Youth Voice is engaging young people in our democracy,

and the staff is top notch. Our issue portfolio is expanding at the local and state level to include child care, public transportation, just housing and mental health.

As I reflect on future opportunities and the resources at our disposal, I would like to focus on two interrelated things: members and local affiliates.

Members are the heart and soul of our Alliance. Members are people who choose to make a financial contribution to the organization. They provide power, credibility, talent, direction, financial independence, and leadership. In 2006, our Alliance had nearly 3,000 members. Today, that figure has dipped to about 600. Without delving into why, I would like to throw down the gauntlet: If we can recruit 1% of the population in our four affiliate counties, we would have about 2,000 members. Two percent of the population would be 4,000 members, and five percent would be 10,000 members. What are we waiting for? What's getting in our way? Our end of the year fundraising campaign is coming up. Let's grow our membership.



**Kevin Williams**  
*Chair of the Board*

Similarly, our number of local affiliates has declined from an all-time high of ten to four — one each in Montrose, Mesa, Ouray, and Garfield Counties. Local affiliates are fundamental to our Alliance's organizational structure. They provide a: (1) significant part of the organization's base and leadership pool, (2) vehicle for people to join as members and become involved, and (3) grassroots voice in setting our Alliance's priorities. For Western Colorado Alliance to continue building its base and power, one way to do so is to organize more local affiliates across Western Colorado. I welcome your comments, questions, and feedback.

**UPCOMING  
Board Meetings**

**Board Budget Meeting**  
*Wednesday, December 11  
12 pm-1:30 pm via Zoom*

**Board Retreat**  
*Saturday, February 8 & Sunday,  
February 9  
in Grand Junction*

# Your Ultimate Guide to VOTING UP

## Demystifying This Year's Epic Ballot

By Tyler McDermott, *Regional Organizer* & Jeriel Clark-Dyar, *Organizing Director*

The falling leaves aren't the only thing marking the arrival of fall — ballots have dropped too, signaling the start of election season! So, grab your coziest sweater, a pumpkin spice latte, and your ballot, and get ready because this year's election is one of the longest yet. With federal, state, and local candidates, 14 statewide ballot measures, and a few local issues, it's important to be well-prepared to vote the entire ballot. Though it may seem overwhelming, organizations like ours are here to help make sense of it all.

Now you might be saying, "Wait a minute, I already voted, why are you sending this information so late?" With just about a week left until Election Day, you might think it's too late to keep pushing election information — but it's actually more important than ever! Voting trends in Colorado show that many voters, particularly younger ones, tend to submit their ballots closer to Election Day. In fact, younger voters — historically the lowest voting demographic — are more likely to delay voting until the final few days. Unfortunately, these same voters are also the most likely to skip voting altogether if they feel uninformed or overwhelmed by the issues.

That's why getting clear, concise information into their hands in formats they use, like Instagram, is critical. So if you've already voted, we need your help to get the word out! And if you haven't voted yet, no worries, because neither have we!

But don't worry, we wouldn't miss it. We know every vote counts — especially when it comes to the local and statewide measures that will shape our communities. To support you and your community this election season, Western Colorado Alliance has introduced new tools designed to make voting on the entire ballot easier, especially for younger voters. Take a look at how we're helping simplify these complex issues:

### BREAKING IT DOWN IN 90 SECONDS

We're thrilled to announce that Western Colorado Alliance is now on Instagram! We've been steadily releasing fun, 90-second-or-less videos explaining each of the 14 statewide ballot measures. These short videos give you everything you need to cast your vote with confidence, featuring in-depth explanations of each measure, the pros and cons of a yes or no vote, and sources for further reading. Be sure to follow us on Instagram at @westerncoalliance and be the first to catch these videos. They'll also be available on Facebook and on our **Vote Up! Virtual Election Guide** on our website at [westerncoloradoalliance.org/vote-up-in-2024](https://westerncoloradoalliance.org/vote-up-in-2024). Whether you have two minutes or two hours to spare, we've got the resources to help inform your vote.

### KEEP IT SIMPLE VOTER GUIDE

We know that the state-issued blue book can feel overwhelming, especially when it's as long as this year's 64-page edition. That's why we've created a two-page voter guide with concise explanation of the measures we have a position on. The guide will be mailed out and delivered directly to voters' doors. It also includes a QR code that links to our Vote Up! Virtual Election Guide.

