

# BURNING ISSUES:



## 2020 WESTERN YOUTH ISSUES REPORT

WEST SLOPE YOUTH





# BURNING ISSUES

WEST SLOPE YOUTH



Sometimes, in 2020, it has seemed like, beyond our own mountains, the whole world was on fire.

We know the only way our hot, urgent problems will get solved is by people getting involved. So, we of West Slope Youth Vote have one goal — to harness the power of students' voices and increase their participation in the decision-making process.

That's right, we're talking about voting.

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

We've compiled this report so you can better understand how our legislators are making decisions that directly impact us now, and to help us determine what the most important issues are that we want to ask our elected officials to work on, on behalf of Western Colorado youth.

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

# PRIORITY BILLS TRACKED BY WEST SLOPE YOUTH VOTE

How Colorado's legislators voted on legislation that directly impacts Western Colorado youth.

**KEY**

- ★ Supported the bill
- ✗ Opposed the bill
- e Excused (did not vote)

LEGISLATOR (Party-District)		LEGISLATION (Numbers correspond to descriptions on next pages)												
		RACIAL JUSTICE			HEALTH	EDUCATION								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
<b>SENATORS</b>	<b>Don Coram</b> (R-6)	★	★	★	✗	<b>MULTIPLE BILLS</b>	★	<b>LOST IN COMMITTEE</b>	★	<b>LOST IN COMMITTEE</b>	★	★		
	<b>Larry Crowder</b> (R-35)	★	★	★	✗		★		★		★			
	<b>Kerry Donovan</b> (D-5)	★	★	★	★		★		★		★			
	<b>Bob Rankin</b> (R-8)	★	✗	✗	✗		★		★		★			
	<b>Ray Scott</b> (R-7)	★	★	★	✗		★		★		★	e		
<b>REPRESENTATIVES</b>	<b>KC Becker</b> (D-13)	★	★	★	★		★		★		★	★	★	★
	<b>Marc Catlin</b> (R-58)	★	✗	✗	✗		★		★		★	★	★	★
	<b>Julie McCluskie</b> (D-61)	★	★	★	★		★		★		★	★	★	★
	<b>Barbara McLachlan</b> (D-59)	★	★	★	★		★		★		★	★	★	★
	<b>Janice Rich</b> (R-55)	★	✗	✗	✗		★		★		★	★	★	★
	<b>Dylan Roberts</b> (D-26)	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★			
	<b>Matt Soper</b> (R-54)	✗	✗	✗	✗	★	★	★	★	e	★			
	<b>Donald Valdez</b> (D-62)	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★			
<b>Perry Will</b> (R-57)	★	★	✗	✗	★	★	★	★	★	★				

## JOIN THE TEAM!

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



**1****SB20-217****ENHANCE LAW ENFORCEMENT INTEGRITY**

This bill requires all law enforcement agencies to issue body-worn cameras to their officers and requires all recordings of an incident be released to the public within 21 days after a complaint of misconduct. It also addresses annual reports regarding police misconduct and interactions with the public. Regarding law enforcement response to a protest or demonstration, this bill regulates use of projectiles and tear gas. Among additional motions to increase law enforcement accountability and safety, this bill bans the use of a chokehold as a law enforcement tactic.

**PASSED!****2****HB20-1048****RACE TRAIT HAIRSTYLE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROTECT**

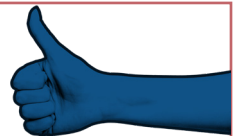
The act specifies that, for purposes of anti-discrimination laws in the context of public education, employment practices, housing, public accommodations, and advertising, protections against discrimination on the basis of one's race include hair texture, hair type, or a protective hairstyle commonly or historically associated with race, such as braids, locs, twists, tight coils or curls, cornrows, Bantu knots, Afros, and headwraps.

**PASSED!****3****HB19-1192****INCLUSION OF AMERICAN MINORITIES IN TEACHING CIVIL GOVERNMENT**

This bill requires public schools to teach history and civil government of the US and Colorado while including historical, cultural, and social contributions of American Indians, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals within these minority groups, and the intersectionality of significant social and cultural features within these communities, and the contributions and persecution of religious minorities.

