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JANUARY 2024

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Designed by Emmett Jordan

National Western photos courtesy of
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happy new year

I hope you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season with your friends and family. We are already looking forward to everything we have planned for 2024!

First, please make sure to join us via Zoom on Thursday, January 18 at 10:00 am for our Annual Business Meeting. We will provide our yearly updates as well as pertinent information that you won't want to miss. Please visit our website at www.sdaco.org for more details.

We are also hard at work scheduling this year's Annual Regional Workshops in June. Right now we are planning to hold the workshops in 11 different locations across the state! As soon as we have the dates and cities finalized we will let you know all the specifics so watch for more to come. We will also once again be updating the Board Member Manual and distributing it to all members. We can't wait to see you there!

Our 2024 SDA Leadership Academy is set to begin in February, and we are excited to welcome a new class of special district leaders to this unique yearlong program.

We certainly can't forget the 2024 SDA Annual Conference, which will be here before we know it! Make sure to mark your calendars now to join us September 10-12 back up in Keystone. We will open our Call for Speakers and exhibitor space over the next few months so keep a close eye on your emails (and check out page 21 for a few more details).

In addition, we are of course focused intently on this year's Legislative Session. You can read our full preview of the issues we will be watching on page 7, and please plan to join us for our Legislative Briefings to get the latest updates on pressing issues for special districts. The first briefing will be held on Tuesday, January 23 at 12:00 pm via Zoom. Thereafter the briefings will be held approximately every other week (please see page 22 for the full schedule), and all members are welcome to participate.

Our partnerships play a key role in our ongoing success, and we are looking forward to our continued work with the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool, the Colorado Employer Benefit Trust (CEBT), and the Colorado State Fire Chiefs, just to name a few. We also continue to maintain strong working relationships with the other local government associations, such as the Colorado Municipal League; Colorado Counties, Inc.; Counties and Commissioners Acting Together (CCAT); and the Colorado Association of School Boards. In addition, we will once again be partnering with Water Education Colorado on this year's Water Fluency program. We will also continue our work with the Metro District Education Coalition on issues related to metro districts.

This is just a small glimpse into everything that lies ahead this year! We can't wait for new opportunities to serve our members, and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Here's to a great 2024!



Ann Terry, SDA CEO

Please **join us**
via Zoom on
Thursday,
January 18
at 10:00 am for
the **SDA Annual
Business Meeting.**



Sincerely,

Ann Terry

Chief Executive Officer

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Keep These Items in Mind as the New Year Begins

There are several important statutory duties that a special district Board must take care of around the rollover of the annual calendar.

1. At the first Board meeting of each year, the Board must adopt a resolution designating the posting location for the district's 24-hour meeting notices. The location for posting the Board meeting notices should be a public place which is accessible by the public. Most districts are now posting Board meeting notices on their websites, which is probably more effective than a physical posting, but does not eliminate the need to adopt this notice. If your district is using its website as its posting location, House Bill 19-1087 requires the local government to provide the website address to the Department of Local Affairs.

A couple of additional points to be made regarding meetings:

- » Legislation was adopted in 2021 to clarify that the "location" of a meeting means the physical, telephonic, electronic, or other virtual place, or combination of such means, where a meeting can be attended. This amendment in House Bill 21-1278 states that special and regular Board meetings can be held in a physical location or by telephonic or other electronic means.

- » The meeting notice of all meetings of the Board that are held telephonically, electronically, or by other means not including physical presence must include the method or procedure, including the conference number or link, by which members of the public can attend the meeting.
2. By January 1, the district must file a current, accurate map of district boundaries (according to Division of Local Government standards) with the County Assessor, the Clerk and Recorder of each county in which the district is located, and the Division of Local Government. This map should include any inclusions or exclusions of property that affect district boundaries.
 3. Between November 16 and January 15, the district must file an updated Notice to Electors (Transparency Notice). (32-1-809, C.R.S.) This is a detailed listing of vital information about the district. SDA members have the option of filing their Transparency Notice on the SDA website at www.sdaco.org.
 4. The budget process, which begins with the appointment of a budget officer prior to October 15, normally ends when the adopted budget, with a budget resolution and certified mill levy, are filed with the Division of Local Government. 🍌

Editor's Note: This article was adapted from the January 2022 Ask Evan.

Dee Wisor Has Retired after 50 Years of Legal Practice!

Please join us in congratulating Dee Wisor from Butler Snow LLP on his retirement! He retired at the end of 2023 after nearly 50 years of legal practice!

Dee began his career in 1976 as the staff attorney for the Colorado Municipal League (CML). Following his time at CML, Dee spent decades focused on representing governmental entities in public finance transactions and economic development projects. His knowledge of all things bond-related is unsurpassed, and his expertise in TABOR (the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights) is unparalleled. In fact, he may be one of the very few people in the state who truly understands the

true intricacies of TABOR and can explain them fully in terms that make sense to everyone.

