

Special District Association of Colorado

SDA NEWS

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2026

Supporting Community-Based Government

Please join us!

2026 SDA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2026



*Before anything else, preparation is
the key to success.*
—Alexander Graham Bell

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Designed by Emmett Jordan



Supporting Community-Based Government

Dear SDA Members,

Conference season is almost here, and I could not be more excited to welcome you to Keystone this September! Our team has been working hard to create an engaging conference filled with timely education, meaningful conversations, and opportunities to connect with colleagues from across Colorado.

This year's theme, **"Be Prepared for Anything,"** reflects the reality that special districts are constantly adapting to new challenges and opportunities. Whether it is changing legislation, emerging technologies, evolving community expectations, or preparing for the unexpected, our goal is to ensure you leave the Conference with practical ideas, valuable resources, and renewed confidence.

Our breakout sessions have been carefully selected to provide information you can immediately put to use in your district. From governance and leadership to finance, operations, public engagement, legal updates, and emerging issues, there truly is something for every Board member, manager, and district professional. We have also chosen keynote speakers who embody the spirit of this year's theme and will challenge, inspire, and motivate all of us to think differently about leadership and service.

If you have not already done so, I also encourage you to visit the Community Education section of our website to watch our new **"What Is a Special District?"** video series. These professionally produced videos explain the important work of special districts in a

clear and engaging way. Whether you serve a fire, water, sanitation, metropolitan, park and recreation, library, cemetery, conservation, or another type of special district, these videos are designed to help your residents and stakeholders better understand the essential services you provide every day.

Please share the videos on your website, social networks, during community presentations, and wherever you have an opportunity to educate your community. The more people understand what special districts do, the more they appreciate the critical role you play in keeping Colorado's communities strong.

I look forward to seeing so many of you in Keystone. Bring your questions, your ideas, and your experiences. Together we will learn, collaborate, and prepare for whatever comes next.

Thank you for everything you do to serve your communities. Safe travels, and I will see you at the Conference!

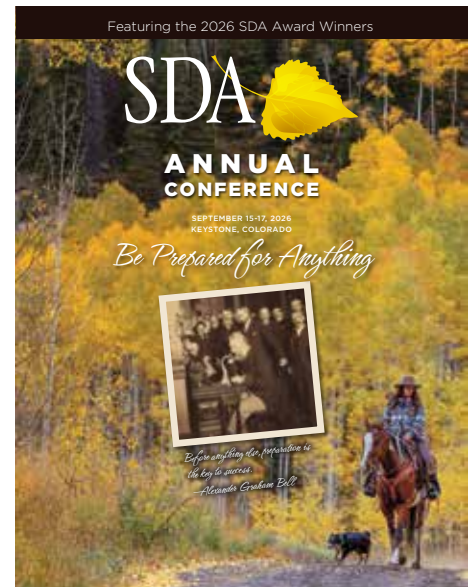
Warmly,

Ann Terry

Ann Terry
Chief Executive Officer



Ann Terry



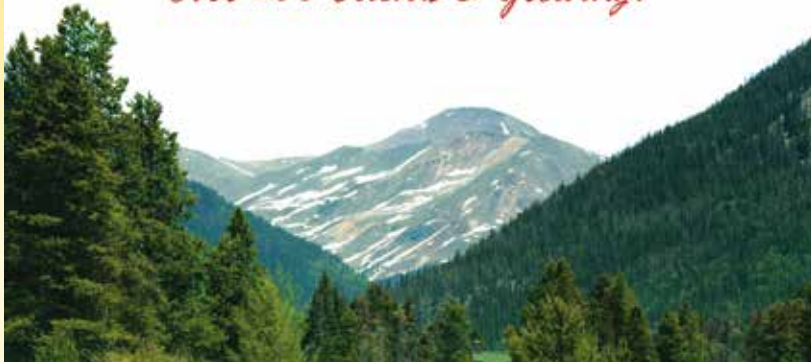
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The **Top 10** Things to Remember for the **2026 SDA Annual Conference!**

It's hard to believe, but the 2026 SDA Annual Conference is right around the corner!

While we have been busy finalizing what is shaping up to be a dynamic three-day event, **we have been thinking of important things to keep in mind as you make your plans to join us at the Keystone Conference Center, September 15-17.**

We have narrowed down our list, and here are the top ten things to remember for this year's Annual Conference...



#10 Due to the huge benefits for all our attendees, we will once again be utilizing our hybrid format, with both an in-person and livestreaming option.

Much like the previous years, **our keynote presentations and breakout sessions will be livestreamed** to a convenient online platform that will provide access for those who would like to join us remotely. The breakout sessions will also be recorded! And what's more, **these recordings will be available after Conference** so all attendees can go back and watch the sessions again, either as a refresher or to catch up on anything they missed.

#9 Conference will kick off early on Tuesday, and it will be a packed day!

We will begin first thing on Tuesday morning with breakfast, the singing of the National Anthem, and the Presentation of the Colors. Immediately following these opening events, we are thrilled to be joined by our **breakfast keynote speaker, Cam Awesome** (yes, that's really his last name!). Cam's fascinating story, from his early struggles with bullying to his pursuit of boxing

greatness, will be an engaging and entertaining way to kick off this year's Conference.

In addition, we will be celebrating this year's annual award winners on Tuesday at our Awards Luncheon. This is always a wonderful opportunity to recognize all our very deserving winners, and we are looking forward to it again this year! **Tuesday's lunch will also feature keynote speaker Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe**, who will introduce a practical, research-driven framework for moving through disruption with clarity, courage, and confidence.

Tuesday will of course also feature breakout sessions and **three different Forums**, which leads us to the next item on our list...

#8 We are bringing back our Discussion Forums on Tuesday afternoon!

This dedicated time for focused conversations on specific topics has proven very valuable in the past, and we are thrilled to offer these Forums again this year.

#7 Tuesday will wrap up with our Opening Night Celebration, and we're once again featuring our game night!

After a busy day, join us at our Opening Night Celebration and game night! The casino tables and trivia have been very popular so we'll have them both available again this year! We'll of course also have lots of amazing food and time to unwind and visit with your fellow attendees.

#6 Remember to pack your boots for Wednesday evening and our Boots and BBQ event!

Enjoy delicious BBQ and music on the beautiful Conference Center patio while you catch up with your colleagues from the special district world. We will also be joined by perennial favorite, **Randall McKinnon**.

Continued on page 6

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#5

Visit all our exhibitors and sponsors and learn how they might be able to help your district.

As always, we are excited to be working with all our wonderful sponsors and exhibitors this year! Be sure to spend some time visiting with each of them and learning about their great services. **In addition to our numerous exhibitors and our Gold, Silver, and Bronze Sponsors, we also have 15 Platinum Sponsors.** Below is the complete list for 2026:

- » Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool
- » CEBT (Colorado Employer Benefit Trust)
- » COLOTRUST
- » CRS (Community Resource Services of Colorado)
- » CSAFE
- » Ramey Environmental Compliance
- » Collins Cole Winn & Ulmer, PLLC
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- » Spencer Fane LLP
- » Fromm & Company LLC
- » Cockrel Ela Glesne Greher & Ruhland, PC (CEGR Law)
- » Pinnacle Consulting Group, Inc.
- » GovDeals
- » Western Alliance Bank
- » Highstreet Insurance & Financial Services (*new for 2026!*)

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#4

Don't miss the keynote speakers each day!