**PASSED!****4****HB19-1120****NICOTINE PRODUCT REGULATION**

This act raises the minimum age of nicotine product customers from 18 to 21, in addition to repealing the criminal penalty for purchasing or attempting to purchase the products as a minor.

**PASSED!****5****HB20-1260, HB20-1366, HB20-1418, HB20-1420****BUDGET & CUTS FOR K-12 SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

Due to COVID-19 and the decreased state budget, the state legislature cut more than 15% from the \$4.6 billion K-12 education budget. Despite a \$510 million infusion of federal coronavirus relief money from Gov. Jared Polis, many school districts are concerned state money won't be restored for years to come, as this is likely to be the first of several difficult budget cycles. Districts are exploring all options for cutting expenses: Furlough days, freezing pay, four-day school weeks, bigger class sizes, merging schools, cutting sports and arts. Options for balancing the budget include reducing staff in schools where enrollment has dropped and having bigger class sizes, raising fees that families pay, selling buildings, eliminating middle school sports and all transportation to school sports, among many others.

**PASSED!****6****HB20-1002****COLLEGE CREDIT FOR WORK EXPERIENCE**

This bill requires the department of higher education to conduct a study concerning awarding academic credit for prior learning within all state institutions of higher education. A plan will be implemented for determining and awarding academic credit for college education based on work-related experience, but not until the required money is acquired through grants and donations. Beginning in the 2022-23 academic year, unless a plan is implemented prior to then, institutions shall accept and transfer academic credit awarded for work-related experience as courses with guaranteed-transfer designation.

**PASSED!**

# THE BILLS WE TRACKED

as summarized by students

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## HB20-1149

### 16-YEAR-OLDS VOTING IN SCHOOL DISTRICT ELECTIONS

This bill would have allowed a person who is preregistered to vote in school district elections beginning at 16 years of age. A school district election is defined as an election to recall a school district officer or elections including those for the state board of education, school district officers, measures to increase mill levies or to raise property taxes, measures relating to the organization of or plan of representation for school districts, and measures related to the financial obligations and indebtedness of school districts. When a person preregisters, they would have had to receive information concerning their eligibility to vote in school district elections and how to update their preregistration information and obtain and cast a ballot.



**LOST!**

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## HB20-1407

### COLLEGE ADMISSION USE OF NATIONAL TEST SCORE

Considering the numerous colleges and universities who have recently transitioned to test-score-optional applications for freshmen students, the CO state legislature took it upon itself to pass this bill, which addresses that switch. The bill states that the governing board of an institution of higher education may, but is not required to, require a national assessment test score as an eligibility criterion for admission for students who graduate from high school in 2021.



**PASSED!**

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## HB20-1110

### HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS

This bill would have created the emergency completion and retention grant program in the department of higher education. The department implements the grant program by annually distributing an amount to each state institution of higher education to use in awarding emergency assistance grants to eligible students who are experiencing qualifying financial emergencies. The bill described minimum procedures an institution shall adopt for the financial aid director at the institution to award the emergency assistance grants. The department would have been required to include in the annual financial aid report submitted to the joint budget committee a summary of the implementation of the grant program and an evaluation of its effect in increasing the retention and completion rates at institutions.



**LOST!**

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## SB20-014

### EXCUSED ABSENCES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Current law requires school districts to adopt a written policy setting forth the school district's attendance requirements. The bill requires the policy to include excused absences for behavioral health concerns.



**PASSED!**

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## HB20-1062

### COLORADO STUDENT FREE EXPRESSION LAW

The bill clarifies that the term "student publication" can mean a publication in written, broadcast, or online format. A student advisor may encourage expression consistent with high standards of English and journalism. The bill also adds a provision to protect public school employees from any form of retaliation resulting solely from the employee's actions to protect a student's rights of free expression or refusing to infringe on student conduct that is protected by the Colorado student free expression law or by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.