Over the years Dee has been a frequent speaker at the SDA Annual Conference on a variety of topics, including TABOR, the Gallagher Amendment, and many more. He has also written a number of articles for the SDA newsletter covering items such as the Fair Campaign Practices Act and post-issuance compliance, just to name a few.

"Dee has been an invaluable resource and a great partner for SDA and our members for many years," noted Ann Terry, SDA's CEO. "We will certainly miss working with him, but we wish him all the very best in his retirement!"



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2024 Legislative Preview and Brief Overview of the 2023 Special Session

Article by the SDA Policy Team

In the good old days, newsletter articles that previewed an upcoming Legislative Session would highlight activity from November General Elections that changed the composition of the General Assembly and often times shifted the power structure within the Governor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, and Attorney General offices. This year, the fall of 2023 had plenty of fireworks and drama but in vastly different packages. The drama came in two stages.

Stage One

Voters soundly rejected Proposition HH on November 7. The final tally was 59.31% of voters saying no and only 40.69% of voters approving HH.

As you might recall, HH was sold as making various changes to state property taxes and revenue limits. The proponents stated their intent with HH was to:

- » Reduce property tax rates;
- » Allow the state to retain and spend revenues that it would otherwise be required to refund to residents under the Colorado Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR);
- » Create a new, increased cap on state revenue, allowing the state to retain and spend additional revenue each year up to the Proposition HH Cap;
- » Allocate revenue to local governments to make up for decreased property tax revenues; and
- » Create a limit on local government property tax revenue.

As stated above, voters rejected Prop HH, which moved November into the second stage.

Stage Two

After some head scratching following the defeat of Prop HH, Governor Jared Polis called a Special Session of the Colorado State Legislature to address property tax relief. The Legislature met for four days and passed a number of bills.

2023 Legislative Special Session Recap

Senate Bill 23B-001—2023 Property Tax Relief

By Senators Fenberg/Hansen and Representatives McCluskie/Kennedy

Senate Bill 23B-001 provides property tax reductions to homeowners. This legislation:

1. Reduces residential assessment rates from 6.765% to 6.7%;
2. Increases the amount of home values that are exempted from taxation (currently, \$15,000 of each

home's value is exempted from taxation. The bill increases this exemption to \$55,000.); and

3. Sends State general fund dollars, not TABOR refund dollars, to local governments to prevent the tax cuts described in #1 and #2 above from damaging certain local governments' ability to provide key public services (particularly K-12 public schools, ambulance, health, and fire districts)

The changes made are intended to help homeowners offset increasing property tax bills, which are being driven by rising home values. The changes are for one year only.

House Bill 23B-1003—Property Tax Task Force (a.k.a. Commission)

By Representative Snyder and Senators Mullica/Fenberg

The Legislature changed the title of the introduced bill from Task Force to Commission. Specifically, the Commission is charged with studying and making recommendations for a property tax structure that protects property owners and residential tenants from rising property taxes while meeting the needs of governments that rely on property tax to pay for local services.

The bill creates the Commission on Property Tax to:

1. Identify the causes of increasing property taxes,
2. Review best practices for short- and long-term property tax relief, and
3. Make recommendations.

The bill outlines the membership of the Commission including legislators, the property tax administrator, representatives of local governments, and other stakeholders. The Commission may create subpanels to assist in developing recommendations.

The task force must meet twice per month between December 2023 and February 2024, and report to the Legislative Council by March 15, 2024. Following the report, the task force may disband or vote to extend itself through December 31, 2024.

Senate Bill 23B-003—Identical TABOR Refund

By Senators Hinrichsen/Marchman and Representatives Mabrey/Dickson

This year, the TABOR surplus equals \$3.28 billion. The Colorado Constitution allows the State to use "any reasonable method" for refunds. Since TABOR was passed, our State has created over 20 different ways to refund TABOR surplus. Senate Bill 23B-003 requires TABOR surplus to be refunded on returns for tax year 2023 in equal amounts to all taxpayers who are eligible

Continued on page 9

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to receive a tax refund. The bill replaces the six-tiered refund mechanism with a system that will cause a majority of taxpayers to receive a larger TABOR refund. This year, single filers will each receive a \$847 check and joint filers will receive a \$1,694 check. Under the six-tiered refund law the range for a single filer was income up to \$51K = \$586 all the way to single filer \$309K and a \$1,834 refund check.

House Bill 23B-1002—Increased Earned Income Tax Credit 2023

Representatives Willford/Young and Senators Kolker/Fields

The state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable tax credit that is calculated as a percentage of the federal EITC. The federal EITC is available to taxpayers with income levels ranging from \$16,500 for a single filer with no children, to a maximum of nearly \$60,000 for married filers with three or more children. The bill increases the after-tax income of lower income households by as much as \$1,350 for a family of three making \$25,000 per year.

