



SAYING GOODBYE
Musicians, writers, actors
who died in 2025 **1B**

LOOKING BACK – PART 2
Blevins’ incredible year
headlines local sports in ’25 **6A**

THE Durango HERALD

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Senator, jewelry maker, judo Olympian and Ignacio resident dies at 92



Ben Nighthorse Campbell laughs while telling some stories about his jewelry in August 2011.

JERRY MCBRIDE/Durango Herald file

Ben Nighthorse Campbell, 1933-2025

BY JOHN PEEL
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

Ben Nighthorse Campbell, the U.S. senator from Ignacio who embraced a maverick personality, breaking stereotypes and ruffling a few feathers along the way, died about 1:30 p.m. Tuesday at his home on a ranch outside of Ignacio. He was 92.

“He was surrounded by my mom – his wife of almost 60 years, Linda; myself; and his grandson, Luke Longfellow,” said his daughter, Shanan Campbell. “Shortly before he passed, the elders of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe came over – Eddie Box Jr. – and sang songs and did blessings for dad, and he

passed just moments after that.”

Shanan said her father died of “natural causes.” He had undergone a few back surgeries in the past 15 years, which had been debilitating.

“He was tired and he was ready to move on,” Campbell said.

Campbell’s fascinating and varied career began with a unique backstory. He was an Olympian and a noted jewelry artist. His Northern Cheyenne ancestry made him one of the few Native American legislators to serve in Congress. Bolo ties and a ponytail quickly distinguished the Harley-riding Campbell from colleagues, and his combativeness both won over



Durango Herald file

Gov. John Hickenlooper pauses May 28, 2013, to speak with former U.S. Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, left, and Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Chairman Gary Hayes before the dedication ceremony of the Mesa Verde National Park Visitor and Research Center.

See **CAMPBELL, 8A**

LA PLATA COUNTY

New year brings tax increase to county

The 1% sales tax hike, approved last year, went into effect Jan. 1

BY JESSICA BOWMAN
HERALD STAFF WRITER

A 1% sales tax increase that La Plata County voters approved in November took effect Thursday on New Year’s Day.

The tax adds one cent to ever dollar spent – or \$1 for every \$100 – on most goods and services countywide.

A bottle of Honeyville honey priced at \$11.99 drew 66 cents in sales tax on Dec. 31 and 78 cents on Jan. 1 – a difference of 12 cents – based on two receipts from south City Market.

By late afternoon on New Year’s Day, shoppers cycling through south City Market appeared unaware of the tax bump, or else they kept it to themselves.

An employee working the self-checkout register said no one had said anything about it all day. “I don’t think anyone noticed,” she added.

La Plata County resident Kenny Cochran, after checking out with groceries he was purchasing for someone else alongside Chelsea Cochran, said he possibly noticed the jump.

“It felt a little higher than it should have been,” he said. Chelsea Cochran, who unlike Kenny does not regularly shop at south City Market, said she couldn’t tell.

Regardless of whether they noticed, both thought the tax was needed.

“The marginal increase that it is, is absolutely worth it for what we’re getting in return,” Kenny Cochran said.

The measure is expected to

See **SALES TAX, 8A**

Colorado’s new 2026 laws will impact bison, renters and more

About 20 new state laws went into effect on New Year’s Day

BY BENTE BIRKELAND
COLORADO PUBLIC RADIO

About 20 new Colorado laws take effect Jan. 1, doing everything from protecting wild bison to streamlining marijuana regulations.

We’ve rounded up a few of the most notable new laws here.

Right-to-repair electronics

Coloradans will have more options for repairing broken cellphones, computers and other electronic devices starting Jan. 1.

A new law requires manufacturers, such as Samsung and Apple, to provide “documentation, software, data and other tools” to device owners and independent repair shops to help people fix their electronic equipment.

The goal is to help consumers save money and get repairs done faster.

The law includes some exemptions, including for video game consoles due to piracy and security concerns.

Democratic state Rep. Brianna Titone of Arvada was the bill’s main sponsor and says it also applies to sales between businesses and with the government.

“This will save companies a ton of money because companies will be able to hire their own in-house people if they want, or a third-party service provider to do the work of fixing their equipment,” she said. “And they don’t

have to go have the expensive contract that the manufacturer requires them to really have.”

Colorado’s right-to-repair law will be one of the most expansive in the country. The state already has a right-to-repair wheelchair law, and a right-to-repair agricultural equipment.

Additional paid family leave for parents of kids needing neonatal care

Colorado’s paid family leave program, FAMILI, allows workers to receive a significant portion of their pay if they need to

take up to 12 weeks off work in a given year for a serious family health or personal issue. It’s a popular program that voters approved by a wide margin at the ballot.

Lawmakers have now expanded it for families with a baby in neonatal intensive care. Those families, under a law taking effect in 2026, can apply for an additional 12 weeks of leave.

Democratic state Sen. Jeff Bridges was one of the main

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