

INDEPENDENT

Inking

WINTER | 2025

A publication of  INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTE.ORG

Our News Site Gets a Makeover - PAGE 7



THINK FREEDOM

WE ARE AN ACTION TANK AND A PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM FOR LIBERTY.

A central role of an effective think tank is to produce quality research and analysis. Since 1985, we have provided research resulting in changes in law and policy. But we have never been content with just research. We are more than a think tank. We are an “action tank.” We put our ideas into action through groundbreaking litigation, coalition building, work on ballot initiatives, new media and investigative reporting. We don’t just fight on paper. We fight for freedom on the streets, in the statehouse, in the media, on the ballot, and in the courts.

The mission of the Independence Institute is to empower individuals and to educate citizens, legislators and opinion makers about public policies that enhance personal and economic freedom.

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Letter from the President

By Jon Caldara, President



Hubris? Arrogance? Disdain? Contempt? What word describes the attitude of the Colorado legislature towards those who elected them. What explains their actions? Long time political strategist Eric Sonderman described it to me in three simple words. “Because we can.”

There are over 5,000 governments and special districts throughout Colorado and none of them can have secret meetings to discuss legal changes. None of them can pass secret, disappearing electronic messages about public business. Only the legislature has this new, secret-police power of privacy thanks to their recently passed Senate Bill 157, signed into law by Jared Polis.

And within weeks after passage, lawmakers put their newfound powers of darkness to work. During the summer special session on property taxes, their closed meetings and secret communications made their negotiations opaque. In old school Chicago political style, we found out what happened after all the deals were cut.

Not insulting enough for you? The new law calls for the executive committee of the legislature to hold a performative meeting to chat about their new dark powers and to take public comment. So, when do they choose to have this meeting? Well of course on one of the darkest days, the one before New Year’s Eve, arguably the most inconvenient time for citizens to involve themselves.

As the perfect way to say goodbye to 2024, I just had to go watch this middle finger to their constituents. Over 30 folks representing wildly diverse groups shared their anger and disgust of the legislature’s hubris. Not even one of them had a pleasant thing to say about SB-157 and being shut out of watching policy being made.

To put an exclamation point behind their disdain for open government, the prime sponsor of SB-157, House Speaker Julie McCluskie, had the audacity to say she “remains committed to values around transparency and openness,” and that legislature is “doing all we can to facilitate good communication and healthy debate.” She actually said this crap with a straight face.

“Committed to transparency” when it was her law that ripped it away? “Facilitating good communications and healthy debate” by scheduling the meeting to review her law for the last day of the year? She was like a kid who swears to his parents he didn’t get into the cookie jar yet has crumbs all around his mouth.

Something positive has come out of this insult to open government. It spurred us to bring together the most interesting coalition I’ve ever seen, “Team Transparency” if you will. Our offices serve as the meeting place for a growing lineup of odd bedfellows to design a change to Colorado’s Constitution to not only reverse this law but to empower all Coloradans to witness their government in action.

When I say odd bedfellows, I’m not kidding. The Colorado league of Women Voters has almost religiously taken the opposite side of Independence Institute on issues. But they are active in this effort.

The Colorado Press Association is at the same table hosted by one of their biggest critics, me. The Colorado Broadcaster Association, the Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition, alternative news outlets, citizen activists, civil rights attorneys and industry groups are making one of the most diverse and powerful coalitions for open government perhaps in the state’s history.

Our collectively decided mission is difficult but simple. To pass a constitutional amendment guaranteeing that Colorado governments conduct their business in full sunshine.

So, thank you Colorado lawmakers for your offensive overreach to hide public business from the public. Your arrogance was the spark that ignited this effort.

Think Freedom,



Standing Up to the Teachers Union's Abuse of Power

By Pam Benigno

I recently came across a post on Colorado Education Association's (CEA) website that caught my attention—a watchlist. I was pleased to see Independence Institute listed. Our unwavering commitment to teachers' rights and collective bargaining reform has rightfully earned us this recognition.