### WESTERN COLORADO ALLIANCE ON THE MEASURES

Now that you know how we're activating voters, let's look at a few of the ballot measures where our Alliance has taken a stance:

#### **Amendment 79: Right to Abortion** *We suggest a YES Vote!*

This measure would enshrine the right to abortion access in the state constitution and ensure reproductive healthcare coverage for state employees. As an organization committed to creating healthy, just, and self-reliant communities, we believe access to reproductive healthcare is essential, especially in Western Colorado, where such services often require hours of travel.

**Amendment J:  
Freedom to Marry**  
*We suggest a YES Vote!*

This amendment would remove outdated language from the state constitution that limits marriage to unions between one man and one woman. At Western Colorado Alliance, we believe everyone should have the right to marry whom they love, and this measure reflects our commitment to equality.

**Amendment K:  
Modify Constitutional  
Election Deadlines**  
*We suggest a YES Vote!*

Amendment K would extend the time county clerks have to finalize ballots by seven days and increase the ballot publication period from 15 to 45 days. With election accuracy being critical, we support this measure to give counties the time they need to ensure every ballot is accurate before it's sent to voters.

**Proposition JJ: Sports  
Betting Tax Revenue**  
*We suggest a YES Vote!*

This measure would allow the state to retain tax revenue from sports betting exceeding \$29 million per year and use it for water conservation projects. Since sports betting is already legal, we support using this revenue to address Colorado's urgent water protection needs.

**Proposition 131: Concerning  
the Conduct of Elections**  
*We suggest a NO Vote!*

Proposition 131 would introduce a "jungle primary" system and ranked choice voting for general elections. We oppose this measure due to concerns about voter confusion and increased spoiled ballots, that would no longer be able to be cured, disproportionately silencing marginalized and

young voters. Election reforms should enhance participation, not complicate it. If you follow the money trail on this one, it's a little stinky. If our position on Proposition 131 surprises you, let us explain! You can find a detailed explanation by visiting our Vote Up! Virtual Election Guide at [westerncoloradoalliance.org/vote-up-in-2024](http://westerncoloradoalliance.org/vote-up-in-2024).

**Amendment 80: School  
Choice in Education**  
*We suggest a NO Vote!*

Amendment 80 seeks to enshrine school choice in the state constitution, potentially diverting public funds to private and religious schools through a voucher program. We oppose this measure as it could undermine public education by reallocating critical resources. School choice already exists in Colorado, and this unnecessary measure could serve to divert public funding away from public schools.

There are eight other measures on the statewide ballot, ranging from Proposition 127, which prohibits the trophy hunting of big cats, to reforms in our criminal justice system. While we haven't taken a formal stance on all these measures, we still break down the measures for you at our website.

**WANT TO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE AT THE  
POLLS?**

This year, our Alliance has partnered with Colorado Common Cause in hopes of bringing election protection to Western Colorado. To

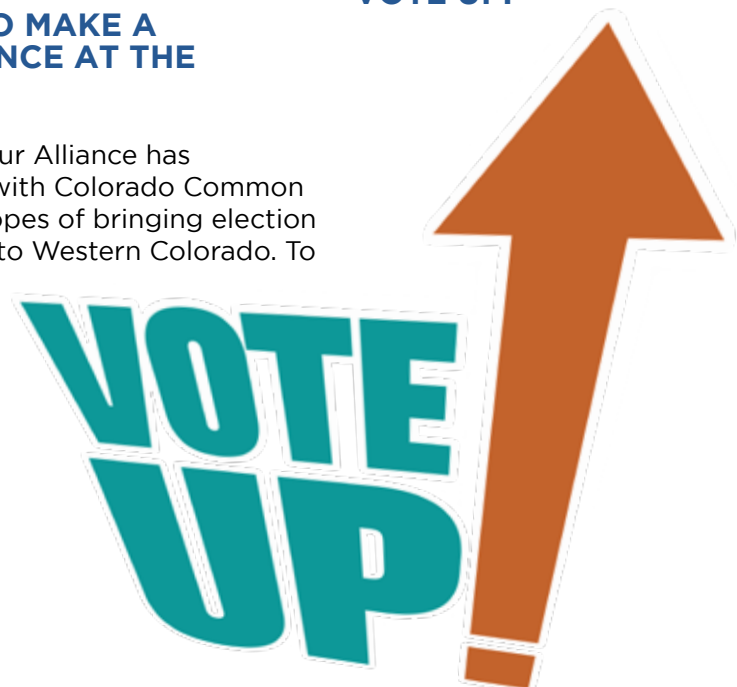
keep Colorado's elections accessible and ensure every voter's voice is heard, we are looking for volunteers like you to help monitor election activities in your community, share nonpartisan election resources, and call voters during and after the election.