Our **entertaining and informative keynote speakers** will offer their unique insight and perspective into big picture ideas that affect all of us. This enlightening group of experts will provide an ideal complement to the information-packed breakout sessions we will be offering. We have an amazing lineup planned, and their presentations will round out our event perfectly!
Speaking of our breakout sessions...

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#3

You will have a wide variety of breakout sessions to choose from!

As always, our schedule of sessions will include **experts speaking on pertinent and timely issues for special districts of all types.** Be ready to take in all the valuable and educational information our breakout speakers will have to offer!

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#2

If you're in Keystone on Monday afternoon, come over to the Conference

Center and pick up your name badge and swag bag!

Much like the last few years, **we will have our registration desk at the Conference Center open on Monday afternoon so you can pick up your name badge and swag bag early!** This is a great way to beat the crowd on Tuesday morning. Watch your emails for specific details on what time the desk will be open.

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#1

It's not too late to register!

All of this and much more awaits you at the 2026 SDA Annual Conference so if you haven't registered yet, make sure you do it today!

Simply go to the SDA website at www.sdaco.org to complete the easy online process.

Now you know the scoop! All and all, we have a wonderful three-day event planned, and **we can't wait to see you in Keystone, September 15-17!**



The SDA Annual Conference Will Be Here Before We Know It So It's Time to **Check Out the Breakout Sessions We Have Planned!**

The 2026 SDA Annual Conference is right around the corner so now's a great time for a preview of the breakout sessions, which start first thing on Tuesday, September 15.

Please remember as you read through all these great classes, especially the sessions on overarching topics, **that they aren't just for Title 32 districts; they apply to all types of districts!** And don't forget that **we will have plenty of CLE opportunities available**, including for in-person attendance and home study for the recorded sessions.

You won't want to miss this information-packed, three-day event so make your plans now to join us at the Keystone Conference Center, September 15-17!

Find out more and register online at www.sdaco.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

Tuesday, September 15

District Administration Survival Guide

Adam Clark from Public Alliance LLC and Crystal Schott from Ireland Stapleton Pryor & Pascoe, PC

Keeping a special district running smoothly requires more than just successful Board meetings, it takes strong administrative support behind the scenes. "The District Administration Survival Guide" offers practical strategies for the behind-the-scenes work that keeps special districts running smoothly. From agendas and minutes to managing records and post-meeting follow-up, this session explores common administrative challenges including version control, last-minute changes, and coordinating with consultants. Participants will leave with practical tools and best practices they can implement immediately to support effective governance, compliance, and transparency.

Asset Management: More Than Just a List of Stuff

Marshall MacFarlane from Farnsworth Group

Asset management is becoming more and more commonplace. More than just a list of equipment, asset management should include equipment assessments (on existing equipment) along with specific information related to the equipment and/or assets. Asset management not only takes some of the mystery out of long-term budgeting for repair and replacement, but this information forms the backbone of your work order system, can help establish design standards, procurement specifications, and more.

Behind Closed Doors: Executive Sessions Done Right

Allison Ulmer from Collins Cole Winn & Ulmer, PLLC

Come learn when a Board can properly go into executive session, what must be said before the door closes, and how to avoid turning a confidential discussion into a public problem. We will cover common missteps, legal guardrails, and real-world tips for handling sensitive topics without stepping outside the law. Ideal for Board members and staff who want to keep discussions private, procedures proper, and headlines nonexistent.

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code or visit
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Emergency Services Funding: Using Impact Fees, Service Charges, and Sales Tax to Support Your Fire or Ambulance District

Emily Powell from Ireland Stapleton Pryor & Pascoe, PC and Chief Joe DeSalvo from Evans Fire Protection District

Within the last two years, state law has created important new funding opportunities for fire protection districts and ambulance districts, including the ability to adopt impact fees without prior municipal approval and to charge fees for non-firefighting services. The new laws also allow fire protection districts and ambulance districts to get voter approval to collect sales tax in addition to property tax, which offers not only an important new revenue source, but also a means for revenue diversification. This session will guide you through the legal ins-and-outs of the new funding opportunities and how to accomplish them, and will also provide real-world information and perspective from Joe DeSalvo, Fire Chief of the Evans Fire Protection District, which has successfully implemented both impact fees and sales tax within its jurisdiction.

The Secret Sauce of a Safety Program

Kyle Brown and Brennan Mendus from the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool

Through education, accountability, and recognition you can develop a high functioning safety program. This session will get your team excited about safety culture and actively encourage critical thinking and engaging participation.

Financial Oversight for District Board Members: What You Should Be Asking (and Why)

Melissa Buck from UMB Bank and Anna Jones from CliftonLarsonAllen

District Board members are entrusted with significant financial stewardship responsibilities, yet most come to their roles without formal finance training. This practical, non-technical session equips Board members with the knowledge and confidence to exercise effective financial oversight—whether they're evaluating a proposed bond issue, reviewing a refinancing opportunity, or simply ensuring their district's long-term financial health. Attendees will leave with a framework for asking the right questions at the right time, understanding what answers to expect, and knowing when to dig deeper.

No Bars, No Backup: Connected Districts are Protected Districts: Real Resiliency, Utility Fragility, and Best Infrastructure Practices!

David Zelenok, PE from Calibre Engineering; and Brian Stephens-Hotopp from Calibre Engineering and Evergreen Metropolitan District

When disaster strikes, the first lifelines to fail often aren't the roads or the power grid—they're the water lines and telecommunications networks connecting people, responders, and critical "Smart Infrastructure." Water lines and telecommunication networks are the invisible backbone of every modern community, yet they're overlooked in resilience planning and dismissed by community leaders who mistakenly believe the private sector is solely responsible for resiliency in utilities and telecommunications. This session will explore how district managers can — and should — take a leadership role in strengthening critical infrastructure crucial in operating "smart cities" infrastructure especially with water, transportation, and emergency response - ensuring their communities stay connected. Participants will learn about "utility fragility" and "real resiliency" and how to view telecommunications as critical public infrastructure — every bit as vital as streets, first responders, or fire hydrants that may or may not work — and how to integrate them into strategic, emergency, and capital planning efforts.

Homeowners, Dog Poop, and Weeds...Oh, My! Navigating the Muddy Waters of Community Management in Metropolitan Districts

Peggy Ripko from Special District Management Services

Metro districts providing community management is more common each year, but confusion still reigns. There isn't an HOA, but there are rules? And fees? Then who maintains the park across the street? Come talk about the history of Community Management in districts, the trends, and the challenges. Learn how to help your Board members, staff, and homeowners understand what we do, why it's important, and how we can work together to make each community successful.

Continued on page 10

The Missing Piece: How Local Government Leaders Can Unlock Hidden Capacity

Debra Whitehead from CPS HR Consulting

When an employee underperforms, most leaders look to two familiar culprits: skills and motivation. But there's a third reason, one that often goes unaddressed, that can unlock levels of performance and service beyond what you thought possible from your existing team or individual performers. This session introduces local government leaders to the concept of "capacity" and provides two practical tools to use immediately: real examples of exceptional performance from ordinary employees, and a four-step situational assessment to help you identify what's actually getting in the way. You'll leave knowing what to look for and having thought about what you can do differently tomorrow. Without adding to your budget!