For two decades, we have actively informed teachers about their right to request a refund for the money the union siphons from their paychecks to fund its ordained candidates and influence the outcome of ballot initiatives. Our notification strategy has adapted over the years. Initially, we emailed teachers the information, but when school districts began blocking our emails, we pivoted to a targeted social media campaign directing Colorado teachers to our IndependentTeachers.org website. Last fall, 743 teachers visited our site to learn how to reclaim their funds.

In the early 2000s, we took the initiative to expose how teachers' dues were exploited to finance union political activities. We uncovered CEA's Every Member Option (EMO) political funding scheme. School districts deduct membership dues from teachers' paychecks, simultaneously taking out EMO funds.

While the union portrays EMO as an "option," make no mistake—it is only an option if a refund is requested before the annual December 15 deadline. CEA does not seek consent before deducting the \$49. Many local affiliates operate similar schemes, charging varying amounts and requiring separate refund requests. As a result, some teachers may unknowingly be contributing upwards of \$91 a year to political activities they strongly oppose.

Since we initiated the notifications to teachers regarding the EMO scheme, CEA and local affiliates have intensified their communication with members about the use of EMO funds to discourage requests for refunds. As a result, an increasing number of teachers are more aware of their right to a refund.

The IndependentTeachers.org website is the only one of its kind in Colorado. Besides EMO refund information, membership options are listed, including the opportunity to join the Professional Association of Colorado Educators (PACE) at a significantly lower cost than union membership. Additionally, our website is the only platform where all Colorado school district collective bargaining agreements for licensed employees are made available.

Of 178 school districts, 39 have collective bargaining agreements, which will soon drop to 38. In December, Colorado Springs D-11 School District's bold board members informed the local teachers union they would not be renewing the master agreement.

The Education Policy Center has firmly established a strong foundation for collective bargaining reform. Our staff has written impactful policy papers, made media appearances, engaged directly with school board members, and delivered presentations advocating for essential reforms. Our long-term work helps make victories possible.



Pam Benigno

Pamela Benigno is Director of the Education Policy Center. A tireless advocate for both public and private school choice, she works with education organizations, policymakers, and community leaders to expand school choice opportunities.

2025 Colorado Legislative Session

By Nash Herman

The 2025 legislative session has now begun, and with it, a few considerations and concerns.

The state legislature spent the last six years increasing tax breaks for special interests that decrease state revenue. Now, the legislature is scrambling to deal with a more than a \$750 million budget shortfall due to, you guessed it, lack of revenue.

Also contributing to the shortfall, the state spent one-time COVID-19 relief funds on programs with ongoing funding needs. Those federal funds are now running out.

Additionally, inflation is cooling, which means slower budget growth as allowed by the state constitution.

The positive side of all this, of course, is that legislators are being forced to reprioritize needs over wants, which is a good thing. With 2025 being a belt-tightening year for the government, hopefully, the deficit will derail some of the crazier bills that would have otherwise been introduced.

Funnily (and sadly) enough, in the early days of the session, some legislators already introduced more special interest tax breaks... after a year they are screaming about a deficit. While tax breaks help some people pay less in taxes, they mostly get in the way of a more sustainable budget and our goal of eventually ridding Colorado of the state income tax. Since Governor Polis took office, Colorado has continued to deplete state revenue through special interest tax breaks at an accelerating rate yearly. Despite a year of moderate economic growth, this unsustainable habit is finally catching up to state legislators.

In worse but no less surprising news, some state legislators are trying to blame TABOR for the budget crisis, rather than their insatiable spending habits. While there is no explicit talk about creating a TABOR-repealing bill, we are on high alert at Independence Institute due to the increasing anti-TABOR rhetoric by legislators.

In a recent interview previewing the session with *The Colorado Sun*, Speaker Julie McCluskie complained that TABOR makes representative government very challenging. Our supporters know that TABOR is Colorado's last bastion of representative government. TABOR ensures consent of the governed in a way that would make Thomas Jefferson jealous, but it needs constant vigilance by Colorado voters.