Training to be a poll monitor is provided and volunteer activities would include: Serving as volunteer poll monitors to ensure local Voter Service & Polling Centers (VSPCs) are accessible, sharing election protection materials in your area, including yard signs, multilingual resources, and other nonpartisan election resources, and assist Colorado Common Cause in calling voters whose ballots were rejected after the election to ensure every voice is heard. If you are interested, please visit [bit.ly/volunteer2024election](http://bit.ly/volunteer2024election), or reach out to Jeriel for support in signing up at [jeriel@westerncoloradoalliance.org](mailto:jeriel@westerncoloradoalliance.org).

**SEE YOU AT THE POLLS!**

We hope you'll visit our Vote Up! Virtual Election Guide, check out our voter guide, and follow us on Instagram for video explainers. Let's tackle this lengthy ballot together and ensure every issue gets the attention it deserves.

**VOTE UP!**





# FARM TOUR WRAP UP

By Nick Allan, *Lead Organizer*



*Jake Gray of Gray Acres Farm in Paonia points to the land where he rotates his chickens.*



*Farmer Terrie Swerdlove explains her growing operation to an interested attendee.*

With visits to seven farms across four counties and more than 150 attendees, **Family To Farm**, our Alliance's 2024 farm tour series, has successfully concluded. And what a series it was! Our primary goal was to engage with the next generation of farmers, and with nearly half (49%) of attendees either being farmers with five or fewer years of experience, or those interested in starting a farm, we can confidently say: Mission accomplished!

A delightful new feature of our farm tour series was the sight of at least

one stroller at each tour — young families introducing their babies to the freshest produce our valley has to offer.

These farm tours tie into our legislative efforts. Every farm we visited practices regenerative agriculture, which focuses on enhancing soil health and fostering a thriving ecosystem. This year, we're reintroducing a bill that passed the State Senate but didn't get a House vote last session. The bill aims to create incentives for restaurants to purchase from



# What Grand Valley Power users really want

By Tyler McDermott, *Regional Organizer*



*Happy Hive Farm in Grand Junction keeps its chickens in open spaces allowing for fresh air and healthy chickens.*

local regenerative farmers. Additionally, it will set up rule-making to establish our state as the first in the nation to officially define “Regenerative Agriculture.”

We believe that once more consumers experience the taste and quality difference in their food, they’ll be eager to support local farms. Just take a look at the beautiful photos from our tours — proof of Western Colorado’s vibrant local food movement!



This year, our Alliance committed ourselves to learning more about the relationship between the Rural Electric Cooperatives that govern our energy systems in much of Western Colorado and the communities they serve. Volunteers in our Alliance went door to door this summer, focusing on Grand Valley Power (GVP) service territory in the hope of understanding how members felt about their cooperative, as well as what they both liked and wanted to see change. Three additional goals include wanting to better understand how people view the power that reaches their homes, if they had opinions about where it came from both geographically and from which sources, and to urge them to turn out to vote while sharing how to make their voice heard in the upcoming Board of Directors election. After knocking 500 doors, here’s a little bit about what we learned!

Beginning with what GVP members most liked about the service they get, the number one thing that continuously came up was that they loved the reliable energy service. Time after time, neighbors would mention that the most important thing for them when it comes to their relationship with power was that the lights (and air conditioning!) come on when they flip the switch. This was especially highlighted for GVP members as Xcel experienced numerous blackouts throughout the very hot summer, in some cases leaving those in their territory in the dark for hours, while GVP did not. GVP’s reliability is certainly something to be commended and their members are proud of it.

Getting into what members wanted to see change, a few things really stood out. Members often mentioned that they had difficulty

voting in their Board of Directors elections for a number of reasons. First, members don’t really have any idea what the board does and why it matters that they vote at all. They want more information about the decision-making process and purpose the board serves, and with GVP’s meetings taking place on every third Wednesday at 9 am, very few are actually able to attend or participate to find out. Second, members mentioned that they didn’t have enough information to make educated decisions about the candidates running for the board. None of the information mailed to voters, nor on their website, showed detailed policy positions and the visions for what each candidate wanted to do on the board if elected. All that is offered is a small biography and work history and how long they have been a GVP member. Few people want to cast their vote without having more information. Third, voters talked about having a digital voting option to make it easier than sending their ballot by mail. Many other cooperatives have adopted hybrid voting options, and after doing so achieved 50% better participation (currently less than 10% voter turnout). Last, as can probably be expected, everyone wants to pay less for their energy and be protected from rate increases.