House Bill 23B-1001—Emergency Rental Assistance Grant Program

By Representatives Lindsay/Herod and Senators Gonzales/Buckner

This bill created the Emergency Rental Assistance Grant Program within the Division of Local Government to provide grants to tenants who have a household income of 80% or less than the area median income and who are at risk of eviction or displacement. The bill appropriates \$15.1 million to the fund.

Senate Bill 23B-002—Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Program

By Senators Zenzinger/Bridges and Representatives Bird/Garcia

The Legislature passed Senate Bill 23B-002 which allows Colorado to opt into a new federal program called the Federal Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children Program (or Summer EBT). The program will be administered by the Department of Human Services (CDHS). This is a permanent program that, for states that opt in, will provide nutritional benefits to eligible students during the summer months. The program will provide a \$40 per summer month, per child benefit to eligible families.

Summer EBT benefits will be electronically transferred to a benefit card that can be used by families at local grocery stores and may be used to purchase eligible food products, exactly the way the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) program operates.

With the Special Session behind us, we have been working for months to prepare for the 2024 Legislative Session. Below are a number of items to look for in the upcoming Session.

Preview of the 2024 Legislative Session

Firefighter Cardiac (Heart) and Cancer Benefits Trusts

SDA is pursuing legislation to provide full State funding for the Firefighter Cardiac (Heart) and Cancer Benefits Trusts. These two Trusts provide important benefits to firefighters as they are dealing with very serious life-threatening diseases. Under the current structure, the Heart Trust is funded by the State, but is limited to full-time firefighters. The Cancer Trust is a volunteer program that allows fire protection districts and city fire departments to join the Trust and quickly direct funds to victims of cancer instead of going through the slower and more costly workers' compensation system. The proposed legislation will provide full state funding for full-, part-time, and volunteer firefighters. This issue resonates with legislative leadership and legislators in rural Colorado. The challenge will be to find the funding to make this a reality. Providing these benefits, which are cost effective, will help fire districts attract, retain, and professionalize small and volunteer fire protection districts.

Property Taxes

No, the issue has not gone away, nor will it go away anytime soon. The Special Session brought us a Property Tax Commission that will study the impact of high property values and the higher property taxes that higher values will bring. Many legislators will wait for the Property Tax Commission to develop recommendations and possibly legislation, but we know from experience, many legislators will not wait or sit idly by for the Commission to develop solutions. Those legislators will introduce their own ideas, and it will be our job to analyze, comment, and work with legislators on their good ideas and work to defeat bad ideas.

From our perspective, part of the discussion on property taxes will include a statewide ballot measure that will put a hard-stop on citizen initiatives that seek to limit tax revenue for local governments in a one-size fits all manner. Our proposal will prohibit statewide ballot questions that require across the board reductions to property tax revenues. We believe that reducing property taxes should be reserved to the taxpayers at the local level of the government and not subject to a populace movement that seeks tax cuts as a method to get certain demographics to the polls in any given November.

To better illustrate the issue, voters must approve raising or imposing new taxes under TABOR, therefore, it stands to reason and logic that those same voters should be in control of reducing taxes. By way of example, initiative **2023-2024 #50—Voter Approval to Retain Additional Property Tax Revenue**, will be on the statewide ballot at the November 2024 General Election. This initiative has two purposes:

1. To require voter approval for government to retain total statewide property tax revenue that is projected to be in excess of 4% annually.
2. To require that for voter approval of a property tax revenue increase, any referred measure be

Continued on page 11



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a stand-alone subject and the ballot title must contain specific language.

Property taxes have been an issue for local governments long before TABOR, and long before the Gallagher Amendment, and they will continue to be at the forefront of the discussions (and fights) in which special districts and our local government partners will be engaged.

Colorado Open Records Act (CORA)

This preview wouldn't be complete without some chatter about the Open Records Act. Legislation in 2023 opened the door to an issue that SDA has been beating the drum about for far too long. The issue is data mining of public records, especially from out of state interests, for commercial purposes. The 2023 legislation provided a discussion point for SDA to gain traction on limits to records that are used for a commercial or business purpose. Our ask is to allow a governmental entity to have more time to comply with requests that have a singular commercial purpose. In this manner, special districts, cities, and counties will be better suited to plan and manage commercial requests, which tend to be voluminous. Additionally, districts need relief and guidance where publishing a notice in a newspaper is required but in the boundaries of the district or county a newspaper does not exist. We will suggest a statutory modification to allow for publishing on the website of the special district in lieu of a newspaper that is far removed from the people of the district.