Setting the Stage for Water Efficiency in Colorado

Andrea Cole from Dominion Water and Sanitation District, Kevin Reidy from the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and Brennan Middleton from Spheros Environmental

Join Dominion Water and Sanitation District for a forward-looking discussion on how thoughtful land use planning and innovative water demand management can shape the future of water-efficient communities in Colorado. Through its collaboration with Sterling Ranch, Dominion is demonstrating how growth and conservation can work together—empowering homeowners with real-time water use tools, advancing drought-tolerant landscaping in partnership with Denver Botanic Gardens, using tiered rates to encourage efficient practices, and leading the state's first and only regional rainwater harvesting project. Attendees will learn how these strategies, along with strong non-residential demand standards, are helping set a new benchmark for resilient, sustainable, and water-conscious development.

Resilient Districts: How to Prepare Before a Crisis Hits

Dr. Deserai Anderson from Anderson Resilience Advisors and the University of Colorado Denver

From wildfires and floods to unexpected operational disruptions, the risks facing special districts are increasing—but proactive mitigation can save districts \$13 for every dollar invested. This session breaks down resilience planning, including organizational continuity, hazard mitigation, leadership training, and crisis communications. Secure your district's future by learning how to prevent the worst-case scenario, saving vital time, money, and stress before the next crisis hits.

Recent Litigation Trends Shaping Colorado Special Districts

David Meschke and Kevin Walsh from Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck

This presentation will provide an overview of recent issues and court cases involving Colorado special districts, with a focus on metropolitan districts. The panel will summarize notable lawsuits and related court decisions and explain, in practical terms, what they involve and why they matter. Particular attention will be given to disputes that arise as districts transition from developer control to resident control, including concerns about governance decisions made during early development and the long-term financing arrangements that support district infrastructure. In several recent cases, residents or resident led Boards have raised questions about existing debt obligations and repayment structures, prompting broader discussions about transparency, oversight, and long-term impacts on communities. The panel will discuss what these developments may mean for district Boards, developers, local governments, and residents, and will highlight considerations for managing risk and expectations going forward.

By Default or By Design: Five Gaps Between Reserve Policy and Reserve Reality

Michael Warne and Tracy Powell-Warne from Synergy Capital of Colorado

Most district reserve programs were not designed all at once. They evolved. Projects changed, balances grew, priorities shifted, and over time the written policy, the actual practice, and the institutional knowledge drifted apart. In many districts the real process lives in one person's head. This session walks through five common gaps between what a district's reserve policy says and how its reserves are actually structured, drawing on Colorado statute and GFOA best practices: policy adoption, reserve classification, matching investments to when the money is needed, investment authority, and Board reporting. The session is built for the whole leadership table: Board members, general managers, fire chiefs, and finance directors. Attendees will leave with a five-question standard they can use to evaluate whether their own district's reserve structure exists by default or by design.

Behind the Bond: Understanding the Legal and Accounting Behind Public Financing

Brian Camiller from Plante Moran and Dillon Peters from Butler Snow LLP

Debt powers public projects, but the rules are complex. This session explains the legal and accounting foundations behind government debt, from authorization and elections to bond types, official statements, and compliance. Instructors include a bond attorney and a CPA, sharing pitfalls to avoid so finance officers can plan, issue, and report debt confidently.

Shared Lessons: Best Practices that Improve Board Outcomes

Alex Clem from CliftonLarsonAllen

This presentation brings together two district management companies to share practical lessons learned from supporting Boards across a wide range of special districts. The discussion will highlight common challenges, effective governance practices, and management-led strategies that improve communication, efficiency, and Board decision-making. By comparing approaches and identifying shared best practices, the session provides Boards and professionals with actionable insights that strengthen district operations and foster more productive Board-management partnerships.

Navigating the Colorado Open Meetings Law: Case Law Updates

Shannon Smith Johnson and Karlie Ogden from Icenogle Seaver Pogue, PC

The presentation will focus on recent case law updates with respect to the Colorado Open Meetings Law and the implications of those cases for running effective and compliant Board meetings.

Registration is open!
www.sdaco.org

Wednesday, September 16

Staying the Course: How Persistence and Board Leadership Advanced a Challenging Infrastructure Project

Steve Ravel, PE from Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services, LLC (AE2S) and Suzanne Jurgens from Upper Thompson Sanitation District

Persistence is often the defining factor between a stalled concept and a successfully delivered public works project. The Upper Thompson Sanitation District's WRF and Lift Station Improvements Project progressed from concept to near completion over six years — demonstrating that determination and adaptability are as essential as technical expertise. While planning and design were critical components, the factors that significantly shaped the timeline were permitting coordination, obtaining funding, escalating construction costs, and the importance of steady governance throughout the process. The district worked closely with regulatory agencies to navigate discharge permits, environmental reviews, and land access. Simultaneously, assembling a viable financial package required multiple funding cycles and careful fiscal stewardship amid changing economic conditions. Attendees will learn that 1) persistence is essential in complex special district infrastructure delivery; 2) regulatory and financial processes drive special district project outcomes; and 3) focused special district governance makes the difference.

Can't We All Just Get Along: Legal Tools and Practical Tips for Managing Board Member Behavior In and Outside of Meetings

Jeffrey Erb, Jillian Martin, and Haley Trecarichi from Erb Law, LLC; and Sarah Shepherd from Circuit Rider of Colorado

Healthy discussion and disagreement among Board members is to be expected and is part of the democratic process. But sometimes behavior goes too far! This presentation will review the legal tools available for managing Board member behavior in and outside of Board meetings, including the potential for recall elections; censuring of Board members; the pros and cons of bylaws and rules of decorum; and public interaction. Board members will benefit from hearing about expected behaviors and how to address poorly behaving Board members from both a practical and legal perspective.

Together We Stand... or Gracefully Disband

Evan Ela and Glory Schmidt from Cockrel Ela Glesne Greher & Ruhland, P.C. (CEGR Law)

In this insightful session, we'll take a deep dive into things to consider when consolidating districts or dissolving districts. Using case studies from our own practice, we'll review important information to keep in mind if your district finds itself considering consolidating or dissolving.

Continued on page 12

Bond Financing 101: A Practical Guide to Funding Public Projects

Sander Blackburn from Northern Water, Andrew Ma from Piper Sandler, and Bryan Stelmack from Stifel

Public infrastructure projects often rely on bond financing—but for many, the process can feel complex and difficult to navigate. This session provides a practical, real-world overview of how bond financing works from start to finish. Through a panel discussion featuring experienced professionals from leading financial institutions, attendees will gain insight into the key players, structures, and decisions involved in issuing bonds. The conversation will walk through the lifecycle of a financing—from early planning and market considerations to pricing, issuance, and post-issuance responsibilities. Designed for both finance and non-finance professionals, this session will demystify the process and equip participants with a clearer understanding of how to evaluate options, ask the right questions, and confidently engage in financing discussions.

Title 32 Special Districts and Construction Project Delivery Methods: Legal and Engineering Perspectives of the Pros and Cons of Common Project Delivery Methods as They Work for Your District

Danielle Kaiser and Michelle Berger from Spencer Fane LLP

Title 32 special districts regularly contract for construction projects of all sizes for the benefit of their taxpayers. However, a lot of districts are unaware of the various project delivery methods available such as design-build, design-bid-build, construction manager at risk, and integrated project delivery. This session will discuss the pros and cons for districts of each project delivery method and provide best practice pointers for ensuring the project delivery method is properly included in the construction contract.

