



December Monthly Newsletter



Updates from Around the County

During November the Montezuma County League of Women Voters hosted two programs updating the community on important issues. Senator Cleave Simpson and Representative Katie Stewart shared information on the recent Colorado special legislative session. Gov. Polis called the special session primarily to address an estimated \$750M budget shortfall due to the passage of HR.1. Colorado uses *rolling conformity* which means that changes to the federal tax code are automatically adopted by the Colorado state tax code. When the Feds lower federal taxable income as the result of raising federal deductions or eliminating taxes on, say, overtime, it impacts the amount of revenue the state generates. Looking ahead, there will also be impacts due to changes in the federal match for support programs, along with unfunded federal mandates.

Measures implemented to close the shortfall include a hiring freeze, cuts to higher education and affordable housing, clawing back an increase to Medicaid reimbursements, eliminating some legal federal deductions, and pulling \$325M from state reserves — a rainy day fund that will need to be reimbursed to 15% of the state budget to maintain the state's credit rating.

"A budget is a moral document," said Stewart. "It reflects our values and helps us achieve equity for our citizens." When the legislature reconvenes in January, reducing the size of government will again be a topic which must include prioritization — what programs do we cut; what do we fund? No easy decisions given the needs of our communities.

Immigration concerns were also raised at this meeting, after the recent ICE altercation in Durango. Though ICE is a federal agency, both Simpson and Stewart agreed to engage in a conversation, after the first of the year, focusing on immigration. The League will also host programs to dispel myths around immigrants and on immigration laws — or lack of — that contribute to current problems.

As the government shutdown continued, funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) ran out November 1. With a crisis looming, leaders of local food banks, soup kitchens, and other food providers in partnership with the Montezuma County Department of Social Services (MCDSS) developed a county-wide plan addressing the shortfall. These efforts are ongoing. Director Kelli Hargraves provided an update on SNAP, local food resources, and the potential impact of

update on SNAP, local food resources, and the potential impact of changes to SNAP and Medicaid by HR.1.

In Montezuma County 4,912 residents receive SNAP benefits; generally, 50% of those are children, 15% the elderly, and 10% disabled. Prior to the shutdown, an average of \$894,000 per month flowed into Montezuma County to subsidize SNAP recipients with dollars to purchase food. SNAP recipients benefit, and the local economy does as well. An influx of almost \$11M annually into this county supports jobs and paychecks in our community.

SNAP benefits have been restored; however, new eligibility and reporting requirements will not only impact SNAP recipients, but also the Social Services staff responsible for enrolling and maintaining SNAP records. Another significant change: In the past the Feds reimbursed 100% of SNAP benefits. Effective October 1, 2026, states will carry a portion of the reimbursement, making it unclear how new requirements will be funded.

HR.1 will also impact Medicaid. MCDSS enrolls and oversees Medicaid for Montezuma County. Currently, 31.77% of the county population is enrolled in Medicaid, funneling almost \$81M into the county. Some recipients may not realize they receive Medicaid as their health insurance goes by another name. They may be surprised to learn they will need to comply with new work requirements and report twice a year vs. once. HR.1 will also affect the Affordable Care Act expansion population — approximately 2,723 Montezuma County residents. There is no crystal ball, but many are worried about the impact on our local healthcare system, the staff that oversees Medicaid, and those who depend on Medicaid for healthcare and assisted living services.

-Karen Sheek, LWV Montezuma County Chair

2025 League of Women Voters of Montezuma County Membership Wrap-up

We had a banner year in membership in the LWV-MoCo! We love our long-standing, returning members, and we welcomed over 60 new members - raising our total membership to over 100 members for 2025. Each new member received a welcome letter from Chairman Sheek, a history of the League (thanks to Connie Fox!), a 'Members Handbook' and a current LWV-MoCo Newsletter. We've enjoyed all the insights, perspectives and energy each member brings to our group. Thank you.