In the context of our requests, we anticipate that the Press Association will be asking for a reduction of the costs for research and retrieval of public records. They assert that the current maximum per hour rate of \$33.58 is too high and have expressed more concern that the expected increase on January 1, 2024, will increase to approximately \$40 per hour due to inflation over the last several years. Fun times!

We also anticipate a few legislative suggestions from our friends.

Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI)

The leadership at CCI has approved a legislative agenda item that would provide additional time to comply with the requirements of the 2021 legislation to improve accessibility of governmental websites. The initial legislation provided an on-ramp for the changes to occur, but counties will be asking for additional time to comply with the new requirements.

Adams County Commissioners

As was featured in a program at the September SDA Annual Conference, Adams County Commissioners are launching legislation that would empower counties to create a County Revitalization Authority (CRA). The new taxing entity would give counties the authority to establish a specific area in an unincorporated area of a county and bring in property tax revenue for fiscal commitments over several years with the goal of capitalizing infrastructure and other improvements to develop the land as a

public benefit. The drafters of this proposal listened to the concerns raised by SDA and amended earlier proposals to reflect changes we requested, namely, participation by special districts is not required but the special districts within a proposed authority would have the ability to opt-in to projects when there is mutual benefit.

In addition, we are following a few other issues as well.

Metro District Task Force

Under the legislative microscope, metropolitan (metro) districts were the topic of a Task Force review over the last few weeks of 2023 and into the new year. In the last Legislative Session, **House Bill 23-1105—Homeowners' Association and Metropolitan District Homeowners' Rights Task Forces** created two task forces with state legislators; representatives of state agencies; local government and metropolitan district officials; and members of the public. The Metro District Task Force side of the legislation will study issues confronting metropolitan district homeowners' rights and consider the findings and conclusions of the HOA Task Force and conclusions as they relate to metropolitan district homeowners' rights. The initial meetings were held on December 5 and 19, respectively with an interim report due on March 1, 2024, and a final report that must be submitted by June 15, 2024.

Moving Special District Elections to Odd-Year November and Requiring that Elections Be Coordinated

If you were worried and nervous before, at least for 2024 don't be worried and nervous about this issue. A legislator, who believes that voter participation will increase by moving special district elections from May to November and requiring that elections be coordinated by a clerk and recorder, has pulled back, for now, on this idea. The most impacted stakeholders, special districts, emphatically rejected the idea, citing local control, and the recent switch from even-year elections to odd-year elections, won the argument. But that is likely only for 2024, and we will need to stand on guard for 2025.

In closing, the SDA Policy Team hosts regular briefings during the Legislative Session and will be monitoring all bills and evaluating them for their effect on special districts. The "Leg Briefings" are open to all SDA members. The briefings are held in webinar format to maximize the time of our members and are held every other week during the Session or as needed. You are invited to participate! Check out page 22 for all the dates and go to the SDA website at www.sdaco.org to sign up today!

The SDA website also hosts a bill tracker that provides members with real time information on the bills SDA has under consideration. As always, SDA welcomes input from members on legislative issues, and encourages members to establish contacts with local legislators, to be ready to contact them when necessary to inform them regarding bills of importance to special districts. 🍷

Parliamentary Procedures at a Glance

As the new year begins, we thought it would be helpful to include an easy to follow guide on parliamentary procedures. The first chart lists motions and/or points in established order of precedence while the motions in the second chart have no established order.

To Do This ¹	You Say This	May You Interrupt Speaker?	Must You Be Seconded?	Is the Motion Debatable?	Is the Motion Amendable?	What Vote is Required?
Adjourn the meeting (before all business is complete)	"I move that we adjourn."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Not amendable	Majority vote required
Recess the meeting	"I move that we recess until..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Amendable	Majority vote required
Complain about noise, room temperature, etc.	"Point of privilege."	May interrupt speaker	No second needed	Not debatable ²	Not amendable	No vote required ³
Suspend further consideration of something	"I move we table it."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Not amendable	Majority vote required
End debate	"I move the previous question."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Two-thirds vote required
Postpone consideration of something	"I move we postpone this matter until..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Two-thirds vote required
Have something studied further	"I move we refer this matter to a committee."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Majority vote required
Amend a motion	"I move that this motion be amended by..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Majority vote required
Introduce business (a primary motion)	"I move that..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Amendable	Majority vote required

¹ These motions or points are listed in established order of precedence. When any one of them is pending, you may not introduce another that is listed below it, but you may introduce another that is listed above it.

² In this case, any resulting motion is debatable.

³ Chair decides.