Rural Health Care's Intersection with Emergency Medical Services

Chief Bruce Evans from Upper Pine River Fire Protection District

Community Paramedicine has a firm footing in Colorado, with Eagle County EMS being one of the first in the nation. There has also been additional enabling legislation for community paramedics to go to the next level in Colorado. Upper Pine has taken that one step further and has broken ground on a fire station and urgent care in the same building which, with the urgent care partner, will be able to deploy community paramedics to the eastern part of LaPlata County. This presentation will detail the funding mechanisms, partnerships, and site locating along with the recent changes in state and federal legislation that has potential to add a revenue stream to local special districts.

From Budget Gaps to Structural Alignment: Rethinking Financial Strategy in Special Districts

David Norris from Eagle River Water & Sanitation District

Special districts across Colorado and the Mountain West are facing a new financial reality—where rising capital demands, workforce pressures, and constrained revenues are converging at the same time. Traditional approaches to budgeting and financial management are no longer sufficient to address these structural challenges. This session explores how leading districts are shifting from reactive budgeting to proactive alignment across operations, capital planning, and financial strategy. Participants will gain practical insights into how to evaluate program and service levels against sustainable funding; align capital improvement plans with long-term financial capacity; and identify operational efficiencies that preserve service delivery while managing cost pressures. Drawing from real-world examples in water, wastewater, and multi-service districts, this session will provide a framework for turning financial pressure into an opportunity for organizational clarity, improved decision-making, and long-term sustainability. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies to better align their district's priorities, resources, and financial planning in an increasingly complex environment.

Perspectives on Passing a Ballot Measure for Your District

Mike Dell'Orfano from South Metro Fire Rescue; Wil Crossland from Telluride Regional Medical Center; Jim McGrady from Triview Metropolitan District; Courtney Sievers from Magellan Strategies; and Bryan-David Blakely (moderator) from Public Alignment Communication

Join special district leaders and professional experts from across Colorado's diverse landscape for a candid discussion on how they successfully educated voters and passed critical funding measures. Through a moderated and interactive discussion, three special district leaders and two professional experts will share their real-world strategies for translating operational needs into compelling public narratives, building community support, and addressing taxpayer concerns in an era of fiscal scrutiny. Learn how different districts tailored their approaches across different issues to community demographics, overcame opposition, and maintained transparency throughout their campaigns. Whether your district is considering its first mill levy ask in years or exploring new revenue options, you'll leave with practical tactics for community engagement, messaging frameworks that resonate with voters, and insights on what worked. This session is essential for district leaders, Board members, and anyone involved in funding strategies for essential services among Colorado's special districts.

Colorado's Property Tax Revenue Limits and Elections to Waive Them

Daniel Rubin from Dietze and Davis, PC

This educational session will discuss the "5.5% limit" (CRS 29-1-301(6)) and the newer "5.25% limit," established by Colorado's House Bill 24B-1001. We'll also provide background on TABOR in the Colorado Constitution (Article X, Section 20). There will be a discussion of the separate revenue and spending limits, and the talk will proceed to focus on the special requirements for each and specifically what requirements apply if holding an election and running a ballot issue or question seeking voter approval to waive the limits.

Cybersecurity on a Shoestring Budget: Protecting Critical Infrastructure and First Responders

Beth Justice from Statewide Internet Portal Authority (SIPA) and Terry Bradley from Mile High Cyber

Water, sanitation, and fire protection districts face the same ransomware, phishing, and account-takeover threats as large enterprises — but with a unique set of high-stakes vulnerabilities. From safeguarding drinking water treatment facilities and wastewater SCADA networks to ensuring 24/7 uptime for fire dispatch and emergency communications, these districts manage critical infrastructure with lean teams and tight public budgets. The good news is that hardening your district's security posture does not require an endless stream of expensive software or a massive IT department. This session introduces a practical "Minimum Viable Security Program" (MVSP) designed specifically for special districts. Attendees will learn how to implement the smallest set of governance, technical, and operational controls that measurably reduce risk across both informational technology (IT) and operational technology (OT) environments. We will map out how to protect critical utility and emergency systems, isolate operational networks, strengthen backup resilience against ransomware, and train shift-based personnel without overwhelming staff or breaking the budget. Through real-world district examples and a pragmatic 30/60/90-day roadmap, participants will leave with actionable, low-cost steps to immediately reduce cyber risk, satisfy insurance requirements, and protect the vital community services they provide.

Funding Options for Your District's Drinking Water and Wastewater Projects

Representatives from Colorado Water Resources & Power Development Authority; the Water Quality Control Division; and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Local Government

Join us to learn about important sources of funding for your water and wastewater projects. We'll provide the details you need to know for a variety of programs that are available. Staff from Colorado Water Resources & Power Development Authority, the Water Quality Control Division, and the Department of Local Affairs will be on hand to provide information, examples of recent projects, and to answer questions.

Special District Annual and Long-Term Financial Planning

Danely Howe from Westwind Management Group, LLC and Bryan Farley from Association Reserves Colorado

This informative session will cover a wide variety of topics related not only to annual financial planning, but to long-term considerations as well. Discussion will include 1) an overview of the district budget process, deadlines, filings, and notices; 2) types of budgeting: zero-budget/incremental and when to use what; 3) when to start the budget and RFP process; 4) long-term planning: determining what to measure, worst/best case scenarios, forecast out, income, and mill levy needs; 5) capital reserve funding: determining components, adequate funding; 6) strategies to establish proper and adequate funding; 7) creating an executive summary of the budget with visual aids such as graphs and charts; and 8) common mistakes/misunderstandings to avoid.

Securing the Future: Succession Planning for Special District Leadership

Jen Volmer and Anne McCord from ILG Strategic Services

Succession planning is a vital exercise for districts of all sizes and types. In this thoughtful discussion, we'll look at how Boards can develop robust emergency and long-term succession plans to ensure leadership continuity, mitigate organizational risk, and preserve institutional knowledge. Key takeaways will include differentiating between emergency and long-term succession planning; identifying critical leadership roles including the special district leader; building internal leadership bench strength; mitigating knowledge transfer risks; and implementing clear protocols for communication and authority during transitions.

Continued on page 15

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Turn Water Leaks into Mountains of Savings: How Performance Contracting Can Strengthen Water Infrastructure and Unlock Savings for Special Districts

Ryan Quigley, Kate Sawyer, and Patrick McGuckin from Performance Services

Colorado special districts are under growing pressure to address aging water infrastructure, rising system demands, and limited capital dollars—all while maintaining reliable service and accountability to their communities. This session explores how performance contracting can help water and wastewater districts advance infrastructure improvements through a practical, outcome-driven approach that does not rely solely on upfront funding. By aligning contractor incentives with district goals, this model helps bridge financial and operational gaps, shift performance risk, and provide greater confidence that projects will be delivered on time and on budget. Attendees will learn how performance contracting can reduce water loss, improve system efficiency and resiliency, and create a clearer path to funding and implementation. Real-world case studies will highlight how performance contracting can turn water leaks into mountains of savings.