Clearly Grand Valley Power has a lot to celebrate when it comes to the service they offer to their members, but there is also a lot we look forward to working with the board to remedy and improve Mesa County’s local energy cooperative for everyone. Grand Valley Power held their election on August 8 for three seats on the nine-seat board, with incumbents Jesse Mease and Brian Woods returning to the board and new face on the board Lindsay Byers Gray joining them.



# State's cumulative impacts and enhanced practices rulemaking falls flat

By Emily Hornback, *Executive Director*

Colorado's Energy and Carbon Management Commission (ECMC) recently passed rules to address cumulative impacts from oil and gas development in Colorado. These rules stem from several recent bills passed by the state legislature, directing the state to limit the cumulative impacts from oil and gas development and protect disproportionately impacted communities. Our Alliance was involved as a party throughout the hearing. Despite significant community input, the new requirements are largely procedural and miss substantive hooks to limit future impacts to communities.

This process seems to be yet another example of state decision-makers giving in to pressure from fossil fuel lobbyists. In June, ECMC released a proposed set of rules that included many key protections for communities disproportionately impacted by oil and gas production. Unfortunately, a few months later, a revised set of rules were released that watered down substantive requirements and removed key protections that community groups had fought hard for.

Key protections, including meaningful thresholds for the state to deny future permits, were removed from the final version of the rule. Without specific denial criteria as well as clear and

accurate baseline data to work from, there is no real protection against cumulative impacts from ongoing and future development. Some positive aspects of the new rules include a slightly expanded area in which oil and gas operators are required to notify the public, with additional time and notice requirements for people living in disproportionately impacted communities.

Alliance members Barbara Vasquez and Rich Alward, with attorney Matt Sura, represented Our Alliance during the hearing. We appreciate all of the individual efforts and comments that were submitted during the process to advocate for additional protections for Colorado communities. This engagement was effective and necessary to ensure the final rule did not fall further astray from community interests. To adequately protect Colorado communities, additional pressure should be placed on the legislature to make progress towards future rulemakings focused on reclamation as well as water quantity and quality issues from oil and gas development.

As concisely said by Barbara Vasquez, "Colorado has once again missed a key opportunity to establish long overdue protections for our most vulnerable communities to counter the harmful



**Barbara Vasquez**

cumulative impacts of oil and gas development. While we are glad to see some additional procedural requirements for these communities put in place as a result of this process, we are disappointed in the state's failure to listen to and respond to community feedback. The protections from cumulative impacts to air and water quality, water quantity, and wildlife are quite weak and lack definition of any thresholds for denying a permit. When it comes to new oil and gas development in the state, it appears decision-makers wish to continue to provide a pathway to saying yes to developers, with community and environmental protections as an afterthought."



# THE BIG SCREEN ADVENTURE OF MOUNTAINFILM RETURNS TO THE AVALON ON NOVEMBER 21!



*A frame from "Above the Noise," directed by Adam De Silva, one of the films which will be shown at this year's Mountainfilm On Tour - Grand Junction.*

By Arn McConnell, *Communications Coordinator*

**Y**ou're flying down the ski slopes of Japan at 40 miles an hour, the wind whistling in your ears. You're kayaking along the cool, serene Zambezi River in Zambia. You're climbing the rugged peaks of Afghanistan, then leaping from an airplane to find peace in an open sky, then shooting down a gnarled mountain bike path past trees and berms in Mexico.

Wait. Is this live? Or is it Mountainfilm?

**Yes — Mountainfilm On Tour - Grand Junction returns to the Avalon Theatre on November 21!**

Our Alliance's biggest "friend-raiser" of the year will be back with even more heart-stopping thrills and heart-warming inspiration. Doors will open at 5:30 pm with the films slated to start at 7 pm, and our Alliance is

working to make this the biggest and best Mountainfilm Grand Junction has seen to date!

The films this year will take you all around the world — to learn about mountain biking in Mexico, horse racing among the Lakota tribe of South Dakota, weather watching on the coast of Sweden, and much, much more!