To Do This ⁴	You Say This	May You Interrupt Speaker?	Must You Be Seconded?	Is the Motion Debatable?	Is the Motion Amendable?	What Vote is Required?
Object to procedure or to a personal affront	"Point of order."	May interrupt speaker	No second needed	Not debatable	Not amendable	No vote needed, Chair decides
Request information	"Point of information."	If urgent, may interrupt speaker	No second needed	Not debatable	Not amendable	No vote required
Ask for a vote by actual count to verify a voice count	"I call for a division of the house."	May not interrupt speaker ⁵	No second needed	Not debatable	Not amendable	No vote required unless someone objects ⁶
Object to considering some undiplomatic or improper matter	"I object to consideration of this question."	May interrupt speaker	No second needed	Not debatable	Not amendable	Two-thirds vote required
Take up a matter previously tabled	"I move we take from the table..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Not amendable	Majority required
Reconsider something already disposed of	"I move we now (or later) reconsider our action relative to..."	May interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable if original motion is debatable	Not amendable	Majority required
Consider something out of its scheduled order	"I move we suspend the rules and consider..."	May not interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Not debatable	Not amendable	Two-thirds vote required
Vote on a ruling by the Chair	"I appeal the Chair's decision."	May interrupt speaker	Must be seconded	Debatable	Not amendable	Majority in the negative required to reverse Chair's decision

⁴ These motions, points, and proposals have no established order of precedence. Any of them may be introduced at any time except when the meeting is considering one of the top three matters listed in the first chart (motion to adjourn, motion to recess, point of privilege.)

⁵ But division must be called for before another motion is started.

⁶ Then majority vote is required.

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Beginning of the Year Refresher on Executive Sessions

Since the use of executive sessions is somewhat technical and frequently not understood, a brief reminder for the beginning of the new year is a good idea.

The Open Meetings Law is the Colorado statutory enactment of the principle that government business is the public's business and should be conducted in full and open view of the public. The authority for special district Boards, as well as other local government entities, to consider certain issues in closed session is a tightly limited and closely guarded exception to open meetings. Its use is a right granted by the State Legislature, which is always subject to further limitations if the right is abused by local governments.

The critical steps in using an executive session are as follows:

- » The posted agenda of a meeting should include notice that an executive session will be held during the meeting and should list the subject matter, including reference to the statutory section that covers the subject matter. The description should be as complete as possible without disclosing the actual facts of the subject.
- » The executive session can only be held as part of a regular or special meeting of the Board.
- » When the item comes up in the meeting, the executive session must be called by a motion, which must be approved by a two-thirds majority. **CAUTION:** In a five-member Board, three out of five does *not* constitute 2/3. Three out of five is only 60%, while 2/3 requires at least 66%.
- » The motion must include an exact reference to the statutory section that covers the discussion. Most districts have ready access to the six statutory sections, and good practice is to read the exact words of the relevant section. **NOTE:** *The statutory sections can be supplied by the district's legal counsel as well as by reference in the SDA Board Member Manual.*

- » As the Board goes into executive session, only the Board and individuals who have specific relevance to the discussion should be in the meeting.
- » The discussion must be limited to the announced subject, and no action can be taken in the meeting. Beware of straw votes or other indicia of how the Board will act when the formal action comes up after returning to the public meeting.
- » The executive session must be electronically recorded, and the recording must be kept for 90 days during which time members of the public may make an open records request. **EXCEPTION:** If the district's counsel determines that the discussion is covered by attorney-client privilege, the attorney will so state, and the recording can be turned off during that part of the discussion.
- » If an open records request is denied, the requestor can ask that the record be heard by a district court. The judge will review the record in private and determine whether the Board discussed items other than what was in the announcement of the session and whether anything indicates that an action was taken, either formally or by wink-wink inference. If so, the judge can require that the record be made public.
- » The discussion within the executive session is confidential and revealing the discussion is a serious breach of a fiduciary duty unless the reason for confidentiality has passed.

There are other provisions governing the conducting of an executive session, which legal counsel will make clear to a Board seeking an executive session. Failure to follow the rules can have consequences and should not be taken lightly. 🍷

Editor's Note: This article was adapted from the January 2022 Bonus Ask Evan.

NATIONAL WESTERN® *Stock Show*



Fascinating Past, **Bold Future**

Guest article by Susan M. Thornton, M.S.

In 1941, 12-year-old Kenneth Monfort (above) exhibited the 4H Grand Champion Steer at the National Western Stock Show. In 1991, he received the prestigious NWSS Citizen of the West award which honored him as "a pioneer in the livestock industry and a community leader in Colorado and the Rocky Mountain West". His career included building the Greeley-based family business into a Fortune 500 company and serving in the Colorado General Assembly.

The annual Mexican Rodeo Extravaganza at NWSS (background) features Charro culture, Mexican-style bull riding, bareback riding, trick roping, Mariachi music, side saddle girls, and the Portuguese style Bull Fights.