Before the Referral: A Leadership Framework for Pre-Resilience in Fire and EMS

Chief Jeremy Young and Sammy Freyta from Frederick-Firestone Fire District

The fire service has invested in behavioral health like never before: peer support, clinicians, EAPs, critical incident response. But nearly all of it activates after a firefighter begins to struggle. A Fire Chief and an embedded Mental Fitness Specialist spent years approaching that problem from opposite ends and reached the same conclusion: resilience doesn't start in a therapist's office. It starts long before that. This session introduces Pre-Resilience: a practical framework of habits, leadership behaviors, psychological safety, recovery, connection, and culture that prepares firefighters before the worst calls find them. Because while therapy helps firefighters heal, leadership can help them stay stronger, longer.

Registration is open!
www.sdaco.org

Thursday, September 17

Fraud in a Small Town: How to Protect Yourself and the Community

Brian Camiller from Plante Moran

In this insightful presentation, we will take a deep dive into a real-world example of local government fraud. Attendees will learn practical strategies to identify and prevent fraudulent activities, safeguarding both their offices and the communities they serve. Join us to enhance your knowledge and fortify your defenses against fraud.

The Silent Warning: Real-Time Threat Assessment and Pre-Attack Indicators

James Hiromasa-Colorado POST Subject Matter Expert, Board of Directors North Metro Fire Rescue District, and Co-Founder Heroes Holdings & Consulting Inc.

In every escalating encounter, there is a window of time where the body betrays intent before an individual ever acts. "The Silent Warning" moves beyond basic de-escalation by teaching special district professionals how to perform real-time threat assessments through the lens of human physiology. Participants will learn to identify specific pre-attack indicators—predictable physical shifts in stance, gaze, actions, verbiage, and motor skills—that signal a person is moving from verbal frustration to physical violence. By recognizing these cues early, staff can proactively change the environment, actively deescalate, call for backup, or exit the situation before it turns into a physical confrontation.

The Missing Infrastructure: Why Social Connection is the Key to Thriving Special Districts

Christy Bryse and Todd Hornback from Cohere

Special districts are essential to delivering critical public services, but increasingly, their success depends on more than infrastructure and operations. It depends on connection. In today's environment, many communities struggle with low engagement, declining participation, and a growing sense of disconnection among residents. Yet emerging research and real-world data shows that when communities are intentionally designed for social connection, the impact is measurable: higher resident satisfaction, stronger participation, increased trust, and long-term sustainability. In this session, we will explore the concept of social infrastructure as a critical, yet often overlooked, component of successful special districts. This session reframes community management and design as the connective tissue that brings districts to life - helping special districts not just serve residents, but truly engage and sustain them. Whether you are in water, parks, libraries, or public safety, every special district ultimately serves people, and people thrive in places where they feel connected.

Continued on page 16

AI for Government

Tyler Svitak from Colorado Smart Cities Alliance

This presentation will highlight how Colorado districts are sourcing and implementing AI to solve meaningful challenges across water, fire, transportation, and even libraries. We'll showcase real projects implementing AI solutions and dive into the challenge-based procurement model that sourced the solutions changing Colorado's infrastructure for the better.

Good Government Starts Local

Kris Kazian from Evergreen Fire Rescue

Every day, local governments and special districts shape the quality of life for our residents, businesses, and visitors by providing essential services such as safe drinking water, parks, fire protection, emergency medical care, and more. Those services, however, are only as strong as the organizations and people who deliver them. As elected officials and organizational leaders, we must look beyond today's challenges and prepare for tomorrow's realities. This session explores the growing pressures facing local governments—including rising personnel and benefit costs, recruitment and retention, aging infrastructure, increasing service demands, regulatory requirements, and escalating costs—and encourages a forward-thinking mindset that builds resilient organizations capable of sustaining exceptional service for the communities we serve.

Unlock Funding for Your Water or Community Project with USDA Rural Development

Sallie Clark, Amy Mund, and Allison Ruiz from USDA Rural Development

Looking for funding to support critical infrastructure in your district? Join this informative session with USDA Rural Development to explore financing options for water systems, wastewater projects, and essential community facilities. Learn how special districts can access low-interest loans, grants, and technical assistance to plan, build, and improve infrastructure that keeps communities safe, resilient and thriving. From drinking water and sewer systems to emergency response facilities and community centers, USDA programs can provide solutions tailored to rural needs. Topics covered include identifying the right funding for your project, understanding the application process, leveraging combined funding opportunities, and connecting the resources to move your project forward.

When Security is Tied to Public Trust: The Value of Cybersecurity for Special Districts

Abel Moreno from South Adams County Water and Sanitation District and Paige Goss from Point Solutions Security

Special districts operate infrastructure that communities depend on every day, making cybersecurity inseparable from public trust. As systems become more interconnected and threats continue to evolve, districts are under increasing pressure to strengthen security while maintaining uninterrupted service and managing limited internal resources. This session examines how a critical infrastructure organization used a comprehensive, programmatic cybersecurity approach to move beyond reactive risk management. Through full-spectrum analysis and a long-term partnership model, the district gained clarity on real, meaningful risks, implemented sustainable security improvements, and aligned cybersecurity efforts with operational priorities — all without the burden of building and maintaining a full internal security team. For special district leaders, IT managers, and operations staff, this presentation offers practical insight into how a structured, ongoing security strategy can reduce risk, improve efficiency, and support reliable service delivery. Attendees will learn how partnering with experienced security professionals can provide depth of expertise, continuity, and strategic guidance that strengthens systems over time while reinforcing community confidence and public accountability.

Navigating Workers' Compensation: Do You Know What You Should Know?

Paula Lowder from the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool

This session will be a practical overview of workers' compensation and what every employer needs to know. This session will cover the basics of how workers' comp works, employer responsibilities after an injury, the claims process, and simple strategies to help manage claims effectively and support injured employees. Whether you're new to workers' comp or just want a refresher, this will be an interactive session, and you'll leave with a clearer understanding of how to navigate the process with confidence.



A Special Thanks to SDA's Platinum Sponsors!

We are thrilled to be working with our 15 Platinum Sponsors throughout the course of this year and for our upcoming Annual Conference! Below is a brief background on each company, many written from their perspective. Please take a minute to learn more about the great services they provide and how they might be able to help your district. And stop by and visit them while you're at Conference in September!



The Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool is Your Risk Management Partner.

We are not your typical insurance company. Because we are member-owned, we don't report to shareholders—we report to our members. Everything we do focuses on life safety, preventing debilitating injury, and the preservation of district property. Our staff of dedicated industry professionals has pulled together comprehensive coverage products and mission-critical services tailored specifically for special districts. Working with members, our staff's mission is to ensure every district employee returns home at the end of his or her shift.

Visit csdpool.org to discover why more than 2,500 organizations trust the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool with their risk management.

Special districts are our focus and helping them is our passion. Each year, we are amazed by their dedication to their organization and their community, how kind and respectful they are when we meet with them, and how they always want to make their district better. Even if members have been with us for a long time, they are always willing to hear suggestions and recommendations to help them manage both current and future risks. Whether we're assisting with safety and loss prevention or discussing

coverage options to make sure no risk goes unaddressed, our team comes to work every day to look out for special districts and make sure they have the support they need to continue being the best they can be.