**PASSED!**



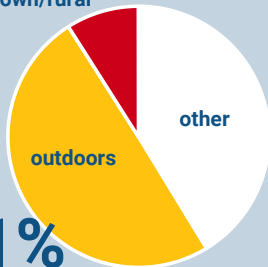
# Voices

presents

## 2019-2020 West Slope Youth Priorities

378 students surveyed by their peers

small town/rural



51%

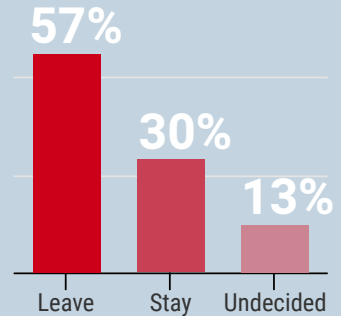
of all students surveyed said their favorite reason for living in Western Colorado was access to the

*outdoors*

### BIGGEST NEEDS

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

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



"I would like to see more care towards younger people in the community, like holding more events for teens."

-11th Grade

"I would like to see more support for the environment. We have access to many outdoor opportunities but we don't always support our environment politically."

-12th Grade

"Changes that would help me is maybe more mental health support for people like me going through tough things."

-11th Grade

### Garfield County

#### Needs

- Affordable higher education
- Being valued as youth in their communities
- Affordable healthcare
- Opportunities for minority populations
- Wilderness/environmental protection

#### Likes

- Outdoors
- Beauty of area
- Environment
- Calm/quiet

#### Dislikes

- Expensive
- Lack of opportunities

School / Community safety • Climate change  
Mental health access • Affordable healthcare

### Mesa County

#### Needs

- Job opportunities
- Increased mental health access & support
- Recreation center
- Less polarization / more kindness
- Environmental protection

#### Likes

- Outdoors
- Outdoor recreation
- Hunting/fishing

#### Dislikes

- Weather
- Lack of retail /restaurants
- Too small

#### Top Issues

School / Community safety • Climate change  
Good jobs • Protection of public lands

### Montrose County

#### Needs

- Affordable higher education
- Job opportunities
- Increased mental health support
- Road improvements
- Activities for youth
- Suicide prevention
- Community connection

#### Likes

- Outdoors
- Small town
- Beauty of area
- Clam/quiet

#### Dislikes

- No activities
- Drug addiction
- Mean people

#### Top Issues

School / Community Safety • Job opportunities  
Mental health access • Affordable education

**MY VOTE  
WON'T  
COUNT!**

**THE TRUTH:**

Your vote **will** count.

Millennials and Generation Z will be the largest share of eligible voters in 2020.

Young people (ages 18-29) made up around 21% of the eligible voting population in 2014.