Visit the National Western Stock Show between January 6-21, 2024. For information about the show, visit www.nationalwestern.com. Visit the National Western Campus free of charge five days a week (and some weekends).



In January of 1906, just months before the cataclysmic San Francisco earthquake and the opening of the summer Olympics in Athens, Colorado marked an epic event of its own—the opening of the Western Live Stock Show in Denver.

Founded by ideas and energy coming from the National Livestock Association; the American Stock Growers Association; the National Wool Growers Association; the Colorado Cattle and Horse Growers Association; the Colorado Horticultural Society; and the Colorado State Forestry Association, that first stock show was attended by a trainload of students from Colorado Agricultural College (now Colorado State University), which closed for the day so students could attend.

The Earliest History

Prior to 1906, there were several attempts to hold a stock show in Denver.

These included the showing of thoroughbred cattle at the Denver Blood Stock Association's Blood Stock Fair in June of 1874. The fair featured five categories of purebred cattle along with five days of horse racing.

In 1894, Denver was barely 40 years old and had a population of more than 100,000 residents. Its pride and wealth were damaged in the Silver Crash that abruptly ended silver mining in the state. *History Colorado* reports that “the crash caused pain across the state, but hit Denver particularly hard. The city was haunted by unfinished and empty houses; its subdivisions on the outskirts were repossessed by the prairie dogs. An estimated 10,000 people left Denver after 1893, the most since the Civil War.”

Reviving Colorado's flagging spirit was a prime objective of the 1898 stock show.

1898: “A Wild and Wooly City”

According to the Denver Chamber of Commerce's history titled *Denver Rocky Mountain Gold*, that year “the Chamber of Commerce, the Colorado Cattlemen's Association, and other livestock interests planned a national stock show in Denver.” They arranged for a free public barbecue following the stock show.

The Denver Republican reported that the barbecue was to include “5 Tons of Meat,” including beef, four buffalo, five freshly shot elk, a feast of quails, two bears, 150 possums, and “large troughs of gravy.” Two hundred pounds of table salt, 200 pounds of brown sugar, and 250 pounds of coffee rounded out the menu. Zang's, a prominent Denver brewer, won a contract to provide all of the beer for the festivities by offering it free of charge.

The barbecue was planned to be held at Seventeenth and Curtis Streets in Denver and was expected to draw from 20,000 to 25,000 people. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported that Police Chief John Farley assigned extra patrolmen to the barbecue and provided “a boxcar to be used as a makeshift jail,” should it be needed.

On the day of the barbecue—January 17, 1898—Denver's courthouse and local banks closed at noon and the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroad operated trains every 15 minutes from Union Station to the site of the barbecue.

The *Rocky Mountain News* wrote that despite ropes set up to contain visitors, “a mob of nearly 30,000 broke into the barbecue grounds and surged forward with a wild roar.” Police officers and state militia cavalry troops tried to hold back the crowd as “terrified waiters threw chunks of beef and loaves of bread at the mob.”

Before the day was over, one man had been killed and the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that rioters had stolen 1,000 steel knives and forks; 2,000 tin cups; 50 large white platters; 25 galvanized iron pails; 20 steel flesh hooks; 200 cleavers, hatchets and carvers; and numerous beer glasses.

According to William Simms, writing in *Ten Days Every January* for the 75th jubilee of the National Western, the *Daily Stockman* reported that the event “caused the Queen City to gain a regrettable reputation as a wild and wooly City.”

1899 to 1906

The 1898 stock show, with its disastrous barbecue, was followed in 1899 by the National Exhibition of Range Cattle, which featured two-year-old steer and calves, but no full-blood cattle – and no free food.

The Festival of Mountain and Plain, which included cattle exhibits, was held between 1895 and 1903, and the Denver Fat Stock and Feeder Show met in Denver sporadically between 1899 and 1906.

A Monster Tent, Severe Storms, and Disease Scares

In 1907, the name of the stock show was changed from the Western Live Stock Show to the Western National Live Stock Show and livestock began to arrive from as far away as mid-Kansas. The first “carload class” was established that year, with 20 lots of animals held in outdoor pens for public exhibit, judging, and sale.

Horses were also introduced into the stock show in 1907 when draft horses made their appearance. Other changes that year included moving the primary location of the show to the east/southeast of the stock yards; constructing a two-story brick horse barn; and purchasing of a canvas “big top” tent to house events.

This “monster tent,” measuring 150 by 175 feet, was built in Denver and erected to house stock show events.

Workers labored in the cold that January to erect the tent, which unfortunately was torn apart in an unexpected Colorado windstorm. Simms reported that workers set about sewing up the tent and replacing broken struts, and the repaired tent was ready when the stock show opened that year.