Colorado Employer Benefit Trust (CEBT): A Trusted Partner in Public Sector Benefits

For over 30 years, SDA has endorsed the Colorado Employer Benefit Trust (CEBT) as its preferred health benefits provider. CEBT is a not-for-profit, self-funded governmental health benefit trust that has delivered high-quality medical, dental, vision, life, and disability coverage to Colorado's public sector for over 45 years. Today, CEBT serves approximately 40,000 members across 500 public employers, including 275 special districts.

CEBT was built to support Colorado public entities, including special districts, with a benefits program focused on stability, scale, and service. Through the power of pooling, participating employers are part of a larger group structure that helps spread risk and improve long-term cost predictability.

How and where employees access care plays a critical role in long-term plan performance. CEBT helps districts address this balance by providing plan options, tools, and resources that encourage

smarter healthcare decisions. Employees are better equipped to understand when to use primary care, urgent care, telehealth, emergency care, or other available support programs.

For special districts, the goal is not simply to offer a health plan. The goal is to offer a sustainable benefits program that supports employees and protects the district over time. By combining pooling, strong networks, thoughtful plan design, wellness and care management resources, and practical employee support, CEBT helps districts build a benefits program that works today and is positioned for the future.

To learn more about how CEBT supports Colorado special districts through cost-management strategies, employee resources, and comprehensive benefit solutions, connect with the CEBT team to explore strategies, tools, and plan options designed to help your district manage costs and better support employees. cebt.org or Terry Rook, Executive Director, terry.rook@wtwco.com



COLOTRUST (Colorado Local Government Liquid Asset Trust) is Colorado's original and largest pooled investment trust in the state. Designed specifically for Colorado's local governments, COLOTRUST's pools seek to provide a convenient method for investing in a range of high-quality, short- to medium-term securities carefully chosen to provide for prioritizing safety, and liquidity and yield.

Founded in 1985, COLOTRUST has since experienced rapid growth in both assets and participation. Continually striving to meet the

Continued on page 18

evolving needs of local governments, COLOTRUST proudly offers three investment options that fit into a variety of fixed-income investment strategies, together creating a comprehensive approach to investing.



Community Resource Services of Colorado (CRS) proudly delivers high-quality, cost-effective and customized services to a broad and steadily growing network of special district clients across Colorado. With nearly two decades of experience, CRS has earned the trust of districts of all sizes by listening closely to their unique needs and delivering tailored, result-driven solutions.

As your trusted, full-service partner, CRS offers expert support in:

- » District Management
- » Accounting & Financial Consulting
- » Elections Administration
- » Billing Services
- » Project Management
- » Field Supervision

Clients depend on our ethical, experienced and highly skilled team of professionals, all dedicated to helping districts operate efficiently and effectively.

Founded in 2005, CRS has built a reputation for excellence with a team that brings together more than 250 years of combined industry experience. Our CEO, Sue Blair, has served on the SDA Board since 2013, continuing our deep commitment to the special district community.

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Collins Cole Winn & Ulmer is a local government law firm powered by experience, innovation, and collaboration.

Together, we bring unparalleled experience in special district law, and we implement a team-oriented approach to deliver high quality and cost-effective legal services to our clients.

Our attorneys and paralegals have deep and longstanding involvement with the Special District Association of Colorado. Jim Collins co-founded SDA in 1975, and Allison Ulmer is now the Executive Vice President.

We work closely with SDA to provide seminars, publications, and other educational materials relating to the legal needs of special districts throughout the year, such as:

- » Updating the Board Member Manual
- » Traveling throughout Colorado to provide the SDA Annual Regional Workshops for Board Members and employees
- » Speaking at the SDA Annual Conference
- » Supporting SDA's legislative activities

Our clients trust our guidance and advocacy. We strive to help our clients both solve their current legal problems and prevent future ones by providing proactive and pragmatic legal representation based on our decades of experience.

We take pride in the respectful long-term working relationships we have developed with our clients. Working collaboratively with local governments allows us to understand the needs of the communities our clients serve and to help serve those needs effectively. You can learn more about us at www.cogovlaw.com, or you can contact us at 720.617.0080 or info@cogovlaw.com.



The Colorado Surplus Asset Fund Trust (CSAFE) is a local government investment pool that has provided Colorado's special districts with reliable investment services since 1988. The Cash and Core funds are suitable investment options for many special districts. Just like the special districts we serve, our investment objectives are Safety, Liquidity, and Yield, in that order.

The Cash and Core funds can be foundational elements of a special district's investment strategy.

CSAFE is proud to be a member of SDA for over 35 years and a Platinum Sponsor for over 16 years. CSAFE treasures its relationship with SDA and the many hundreds of special districts it has the privilege to serve.

Please contact us at csafe.org/contact-us to learn more.



CEGR Law is a team of dedicated local government and public utility attorneys and paralegals working for more than 40 years serving Colorado's communities as general counsel, and providing specialized services, including conducting public elections and water rights administration and litigation.

Our lawyers have worked in nearly all counties in Colorado to organize and advise local government entities engaged in multiple community services through metropolitan districts, and locally managed government services of all types including water, sanitation, fire, EMS/ambulance, hospital, library, and park and recreation districts. We have experience advising on and solving our client's legal issues associated with water rights and litigation; real

property transactions; construction contracting; local government elections and TABOR compliance; employment matters; water and wastewater system operations and permitting; bond financing; and intergovernmental contracting.

CEGR Law fosters community relationships and is skilled at working collaboratively with other agencies and their counsel to create partnerships that improve efficiencies through intergovernmental authorities and contracts for combined services. We support all types of special districts, from small rural special districts that rely on volunteer involvement, to large service districts with professional staffs providing services to hundreds of thousands of customers and property owners, and to metropolitan districts that enable the creation of new neighborhood communities and redevelopment of blighted areas.

Special districts are as unique as the communities in which they operate. While we have collectively been involved in legal services to special districts across Colorado for more than 40 years, the landscape is always evolving and each year presents a new challenge to tackle together with our clients. We could not imagine a more interesting and dynamic community of interest, or one with such ability to impact Colorado residents, than that created by local government.



Streamline is the only platform built specifically for special districts, offering powerful, easy-to-use tools that simplify communication, boost efficiency, and ensure compliance—even with limited budgets and small teams. Our all-in-one solution includes a website platform with built-in compliance checklists, professional mass communication tools, an intranet for secure internal operations, online payment processing, and

now **DocAccess**—a game-changing tool that **instantly transforms PDFs into ADA-compliant versions**, helping districts meet accessibility requirements automatically and affordably.

At Streamline, **our mission is to help local governments serve their communities.** We're passionate about supporting special districts—not just for the staff who keep them running, but for the people and places they impact every day. With Streamline, districts can do more with less—and engage their communities like never before. Find out more at www.getstreamline.com



Ramey Environmental Compliance provides contract operational services for domestic drinking water, domestic wastewater, and industrial wastewater facilities for special districts, municipalities, and private owners. Ramey Environmental Compliance also provides consulting services in many areas of the water/wastewater industry along with an Equipment Services Division, which provides service and maintenance on existing and new equipment used in the industry.