Upcoming Events

- January 10 at 10:15AM at the Cortez Public Library - 202 N Park St, Cortez
 - LWV Montezuma County Monthly Meeting
 - Topic: 3 guest speakers will join to share updates regarding key recycling efforts in Montezuma County.
 - Marianne Mate - "Circularity in Colorado" - Coordinator - Southwest Colorado; Circular Economy Development Center
 - Colby Early - "Cortez Recycling and Single Stream Opportunities" - City of Cortez
 - Mel Jarmon - "Montezuma County Recycling and Composting"
- January 24 at 10:15AM at the Mancos Public Library - 211 W 1st St, Mancos
 - LWV Montezuma County Special Meeting
 - Topic: January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month - Angela Clark will be the our featured speaker on this important topic.

Shop Local this Holiday Season

Corporations have BIG plans for how you'll spend your money this holiday season. Join the millions of others in saying "no" to the big companies weakening our democracy and posing a threat to our worker power.

Nearly 200 million working people exercise their economic power around the holidays. This year, we're saying: [We Ain't Buying It!](#) If we need to shop, we're shopping local, spending our dollars in ways that align with our values. In particular, if you're able, we recommend you avoid shopping at Amazon, Target, and Home Depot.

Collectively, we can send a clear message this holiday season, and keep building our solidarity and resolve as we head into the New Year.

Recommended Reading

The Brennan Center for Justice has published an analysis, "Big Budget Act Creates a "Deportation-Industrial Complex" on H.R. 1 and its impacts funding to border enforcement and detention centers. [Read more here.](#)

What is the "One Big Beautiful Bill" and Its Impact?

The National League of Women Voters has created this resource to explain the details of the bill. [You can read the full post here](#), but we're also going to quote/share highlights of the resource during the next several newsletters.

"The OBBB will result in an estimated 22 million families losing some or all of their SNAP benefits."

How the OBBB Impacts Nutrition: SNAP

The [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) is the country's largest nutrition assistance program, supporting more than 42 million people with low incomes to afford food. The OBBB will result in an estimated [22 million families](#) losing some or all of their SNAP benefits.

Limiting Benefits

The new law [limits future increases to the Thrifty Food Plan](#), which is used to determine SNAP benefit levels, only allowing adjustments for inflation. This will likely mean that people's SNAP benefits won't keep up with the rising cost of food.

Expanding Work Requirements

The law also [expands existing SNAP work requirements](#). It changes requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents by raising the age of exemption from 55 to 65. This requires caregivers to work if their children are at least 14, and veterans and unhoused people to work. It removes the grace period for individuals who were in the foster care system (who previously did not have to work until age 24) and restricts states' ability to waive work requirements in areas with unemployment above 10% or limited job opportunities.

An Error Rate Penalty

SNAP is federally funded, but the new law [requires](#) that states with at least a 6% payment error rate pay 5-15% of SNAP costs. Fear of losing federal funding due to payment errors could result in states denying eligible people's coverage."

Resources

Our priority is to provide factual, unbiased information and connect groups across our community. To that end, here are some suggested resources to stay informed and learn more:


- **Colorado League of Women Voters**
 - [Colorado Voting Rights Act](#)
 - [Legislative Action Report](#)
 - [Where the League Stands](#)
 - [Legislative Conference 25](#)
 - [Redistricting in Colorado](#)
 - [Contact Elected Officials](#)
 - [LWVCO Task Forces](#)
- [5 Calls](#) >> scripts for callings your representatives about a variety of issue areas
- [League of Women Voters Bill Tracker](#)
- [Just Security](#) >> litigation tracker with updates
- [Congress.gov](#) >> find your federal Representative and Senators
 - Remember to sign up for their newsletters!

How to Get Involved

- Attend our regular meetings, the second Saturday of each month, usually at one of our county libraries;
- Follow us on [Facebook](#), check out our [website](#) and/or newsletter calendar for other League sponsored events;
- Join the League. You can register online: [portal.lwv.org](#) or in-person at one our meetings;
- Keep us in the loop if you hear of events or projects you believe the League might want to promote or partner with.
- **We can be reached at lwmzc@gmail.com.**

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