Severe winter storms also challenged the National Western in 1914, 1916, and 1922, causing a reduction in the number of exhibitors and attendees. A hoof and mouth disease scare occurred in 1915, and 1922

Continued on page 18

was challenged by a smallpox scare that kept many people at home.

However, 1906 and the establishment of the National Western Stock Show—as it is known today—marks the true beginning of this major annual event in Denver.

An Important Economic Driver

Today, the National Western Stock Show not only provides an opportunity for farmers and ranchers to reunite with friends and learn about new techniques in agriculture and ranching.

It also has an economic impact of \$130 million per year and attracts nearly 700,000 visitors, many of them urban dwellers who the stock show helps educate about the heritage that feeds them.

Its shows, dog-herding demonstrations, and equipment exhibits are big draws, as are a Wild West show; professional bull riders; a professional and a Mexican rodeo; a draft horse show and pulls; and hunter-jumpers, paint, and quarter horses.

The Junior Livestock Auction features steers, lambs, hogs, and goats raised by youngsters ages 9 to 18, and it helps raise funds for agricultural scholarships for the youths. Established in 1983, the fund has provided \$6.8 million in scholarships to 110 students each year since its founding.

The stock show also hosts the largest agricultural trade show in Colorado according to Paul Andrews, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Western since 2010. In 2023, it attracted farmers, ranchers, and competitors from 48 states. In 2024, Andrews anticipates that all 50 states will be represented, with skilled rodeo competitors coming from Alaska and Hawaii.

The Westernaires, featuring youth ages 9 to 19 years of age, perform precision drills on horseback as a crowd-pleaser, and the Coors Western Art Exhibit and Sale presents important Western art.

In addition, the stock show has honored a Citizen of the West each year since 1978. This year the 45th honoree is General Ralph E. Eberhart, former Commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and the U.S. Northern Command.

An Unusual Role During COVID-19

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the stock show was asked to house people who were homeless and at risk of infection with COVID.

Andrews said both he and the National Western's Board of Directors agreed to the request. "We had 200,000 square feet of space and could feed people. We try to live by the motto of, 'What's the right thing to do.'" At one point, the facility served as home to 900 men who otherwise would have been unhoused.

After almost a year, as the urgency of the pandemic eased in the fall of 2021, the National Western Stock Show converted the space back to its original use as an events complex.



Vida, CSU Spur's animal and human health building, pictured in 2022 is located at the National Western Center.

The stock show is expected to grow from its current attendance of approximately 700,000 to over a million visitors each year. Its economic impact for Colorado is expected to increase from \$120 million annually to \$300 million each year.

The New National Western Center

As the stock show's facilities aged, there was concern in Denver that the show might relocate to Aurora or to another state altogether. As a result, in 2015 Denver voters approved funding to revamp the campus into a year-round facility.

Groundbreaking for a new, eight-stage, 250-acre campus called the National Western Center began in 2020.

The newest portion of the campus is CSU Spur, a name that incorporates a nod to the spur on a cowboy's boot and to a railway branch, as well as references to the National Western Center's location and to its more than 115-year affiliation with Colorado State University.

Vida, Spur's animal and human health building, opened in 2022. At Vida's Equine Center, visitors can observe as horses are rehabilitated from injuries on a water treadmill or observe live surgery on a dog or cat at Vida's Dumb Friends League Clinic.

The Terra building, with its rooftop greenhouse and focus on food and agriculture, also opened in 2022, and is where Colorado State University researchers study water, sustainability, and food.

Visitors can view artists at work in the Hydro building, which educates children and adults about water sources and how water flows through Colorado.

And throughout the three buildings, visitors can see and enjoy innovative art and sculptures.



Freestyle Reining is one of the many equine events held every year at the National Western Stock Show.



Youth education and events are central to the mission at NWSS and the CSU Spur Center.

Outreach to the Surrounding Neighborhood

The stock show is located in a low-income, largely minority neighborhood, and there has been some concern about what the growth of the National Western Center and the stock show will mean to those living in the area.

Dr. Tony Frank, President of Colorado State University from 2008 to 2019 and current stock show Board member, says that development of the Center is “one of the largest urban redevelopment projects in the nation,” adding that, “There really isn’t anything like it anywhere in the country.”

The goal of the redevelopment, he says, is “for every K-12 student in Colorado to come through these [Spur] buildings every year they’re in school. We want them to learn about careers they didn’t know existed and to go home so excited they can’t stop talking [about it] at dinner.”

Ultimately, Dr. Frank, who remains as Chancellor of the CSU System, hopes that exposure to the new campus will “translate into more kids who see college as a possibility for them and understand the pathway to get there. That’s really how we’ll measure

our success over the long term.”

He acknowledges that the success of the campus depends on community trust. “That means we’re there after 5:00 p.m. and on weekends, with programs like Second Saturdays at Spur, with scholarships for students in the surrounding neighborhoods, and with extensive community and neighborhood outreach.”