And of course, it wouldn't really be Mountainfilm On Tour - Grand Junction without our famous Happy Hour and Silent Auction. Local businesses have stepped up to make this year's auction one of our most exciting. And this year, a couple lucky attendees will also win a mouth-watering bundt cake package from Nothing Bundt Cakes in a special drawing.

The Happy Hour will feature live

music and, after placing your bids in the Silent Auction, you'll be able to mingle with your fellow Alliance members! Have a drink before the show from the Avalon's bar. We'll have tables featuring some of our sponsoring organizations among the few hundred smiling faces.

This year, the event is again free, but we are requesting a \$15 donation to Western Colorado Alliance if you can afford it. And don't forget the Avalon's bag policy! The theater permits: clear totes no larger than 12" x 8" x 12"; one-gallon clear plastic bags; and small purses, clutches, and wallets that aren't clear but which are no larger than 5" x 8".

We can't deny it: We're excited about this year's Mountainfilm On Tour - Grand Junction, and we can't wait to see you there!



# A grand day for pollinat

None of us would be here without pollinators.

Pollinators (butterflies, ladybugs, and many other species) are considered “keystone species,” because they help hold ecosystems together.

On August 24, our Alliance came together at Colorado Mesa University to do a little pollinating of our own. “Pollinators” was the theme of our Alliance’s 44th Annual Conference, which saw members from four different counties come together to discuss the state of our Alliance, further our business, ratify our platform, elect new Board officers, and learn new organizing skills!

This year’s Conference brought many new faces — and a few old familiar ones. Long-time organizer and member Kevin Williams was elected to be our new Board Chair, and Dee Wernette was elected as Treasurer. The



keynote speech was by former West Slope Youth Voice intern Liliana Flanigan, who currently is working on her Masters Degree at New York University and serving as a White House intern. Liliana’s speech was moving, sweet, and inspiring! We also benefited this year from some excellent workshops, including an in-depth look at our goals in the coming election and legislative session, and a panel interview featuring a bipartisan group of Western



*Kasey Weingarten and Tom McCloskey were two of our award winners this year!*





# ting!

Colorado lawmakers and officials, some of whom chose to attend the Annual Conference all day.

Our Worley Award, given to a member or members who have offered outstanding service or significant contributions to our Alliance during the past year, went to Tom McCloskey, primarily for his work on clean energy. The Rising Star Award, given to someone new to our Alliance who has made a significant contribution this year, was awarded to Kasey Weingarten for her work on local foods and agriculture. And the Rawlins Award (named after our board member emeritus, Peggy Rawlins, and given to someone who has shown “determination and grit and fearlessness in speaking truth to power”) went to long-time member Tom Acker.

Please enjoy these photos from the event! We hope you’ll join us in “holding our ecosystem together.” And we hope to see you next year for a very special 45th Annual Conference!



## West End members tackle healthcare access

By Rachel Zatterstrom, *Contract Organizer*

In the summer and fall of 2023, our Alliance led an issue identification process in Montrose County’s West End as part of our Homegrown Prosperity work. Many issues surfaced, and given that other groups were already working on housing and economic development, our leaders decided to tackle healthcare access.

It’s no secret that rural communities face unique challenges to accessing adequate healthcare. The crisis of healthcare access in the West End escalated when Montrose Memorial Hospital stopped operating the Basin Clinic in 2013, leaving the clinic struggling to survive on its own and no longer able to provide 24-hour emergency services. Local EMS volunteers have described the experience of watching the clock tick on patients’ lives with ambulance trips taking at least two hours and helicopters often unable to fly due to weather.

West End residents also struggle to access adequate preventive and chronic care services and specialty care providers, often traveling more than four hours round-trip for basic healthcare. Residents have very limited access to any kind of mental health services and no in-person mental health crisis support.

Despite previous efforts to bring healthcare solutions to the region, no real traction has been gained. It can be incredibly daunting to tackle an issue of this magnitude. However, our leaders haven’t shied away from the task and are engaged in action-oriented research to get a handle on some of what’s driving their unique challenges and begin to identify winnable, local solutions.

Here is how Cliff Allred, who grew up in Naturita and has recently moved home, describes his experience as a member of the West

End Healthcare Committee: “It tends to be difficult for me to translate between the ideas that motivate me to get involved in political or community work, and the actual, concrete steps that can be taken to further a goal. I experienced this quite a bit down in Phoenix, where I would volunteer for political campaigns, and at one point served on a church board, and at no point did I feel like I was doing more than going through the motions.

