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Talking points

Fire and water the focuses of Club 20 Spring Conference

Bennet participates in Western Colorado Alliance forum

By NATHAN DEAL
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Legislation, wildfires, water and energy were the major topics of the Club 20 Spring Conference on Saturday.

Held at the Grand Junction Convention Center, a variety of speakers gave their thoughts and received audience feedback in a room of roughly 65 club members, many of them elected officials or business leaders.

HURD

The first speaker was U.S. House Rep. Jeff Hurd (R-Grand Junction), who touched on multiple topics, including the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's efforts to introduce a new surface reauthorization bill before the previous bill expires this September, the Small County PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) Act that he introduced last week to update the PILT formula to better reflect funding levels and expand eligibility for small counties, and "a health care engine that's leaking a lot of oil."

He spoke about the



Photos by LARRY ROBINSON/The Daily Sentinel

Rep. Jeff Hurd speaks Saturday about his time in Congress and current local issues he is focusing his efforts on during Club 20's 2026 Spring Conference at the Grand Junction Convention Center. Hurd touched on multiple topics, including legislation he is working on, the need for reliable energy and his role in trying to get money for the purchase of the Shoshone Water Rights by the Colorado River District.

federal government's order for the reactivation of the Craig Power Sta-

tion, including a five-day operational period this month that he called "not

economical."

"Grid reliability and our resource adequacy shortfall is not a theoretical concern. It's an actual concern happening right now here in the Rocky Mountain region," Hurd said before discussing another energy concern.

"People ask, 'Jeff,

what's struck you the most about your first year in Congress?' There's a lot of things that have surprised me, but AI and data centers and what they mean for our economy is probably the biggest surprise. The resource

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Dan Dallas, incident commander for U.S. Forest Service Region 2, speaks during a fire mitigation forum alongside XCEL Energy's Wildfire Management Program Community Engagement officer Steve Roalstad during Club 20's 2026 Spring Conference at the Grand Junction Convention Center on Saturday.



Western Coloradans part of Club 20 clap Saturday after hearing from a local constituent about how Rep. Jeff Hurd helped her rural community during the Club 20 2026 Spring Conference at the Grand Junction Convention Center.

Man recovering from cow injury finding new purposes in life

By KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG
Montrose Daily Press

When Dan Wegelin headed out to Confluence Park in Delta for a day of mountain bike trail work, he could not have known it would end with him fighting for his life, let alone have imagined his injuries would come at the hooves of an "enraged cow." In the months since the animal knocked him down a hill, then stepped on him while rising, and fell onto him, Wegelin has battled to regain function, and has had to refocus on new opportunities.

Wegelin, a board member for Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association, was working with another member of the association on Feb. 27, when a passerby alerted them to the cow on the loose in the park.

"My friend grabbed his kids and brought them down to a lower trail. He went up to grab his bicycle and I went up to help get his kids' bike," Wegelin recounted on

April 10. "When I turned around, there was a cow coming at me. The cow hit me and knocked me off an embankment. As it came down, it stepped on my chest, then tripped and fell on me, and then I was trapped under a cow."

Wegelin isn't quite sure what happened next; he just remembers somehow getting out from under the animal, and seeing it beside him. As he struggled to his feet, he realized he was not breathing correctly. He was in trouble.

Wegelin gasped out to his friend that he needed to get the children to his vehicle, and that Wegelin himself needed an ambulance. Pronto.

"Another Samaritan had driven up the hiking path and said, 'I have a car; does anyone need to get in?'" Wegelin recounted. He did — but he couldn't. The Good



DAN WEGELIN

Samaritan's car was uphill from him, and he couldn't manage it. His friend placed the children into that car; Wegelin struggled back to his own vehicle, not far away. The ambulance soon arrived

and whisked him to Delta Health.

There, things went from bad to worse: doctors determined Wegelin's back and neck were broken, and his partially collapsed lung was filling with fluid.

"They rushed me to St. Mary's in Grand Junction and intensive care," Wegelin said.

TWO WEEKS IN HOSPITAL

In all, he spent two weeks in the intensive care unit, battling horrific pain. It was, he said, "pretty terrible," although his care was first-rate. Wegelin's lung

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Courtesy of DAN WEGELIN

Dan Wegelin, right, shown before his Feb. 27 injuries, is focusing on mountain bike-centered career opportunities since a cow hurt him so badly that he cannot continue as a general contractor.

By NATHAN DEAL
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One week after hosting the West Slope People's Forum with five Democratic candidates for state offices, the Western Colorado Alliance hosted another forum Saturday, this time with U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet.

Bennet, a Democrat running for governor, participated in a town hall at Dual Immersion Academy, with about 70 people filling up the bilingual school's cafeteria — though one table was left with seven open seats, which the alliance said represented the fear Spanish-speaking people face amid the Trump administration's immigration approach, citing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) statistics showing 240 ICE arrests in Mesa County in 2025.

On each empty seat was a note reading, "Our neighbors don't feel safe in public." Bennet acknowledged this, telling an immigrant Palisade High School student in attendance, "I know it's not a small thing for you to be here. There are immigrants all over the state of Colorado who are citizens of the United States who carry their passports with them because they're worried they'll be pulled over on the side of the road by rogue immigration agents."

Emily Powell, the director of Housing Resources of Western Colorado, told Bennet a story about a woman who could only achieve homeownership through the nonprofit's down payment assistance program. She said she and others are concerned that the state's efforts toward affordable housing are inadequate or outdated.

Bennet called housing Colorado's No. 1 issue, responding that he's had conversations across the state with people struggling to secure affordable housing, including a meeting The Daily Sentinel covered in March in which Bennet met a small group of 25-to-35-year-olds and learned about their own housing struggles.

"Any working person who is spending more than 30% of their income on housing cannot live a middle-class life," Bennet said.

When asked if he was willing to lift Colorado's statewide ban on rent stabilization, he responded that he's "willing to consider anything to build more affordable housing."

Mesa County Clerk and Recorder Bobbie Gross, a Republican, spoke about an increase in threats against elections staffers and poll workers, increased chatter about intimidation tactics being deployed at ballot boxes, and a decline in federal funding support, including instability with HAVA (Help America Vote Act). She asked Bennet how elections can be protected and adequately

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