The company was founded in 1992 and incorporated in 1997. Ramey joined the PERC Water family in November of 2023. Established in 1998, PERC Water is an innovative water infrastructure company that develops, designs, builds, operates, and manages water infrastructure throughout the United States. Their unique project approach results in certainty of cost, schedule, and water quality for their clients. PERC Water can uniquely provide such certainty at an early stage of a project by leveraging their Customized Design Report. Their trademarked and award-winning designs allow for an efficient and environmentally sensitive solution(s) to water recycling.



Spencer Fane LLP serves as general counsel and special counsel to scores of Colorado's special districts and municipalities, including cities, fire protection districts, water and sanitation districts, metropolitan districts, business improvement districts, intergovernmental authorities, and others. It provides services regarding the formation and representation of these entities in the areas of municipal law, election law, TABOR issues, finance, environmental law, land use, eminent domain, litigation, and other related areas. In addition, the firm serves as bond counsel to numerous political subdivisions throughout the state.

Founded in 1952, Spencer Fane is a full-service law firm with more than 750 attorneys across 38 offices throughout the U.S. It notes that its attorneys were instrumental in writing the Colorado legislation establishing special districts, as well as the laws governing the electoral process for not only special districts but Colorado municipalities generally.

Spencer Fane attorneys and business professionals enjoy supporting the dedicated and hard-working individuals who serve on Boards, work as staff, and volunteer their time and energy to help their local governments and communities thrive.



Shaping Communities. Building Futures.

Founded in 2004, Pinnacle Consulting Group, Inc. has become a trusted partner to special districts across Colorado and Utah. With over 20 years in business and a team of more than 50 professionals, Pinnacle brings deep institutional knowledge and hands-on experience to the complex challenges our clients face — from compliance and budget constraints to growth and governance.

Our structure allows us to

Continued on page 20

deliver specialized yet integrated support across four core service areas: Finance & Accounting, Management & Administration, Capital Project Management, and Facility Operations. Whether your district needs help in a single area or comprehensive support, our collaborative teams ensure dependable service and tailored solutions.

At Pinnacle, we believe strong relationships are the foundation of successful communities. That's why our commitment extends beyond our clients to the people they serve — through community sponsorships, food and goods drives, and volunteerism.

We're proud to support today's needs while helping shape tomorrow's communities. Discover the Pinnacle difference your district deserves at PCGI.com.



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What Sets Us Apart

- » All of our operations, products, and relationship managers are exclusively dedicated to the special district and community association industries
- » Solutions and tools built on our industry experience that bring your organization increased efficiencies
- » Dedicated team to walk you through every stage of the banking transition process and a one-on-one relationship with your relationship manager



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GovDeals enjoys working with special districts to bring the power of over five million bidders to the agency auctions and increase the

revenue returned to the budget. Gain access to GovDeals through your SDA membership at no extra cost to your agency.



Fromm & Company is a family-owned firm providing accounting, management, billing, budgeting, auditing, and compliance services to special districts across the state. Our firm is comprised of individuals with vast experience in the special district world. This experience provides Board members the ability to govern their district while Fromm & Company takes care of the necessary duties to ensure the district is operating smoothly and in compliance with state regulations.

The firm is led by Cathy Fromm, CPA, who has been in the local government finance arena for over 40 years, including ten years as a municipal Finance Director. Cathy has also served as President, Vice-President, and Treasurer for the Colorado Government Finance Officers Association (CGFOA). Other team members' experience encompasses over 25 years in administration, accounting, compliance, management, election, and paralegal services to special districts, in addition to Big 4 CPA auditing experience. Another service Fromm & Company can offer our clients is construction management, with over 40 years of experience amongst our team members.





Our agency has a long-standing tradition of serving the public sector, with roots dating back to 1945 as T. Charles Wilson Insurance Services, later known as TCW Risk Management. Over the decades, we've built a reputation as a trusted partner across Colorado, delivering tailored insurance and risk management solutions.

In 2022, we joined Highstreet Insurance Partners, expanding our capabilities and resources. In 2025, we merged with Wallstreet Insurance and Confluence Insurance to become the Rocky Mountain Branch of Highstreet Insurance & Financial Services — reflecting continued growth while maintaining the same local team and personalized approach our clients value.

Today, we offer comprehensive solutions across public sector, commercial insurance, personal lines, and employee benefits. While we lead with deep public sector expertise, we support a broad range of clients with customized strategies designed to meet complex and evolving needs.

Our Property & Casualty and Workers' Compensation teams provide proactive risk management support, complemented by programs like Risk Concierge and ModPro. Our Employee Benefits team delivers innovative, client-focused solutions. In addition, our Personal Lines team specializes in high-value homes, complex property portfolios, and unique exposures that fall outside standard markets—offering tailored coverage and a high-touch service experience.

We're proud of our long-standing partnerships and remain deeply rooted in the communities we serve. Our focus is simple: deliver strategic guidance, responsive service, and long-term value.

Contact us at 303-368-5757 or RockyMountain.info@highstreetins.com. 

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Proposed Rule for Federal Grants Could Impact Districts

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has proposed a wide-ranging rule aimed at reworking the federal funding award process for local governments, organizations, and institutions, including special districts.

Building on previous executive orders, specifically Executive Order 14332, "Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking," the regulation would allow federal agencies to terminate grants when the award no longer advances federal agency priorities or the national interest, or withhold funds from organizations promoting specific diversity concepts while placing greater emphasis on political appointees' roles in the grantmaking process.

The National Special Districts Association (NSDA) has been analyzing the proposed rule changes and gathering feedback on the potential impacts on special districts, and there are a number of items about which districts have expressed concerns:

- » Potential termination of grants at any time for any reason
- » Review and cancellation by political appointees which may create bottlenecks
- » No consultation process of the rule proposal
- » Potential for impacts to municipal bond ratings and project delivery

The administration is providing a 45-day comment period on the rule, published in the Federal Register, and is aiming to issue a final rule by October 1. The October date would allow the federal government to determine what requirements FY27 awards are subject to.

Comments on the proposed rule were due July 13, but the National League of Cities (NLC), U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), National Association of Counties (NACo), International City/County Management Association (ICMA), National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Council of State Governments (CSG), Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), and the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) sent a letter to OMB Director Russ Vought and OMB Office of Federal Financial Management officials Joel Savary and Andrew Reisig asking for a 45-day extension of the public comment period for the rule.

The letter argues that the current timeline is insufficient to evaluate a sweeping, government wide rewrite affecting roughly \$1 trillion in federal grants. It also emphasizes that state and local governments need more time to assess significant operational impacts and provide meaningful feedback to ensure the rule reflects on the ground implementation realities.

NSDA is reviewing the proposed rule and will provide updates as the rulemaking progresses. SDA will also share any pertinent information as it becomes available.

Rising Healthcare Costs

Understanding the Drivers and Finding Sustainable Solutions

Guest article by CEBT



While employers cannot control every factor driving healthcare inflation, they can choose a benefits partner that helps them manage risk, improve employee health, and create greater long-term cost predictability.

For special districts across Colorado, providing quality health benefits is an important way to support the employees who serve our communities every day. Yet as healthcare costs continue to rise, many organizations are facing difficult decisions about their benefits programs. With annual healthcare rate increases trending above historical norms in recent years, it is more important than ever for employers to understand what drives healthcare costs—and how they can take a more proactive approach to managing them.

Several factors contribute to rising healthcare costs. Higher provider prices, increasing prescription drug expenses, workforce shortages, inflation, chronic health conditions, and overall increases in healthcare utilization all play a role. While many of these market forces are outside of an employer's direct control, how employees access and use healthcare can significantly impact long-term plan performance.