The Youth Vote is **POWERFUL.**



**WEST SLOPE YOUTH**



**Leaders we elect include:**

RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATIONS

**Rural Electric  
Association Board  
Members**

SCHOOL BOARD

**School Board  
Members**

CITY

**City Council Members**

COUNTY

**County Commissioners  
Clerk & Recorder  
Treasurer  
Sheriff  
Surveyor  
Coroner  
Judges**

STATE

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

FEDERAL

**U.S. Senator  
U.S. Representative  
President**

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

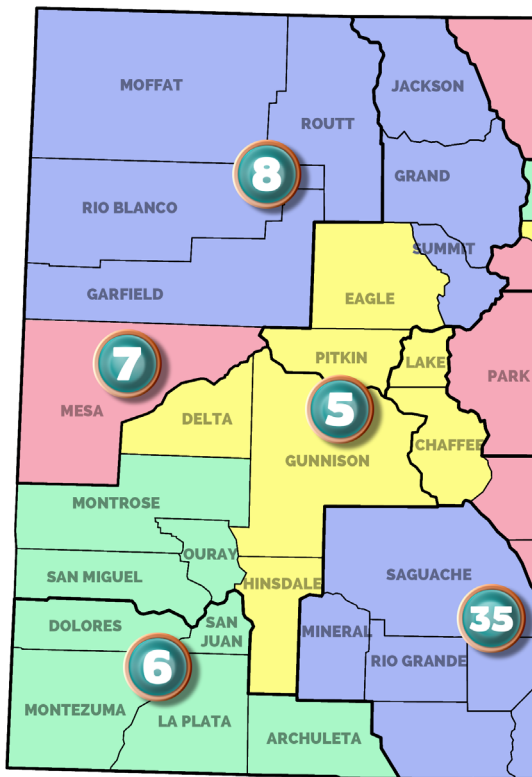


# Who represents you in Denver?

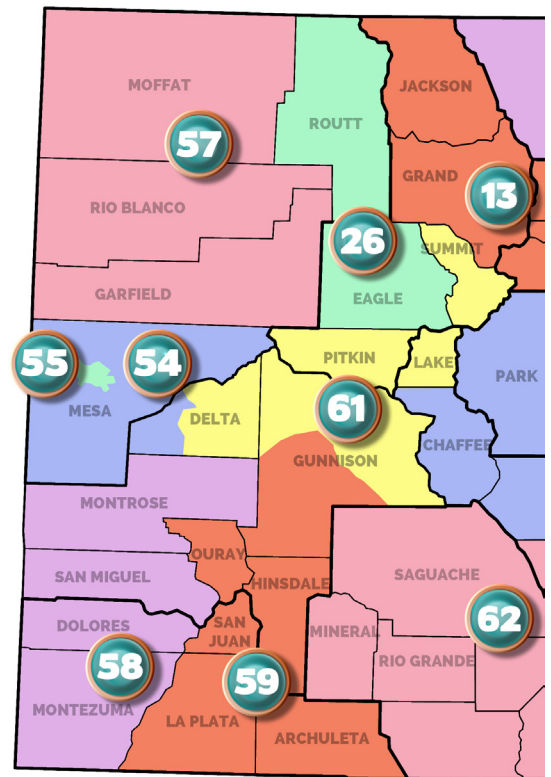
COUNTY	SENATOR	REP.	COUNTY	SENATOR	REP.
Archuleta.....	Coram (SD6).....	McLachlan (D59)	Mesa .....	Scott (SD7) .....	Soper (D54)
Delta.....	Donovan (SD5).....	McCluskie (D61)	Mesa .....	Scott (SD7) .....	Rich (D55)
Delta.....	Donovan (SD5).....	Soper (D54)	Mineral.....	Crowder (SD35).....	Valdez (D62)
Dolores.....	Coram (SD6).....	Catlin (D58)	Moffat .....	Rankin (SD8).....	Will (D57)
Eagle .....	Donovan (SD5).....	Roberts (D26)	Montezuma.....	Coram (SD6).....	Catlin (D58)
Garfield .....	Rankin (SD8).....	Will (D57)	Montrose.....	Coram (SD6).....	Catlin (D58)
Grand .....	Rankin (SD8).....	Becker (D13)	Ouray .....	Coram (SD6).....	McLachlan (D59)
Gunnison .....	Donovan (SD5).....	McLachlan (D59)	Pitkin .....	Donovan (SD5).....	McCluskie (D61)
Gunnison .....	Donovan (SD5).....	McCluskie (D61)	Rio Blanco.....	Rankin (SD8).....	Will (D57)
Hinsdale.....	Donovan (SD5).....	McLachlan (D59)	Routt .....	Rankin (SD8).....	Roberts (D26)
Jackson.....	Rankin (SD8).....	Becker (D13)	Saguache.....	Crowder (SD35).....	Valdez (D62)
Lake .....	Donovan (SD5).....	McCluskie (D61)	San Juan.....	Coram (SD6).....	McLachlan (D59)
La Plata.....	Coram(SD6).....	McLachlan (D59)	San Miguel.....	Coram (SD6).....	Catlin (D58)

## Western Colorado Legislative Districts

SENATE



HOUSE



**For more information on Western Colorado Alliance's West Slope Youth Vote program, contact:**

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