“Now, I realize that Rachel has, in large part, been training us on the process of grassroots organizing — how to set goals, what questions to ask, how to figure out the steps needed to achieve the goals. I appreciate this a great deal. I’m finding the process to be far more engaging and relevant than what I’ve experienced before.

“I’m not sure I have any real expectations regarding the outcome. What gives me hope, though, is the feeling of being able to get traction with the problems in our community.”

The West End is no stranger to coming together as a community and solving tough problems. Local leaders have vision, passion and skill and are committed to a long-term goal of ensuring the communities of the West End of Montrose County have the care and resources they need, where they live, to lead healthy lives. We are building relationships with local providers, healthcare experts, and county commissioners, and exploring solutions to create sustainable revenue streams to support adequate local healthcare facilities. Continued grassroots organizing efforts can keep the West End on a path to winning local solutions, grounded in community self-determination.

# Affiliate Update



By Jeriel Clark-Dyar, *Organizing Director*

Our Mesa County office has been a bit quieter recently, as Western Colorado Alliance of Mesa County Community Organizer Maria Luiza has taken some time away from work to focus on personal family matters. We wholeheartedly support her decision and are incredibly thankful for the state's FAMLI program, which has played a crucial role in helping two of our staff members this year. FAMLI supported Jeriel Clark-Dyar during her maternity

leave and has now allowed Maria to care for her family during a critical time.

While we've missed Maria's presence, the organizing in Mesa County hasn't slowed to a halt.

Upon Jeriel's return from maternity leave, she and the Just Housing Committee completed their series of "Know Your Rights" housing events. The highlight came when nearly 75 residents from mobile home parks in Clifton attended our special training session for mobile home park residents. Housing Attorney David Valleau from the Colorado Poverty Law Center was the guest for our session, which was packed with eager, note-taking participants. Afterward, a vibrant group of residents continued organizing right outside in the

parking lot, demonstrating a clear need to support this population in an ongoing and sustainable way.

Mesa County members of Western Colorado Alliance are also engaging in this year's election, particularly with the endorsement of local ballot measures 4A and 4B, which propose a mill levy override and bond issuance, without raising taxes, to address ongoing needs in District 51 schools. These measures are vital to ensuring that Mesa County students continue to receive the resources they need for quality education. We encourage all our members to stay informed and get involved in supporting these measures.

Despite the quieter period, Western Colorado Alliance is still pushing forward in Mesa County. We are proud of the progress our community has made and look forward to continued engagement and organizing efforts.

Western Colorado Alliance of Garfield County is launching a campaign to improve and expand public transit in the west end of the county.

Transportation was identified as a top issue by members following our deep listening project and in-depth analysis by the local organizing committee. In an area where the vast majority of workers commute, expanding bus service for western residents would offer more mobility options while also reducing traffic in the eastern half of the county. Beyond

commuting, down-valley residents have repeatedly expressed the need for more ways to access local businesses, community resources, and leisure activities in their hometowns. Expanding public transit will be a win for everyone.

To get started, we've been holding meetings with local leaders and officials and connecting with



By Hanna Arauza, *Community Organizer*

community at public events throughout the summer. The response has been overwhelmingly



# ates

positive, with community members and representatives of municipalities and allied nonprofits alike recognizing the need for transit solutions. And also recognizing that to be realized, this vision needs to be driven by our community.

Currently, we're collecting community input with a bus survey that is available in English and Spanish. We hope to collect at least 700 survey responses. Between tabling at the Latino Conservation Week Celebration and the Hispanic Heritage Celebration last month, we've already collected 70 responses and we haven't even rolled out the digital survey option yet. Two thirds of folks surveyed responded in Spanish, and we are committed to prioritizing language justice and engaging with people in their heart language. If you are bilingual and willing to lend your

language skills to this campaign, please reach out.

The survey results will be important when we present our findings publicly. But what we'll need more than data is people. The success of this campaign rests on ensuring all community voices are included and everyone has an opportunity to get involved. The next step is to build a dedicated team who will develop our campaign plan. Campaign meetings will begin mid-November. All Garfield County residents are welcome and encouraged to participate. If you're interested in joining, contact Hanna at [hanna@westerncoloradoalliance.org](mailto:hanna@westerncoloradoalliance.org)!