Utilization is one of the most important drivers of healthcare spending. When employees use high-cost settings, such as emergency rooms, for non-emergency issues or receive unnecessary services, claims costs can increase rapidly. At the same time, underutilization can create equally costly challenges. Delayed preventive care, untreated conditions, and poor management of chronic diseases often lead to more serious health issues and higher claims costs in the future. The goal is not to reduce utilization, but to encourage the right care, at the right time, and in the right setting.

Effective benefits programs help employees become informed healthcare consumers. Access to primary care, virtual care, wellness programs, mental health resources, disease management support, and care navigation tools can help employees make better healthcare decisions while improving health outcomes. Equally important is employee education. When employees understand their benefits and available resources, they are better equipped to access cost-effective care and avoid unnecessary expenses.

While employers cannot control every factor driving healthcare inflation, they can choose a benefits partner that helps them manage risk, improve employee health, and create greater long-term cost predictability. As healthcare costs continue to rise, special districts need more than a health plan—they need a long-term strategy. By combining the power of pooling, proactive cost-management resources, employee education, and comprehensive support services, CEBT helps special districts build sustainable benefits programs that support employees today while helping control costs for the future.

Built specifically to serve Colorado public entities, including special districts, CEBT combines the strength of pooled purchasing with comprehensive benefits strategies designed to manage costs while supporting employee health. Through pooling, participating employers share risk across a larger group, helping improve long-term rate stability and predictability compared to many standalone arrangements.

Beyond the financial advantages of pooling, CEBT provides a



comprehensive suite of programs, tools, and resources designed to address the underlying drivers of healthcare costs, including:

- » **Pooling power** that helps spread risk across a larger group.
- » **Lower fixed costs** compared to many fully insured or standalone arrangements, helping districts allocate more dollars toward actual care.
- » **High-performing networks** that support access to quality, cost-effective care.
- » **Competitive plan options** that give districts flexibility.
- » **Value-added benefits** that support employees beyond the core medical plan.
- » **Wellness and mental health resources** that promote overall well-being.
- » **Virtual care and care navigation tools** that help employees find the right care at the right time.
- » **Disease management and preventive care support** to help address health issues earlier.
- » **Employee education resources** that help members better understand and use their benefits.

Together, these resources help employees make smarter healthcare decisions, access appropriate care, and address health concerns earlier—supporting better outcomes while helping control long-term claims costs.

CEBT also focuses on thoughtful plan design and member engagement. By combining care navigation tools, wellness support, communication strategies, and cost-conscious benefit options, CEBT helps employers create a benefits program that balances affordability with a positive employee experience. Rather than simply paying claims, the program is designed to help employees navigate healthcare more effectively while giving employers practical tools to manage financial risk.

“CEBT understands the unique needs of Colorado’s special districts and has earned the trust of our members by delivering exceptional service and innovative benefit solutions. They are a valued partner in helping districts care for their employees while managing healthcare costs for the long term,” said Ann Terry, SDA’s CEO.

If your district is looking for ways to better manage healthcare costs while continuing to provide valuable benefits to employees, CEBT can help. Connect with our team to explore strategies, resources, and plan options designed specifically for Colorado special districts. cebt.org

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By combining care navigation tools, wellness support, communication strategies, and cost-conscious benefit options, CEBT helps employers create a benefits program that balances affordability with a positive employee experience.

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Spencer Fane is the law firm where your leaders work with our leaders. With over 120 combined years of special district experience in Colorado, we can handle all of your district's legal needs. Advancing the interests of your district is our priority.



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Excavation Safety Training

Guest article by the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool

The Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool remains committed to our more than 2,500 public entities as *Your Risk Management Partner*. Each month, we are focusing on a different program or service we offer our membership, either at no cost or at a discounted rate. This month, we're highlighting our Excavation Safety Training.

Complimentary Excavation Safety Training

Trenching and excavation work presents some of the highest risks on any jobsite—but the right training can help prevent serious incidents. Our Excavation Safety Training equips participants with the awareness to safely plan and perform trenching and shoring operations, recognize hazards, and implement protective measures before work begins. Topics include:

- » Safety planning
- » Soil classification and testing
- » Hazard recognition
- » Cave-in prevention
- » Protective systems
- » Safe access and egress
- » Atmospheric hazards
- » Excavation best practices

Training includes classroom instruction with practical, hands-on exercises when logistics allow, giving participants the confidence to apply safe excavation techniques in the field.

Our team is available to answer questions, discuss your specific workplace challenges, and tailor training to meet your organization's needs.

Request your excavation safety training today at csdpool.org/request-a-safety-consultation.

To learn more, visit our website at **csdpool.org/safety-consulting**.

As *Your Risk Management Partner*, we remain committed to providing specialized coverages tailored for public entities, exemplary claims support, and safety and loss prevention services to ensure everyone within the organization—from Board members to supervisors and staff—has the tools they need to succeed. If you have any questions about the resources mentioned here, please visit **csdpool.org** or message us at **csdpool.org/connect**.



Don't Forget to Check Out the New 2026 SDA Board Member Manual!

Just a quick reminder that as part of your membership benefits, complimentary copies of the 2026 SDA Board Member Manual have been sent to districts as well as to management companies to share with their clients!

We were proud to partner with the law firm of Collins Cole Winn & Ulmer, PLLC to produce this year's manual, which has been updated to include the most current information.

In addition to the hard copies that were sent out, a PDF of the manual is also available under the Publications section of the SDA website at www.sdaco.org (you do need to be logged into our website to access this section so please call our

office if you need assistance). This is an easy and convenient way to download a copy of the manual and/or to reference it electronically.

If you have any questions or need any additional assistance, please feel free to call the SDA office at 303-863-1733.

We hope you will consider this convenient guide a valuable resource!

Editor's note: The Board Member Manual is intended to be a general survey of statutory responsibilities for Board members of Colorado special districts and is not meant to replace a district's general counsel. The reader is strongly encouraged to seek the advice and assistance of legal counsel experienced in special district matters with any legal issues that may arise.

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October 15 Budget Deadline Quickly Approaching!

The Board must designate a qualified individual to prepare the district's proposed annual budget and submit it to the Board on or before October 15 of each year, as required by §29-1-105, C.R.S. Once the proposed budget has been submitted to the Board, the Board should set a budget hearing to consider the proposed budget before taking action to adopt it.

Colorado law does not prescribe a specific level of detail for the budget or require a particular line-item format. The appropriate level of

detail is typically determined in consultation with the district's accountant or financial advisor. Generally, expenditures need not be itemized in extensive detail, but district spending must remain within the amounts appropriated.

Following the budget hearing, the Board adopts the annual budget by resolution and makes appropriations for the budget year. The total appropriations may not exceed the budgeted expenditures, and the district may make expenditures only up to the amounts appropriated in the adopted budget.

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Colorado Special Districts
Property and Liability Pool

Build safer trenching and shoring practices with awareness training on:

- ✓ **Excavation Planning**
- ✓ **Soil Analysis**
- ✓ **Hazard Identification**
- ✓ **Protective Systems**
- ✓ **Inspections**
- ✓ **Cave-In Prevention**

Schedule a complimentary training session for your district.