It’s important for neighbors to know that “we’re part of this community now and into the future,” he adds.

A Bold Future

With all its past challenges and newfound successes, one might wonder, “What lies ahead for the National Western Stock Show?”

Andrews predicts that the stock show and the new National Western Center together will have an “amazing future.”

The National Western Center will be part of what Andrews calls “the most unique campus in the world, built in partnership with the City of Denver, Colorado State University, and the National Western Stock Show as equity partners responsible for completing the campus.”

So far, he says, only one of eight phases of construction have been completed, with phase two under way with the construction of the Sue Anschutz-Rodgers Livestock Center and the future Equestrian Center at the National Western Center.

Andrews believes that as the National Western Center grows, people will want to see its buildings, which will be “a draw to bring more people to the stock show.” From its current attendance of approximately 700,000, he anticipates the stock show’s attendance will grow to over a million visitors each year, and its economic impact for Colorado will increase from \$120 million annually to \$300 million.

The National Western Stock Show has been through many ups and downs – from winter storms to health hazards to economic crises to two world wars. But it has always come roaring back, to the delight of farmers, ranchers, and devoted fans across the West. 🌟



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Wide Range of Membership Benefits Available at No Additional Cost to CSD Pool Members

Guest article by the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool

As we head into a new year, the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool remains committed to our more than 2,500 public entities as *Your Risk Management Partner*. This means providing our membership with specialized coverages tailored for public entities, exemplary claims support, and safety and loss prevention services to ensure everyone in your organization—from Board members to supervisors and staff—has the tools they need to succeed.

To help, we have put together a wide range of membership benefits at **no additional cost** to help our members make the most out of their budget and their time. These include:

- » Vector Solutions' LMS, an online training center with hundreds of courses for all entity types
- » Water and wastewater operators' certification training and tracking
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- » NetDiligence's eRisk Hub, an online cybersecurity resource portal
- » Zywave's HR Helpline, an online HR portal
- » 10 hours of free HR consultations through CPS HR Consulting
- » Safety and Loss Prevention Grants, which reimburses up to 50% of applicable purchases
- » Member discounts from top safety vendors such as Lexipol Fire, AED Professionals, Conney Safety, NetDiligence Cyber Assessments, Daupler, FireCatt, and Red Wing Shoes.

Through these offerings, we are focused on helping our members manage their risks, grow their workplace safety cultures, and ultimately lower their claims and contributions. At the end of every day and every shift, we are committed to making sure every employee goes home safe.

If you are interested in learning more about what membership benefits are available to you, visit us at csdpool.org. 🍌

Would You Like to Be a Speaker or Exhibitor at the 2024 SDA Annual Conference?

If you answered "yes," then make sure to watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org in January and February! That's when our Call

for Speakers and exhibitor space sign-up will open! We will be announcing specific dates soon so keep your eyes open for all the details to come (especially

for the exhibitor space as it sells out quickly!). And in the meantime, everyone can mark their calendars to join us back up in Keystone, September 10-12!

SDA Legislative Briefings Will Begin January 23!

Are you looking for an easy and convenient way to stay up to date on the latest legislative issues for special districts? Then make sure to mark your calendars to join us for the 2024 SDA Legislative Briefings!

The 2024 Legislative Session officially convenes on Wednesday, January 10, and we already have our full set of Legislative Briefings scheduled and ready to go.

The first briefing will take place on Tuesday, January 23 at 12:00 pm. These briefings will take place via Zoom, and all SDA members are welcome to listen in as we review the current hot topics and issues we have been working on at the Capitol. Plus, we will also include updates on federal legislation.

Following the first briefing, the schedule of briefings for the entire Session is as follows:

- » Tuesday, February 6 at 12:00 pm
- » Tuesday, February 20 at 12:00 pm
- » Tuesday, March 5 at 12:00 pm
- » Tuesday, March 19 at 12:00 pm
- » Tuesday, April 2 at 12:00 pm
- » Tuesday, April 16 at 12:00 pm
- » Tuesday, April 30 at 12:00 pm

Please visit the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for more information and to register. Whether you would like to listen every time or just once in a while, this is an easy way to stay informed on all the current issues (please note that we will not be recording the briefings).

In addition, you will also be able to access a wide variety of legislative information on the SDA website. Here you will find the full Legislative Briefing schedule, the bill tracker, and any other pertinent legislative update or reports, all in one easy-to-find place. This added convenience is a quick and helpful way for members to stay up to date with the Legislative Session.

As always, please contact the SDA office at 303-863-1733 and ask for Ann Terry or Michael Valdez if you have any questions.



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If you have any questions or need any assistance, please feel free to contact Karla Boughey, Membership Services Coordinator, at 303-863-1733.

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