The Grand Valley Citizens Alliance has also been hard at work in Garfield County, continuing the fight for public health and safety in the face of irresponsible oil and gas development. GVCA was fighting

for pollution thresholds, protections for wildlife and land owners, and tougher reclamation standards in the recent cumulative impacts rulemaking before the Energy and Carbon Management Commission (see associated story on page 7). GVCA is also continuing its close collaboration with Earthworks, hosting field tours with the FLIR infrared camera to spot leaky equipment in Garfield County and continuing the fight to reduce methane and volatile organic compound pollution from oil and gas facilities.



By Bianca Diaz, *Community Organizer*

The Ridgway Ouray Community Council (ROCC) continues to build, nourish and protect the healthy spirit of the Ridgway and Ouray community.

ROCC is dedicated to quality-of-life issues that will help shape the future of Ouray County, and currently has several committees who work on numerous topics: Dark Sky, Public Lands, Land Use, and Social Justice. There is also an ad hoc group actively working on the next Ouray County Master Plan.

As part of supporting the community, ROCC is providing grants to:

- Voyager, a local youth organization
- Home Trust of Ouray County
- Minerva West, a local theatre company

- Ouray County Support and Advocacy Project, a sexual assault/domestic violence support group
- The Uncompahgre Watershed Project
- And the Ouray County Soccer Club, a recreation league for pre-K and elementary age children

ROCC recently held their semi-annual Highway 550 road clean-up event. Also, ROCC is co-sponsoring a debate of the candidates for Ouray County Board of County Commissioners to be held on October 17 in the city of Ouray.

# Affiliate Updates



By Bianca Diaz, *Community Organizer*

Uncompahgre Valley Alliance (UVA) has situated itself to be a real player when it comes to improving public transportation in Montrose. After a month of surveying bus riders and the community at large in June, a very unique situation presented itself to the Montrose affiliate. The Montrose City Council was toying with the idea of putting a lodging tax increase on the 2024 ballot and, through research actions earlier this year, UVA knew that part of this new funding could be funneled to the public transportation needs of Montrose. On a fateful day in early September, three UVA members (Kendra Stucki, Lisa Thomas, and Harley Whomble), along with our partners at All Points Transit, made the case to their counselors: If the city wanted to bring in more money from tourists, it would be a mistake to exclude the transit needs for visitors and the hardworking Montrosians who make their stays possible.

The timeline was tight, and we were only able to get their attention with public comment, but the

council listened to UVA and All Points Transit. Five percent of all tourist-paid hotel taxes would be earmarked for public transit. We were proud that our quick action resulted in a small win. Numbers-wise, 5% of the increased lodging tax translates to roughly \$60,000 for All Points Transit, which could potentially bring some of the improvements that we heard over the summer to life. Can you imagine a weekend route, where your neighbors who can't drive will be able to connect to their community? Or even a bus that ran later than 7 pm on the weekday? These changes feel slightly more in reach now.

By the time you read this, the voters of Montrose will have decided to approve or deny this municipal ballot measure. No

matter the outcome, UVA will continue to lead the charge to improve public transportation in Montrose because we all have places to be and one's ability to drive or not shouldn't stop them from living their life. We know this potential small investment into public transit is just the start. After all, you can't eat the whole enchilada in one bite!

In other news, UVA has a new home in the Hispanic Affairs Project Community Center! Located at 501 N 1st, UVA has a dedicated office space and access to the roomy community center. All future team meetings will be held in the Community Center unless otherwise specified. Thank you for keeping up with UVA, and we look forward to seeing you soon!



The UVA leadership team has been working to keep your local affiliate healthy and relevant. They have one upcoming event this year that they'd like to see you at!

**UVA's End of Year Gathering**  
Thursday, December 5th at the Ute Indian Museum

For questions, email Bianca Diaz  
[bianca@westerncoloradoalliance.org](mailto:bianca@westerncoloradoalliance.org)



# Western Colorado's BRIGHT Future

By Emily Hornback, *Executive Director*

In 2024, our Alliance showed how homegrown people-powered organizing get the goods and delivers meaningful change for our Western Slope communities. From farmers regenerating their soil health for future generations, to teachers supporting our region's next leaders, to small business owners fighting for an economy that works for all of us — hundreds of people like you came together to **build a brighter** future for the Western Slope.

From Rifle to Montrose to Nucla, we are celebrating big wins for our towns:

- Repealing the Mesa County solar moratorium, working with local solar businesses and community members to create model pro-solar land use codes.
- Engaged over 200 farmers and ranchers in regenerative agriculture techniques and soil health practices.
- Won federal oil and gas leasing reform to ensure taxpayers

receive a fair return for use of publicly owned minerals and holding operators accountable to clean up costs.

- Empowered West Slope Youth Voice students to lobby for increased access to student-based health centers in rural Colorado.

...and more! All of these actions and accomplishments were driven by people like you, problem-solving and working together to build grassroots power and effect decisions that impact our lives. **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.**

Western Colorado Alliance will keep up the hard work to make our vision a reality. We need your help to make it possible. In 2025, we are ready to:

- Expand **our local clean energy economy** by bringing federal climate investments home to rural Colorado.

- **Win pro-solar land use codes** across Western Colorado, balancing landowner needs with efforts to transition to a clean energy future.
- **Expand access to local markets for climate-friendly farmers and ranchers**, creating tax incentives and programs to get local food into more restaurants and schools.
- **Build sustainable and affordable transportation and housing solutions** for our rural communities.

These are ambitious goals, and we know we can do it with your help. You can help us achieve them by keeping us strong, financially independent, and ready to face whatever challenges lie ahead with an end-of-year gift. Your continued generosity is an investment in sustaining our Alliance as a force for social change now and for generations to come. Thank you for your support and consideration.

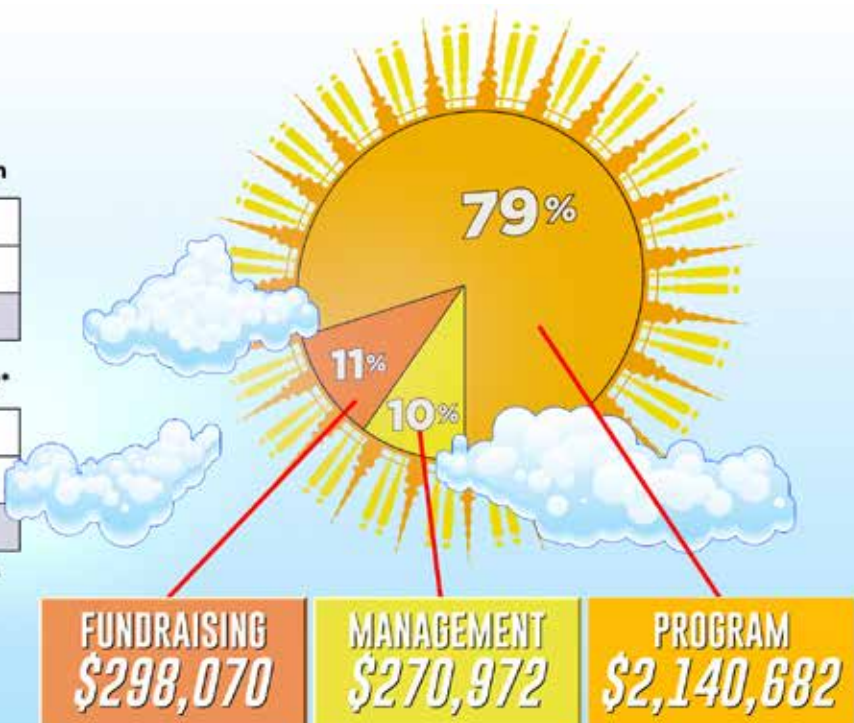
## Statement of Financial Position

Total Assets	<b>\$1,543,210</b>
Total Liabilities	<b>\$95,767</b>
Total Liabilities and Equity	<b>\$1,543,210</b>

## Statement of Financial Activity\*

Total Revenue	<b>\$2,813,464</b>
Total Expenses	<b>\$2,709,724</b>
Total Net Revenue	<b>\$103,740</b>

\* Includes revenue and expenses of nine fiscal projects that our Alliance supports in Western Colorado.





601 N. 1st Street  
P.O. Box 1931  
Grand Junction CO 81502

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

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 2025!**

**Make your donation at**

[westerncoloradoalliance.org](http://westerncoloradoalliance.org)



or mail it to

P.O. Box 1931  
Grand Junction, CO 81502

A promotional banner for Colorado Gives Day. The banner has a teal border. At the top, a teal bar contains the text "December 10" in white. Below this is a large graphic featuring a teal infinity symbol on the left and a stylized sun on the right. The sun is composed of concentric arcs in yellow, orange, and red, with a teal hand reaching up to touch the sun. Below the graphic, the text "COLORADO GIVES DAY" is written in blue and teal. To the right of "GIVES DAY" is a small orange square with the text "Presented by i-BANK". At the bottom of the banner, a teal bar contains the text "ColoradoGivesDay.org" in white.