In other news, although we do not intend to be fooled by politicians' lip service, the strengthening national and local trend toward regulatory reform is encouraging. Recent studies and discussions about the state of regulation in Colorado are hopefully opening people's eyes to the importance of the free market in ensuring Colorado's competitiveness and economic success.

We are eager to take advantage of these sentiments to welcome more people to the freedom movement.



Nash Herman

Nash Herman is a policy analyst at Independence Institute. He graduated from the University of Denver with a bachelor's degree in International Studies and Political Science, and a master's degree in Global Economic Affairs.

Big Government, Big Business, and the 2nd Amendment

By Dave Kopel

In recent years, a malign alliance between big government and big business has been attempting to destroy the exercise of Second Amendment rights. Their actions are in service of the objective “No More Guns. Gone,” in the words of Mrs. Gabrielle Giffords, head of a large national gun prohibition organization. (*Time*, Apr. 26, 2023.) This is the subject of a new article I am writing for a forthcoming symposium issue of the *Dickinson Law Review*. My coauthors are University of Wyoming law prof. George Mocsary, and my excellent intern Bhav Ninder Singh. The article will be posted on my website, davekopel.org, in several weeks, once a polished version is ready.

Part I of the Article examines debanking and other financial blacklisting. It explains how the financial regulatory environment enables abuse. A case in point is the Obama administration’s Operation Choke Point, an effort to debank the entire firearms industry, via regulatory warnings to banks against doing business with firearms businesses. While that particular program was thwarted by its exposition in congressional hearings, debanking continues to be a growing problem.

Abuses have been particularly severe in New York State. There, the Governor, the head of the Department of Financial Services, and the Attorney General engaged in abusively egregious conduct to attempt to destroy the National Rifle Association for political reasons. The efforts included sending threatening letters to banks and insurance companies warning them to stop doing business with the NRA. When the case reached the Supreme Court, Independence Institute filed an amicus brief in support of the NRA, and the Supreme Court unanimously agreed that the NRA’s case should be allowed to proceed.

In response to regulator’s abuses of the banking system, many states, but not Colorado, have enacted Financial Industry Nondiscrimination Acts, to prevent banks and insurance companies from discriminating against customers because they are in the firearms business, or because of religious views or other illegitimate reasons.

Part II of the Article turns to forced disclosure of private banking information. This includes the use of Merchant Credit Cards code to compile lists of everyone who uses a credit card for a purchase from a store that sells firearms, such as Cabela’s. As the article explains, the credit card collection program has no utility in crime prevention. Instead, its only use is to create a list of potential gun owners for the confiscation programs that the gun prohibition lobbies hope to implement one day.

Only three states, all of them under the thumb of the gun prohibition lobbies, have enacted such laws: Colorado, New York, and California. Many other states have enacted legislation to stop the invasions of privacy and the compilation of registration lists of potential gun owners.

Social media censorship of firearms-related content is the subject of Part III. Based on examination of the policies and practices of six leading social media businesses, the worst offenders are Meta and YouTube. While these companies have detailed published policies, the company’s censors act arbitrarily, capriciously, and contrary to the published policies. Unfortunately, the social media censorship problem may be unsolvable by legislation or lawsuits.

In the larger picture, all the censorship and the debanking are symptoms of a broader problem in the United States: the movement of the United States in the direction of the type of government favored by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini: businesses nominally remain under private ownership, but businesses—and through them the people—are under the thumb of arbitrary, unchecked executive power rather than by the rule of law. As in those days, some businesses are so eager to demonstrate their allegiance to their masters that they voluntarily outran the government in escalating repression.



Dave Kopel

Dave Kopel is Director of our Second Amendment Project and our Research Director. He is also an adjunct scholar with the Cato Institute in Washington; and adjunct professor of advanced constitutional law at University of Denver’s Sturm College of Law.

Welcome to the New Complete Colorado

By Mike Krause

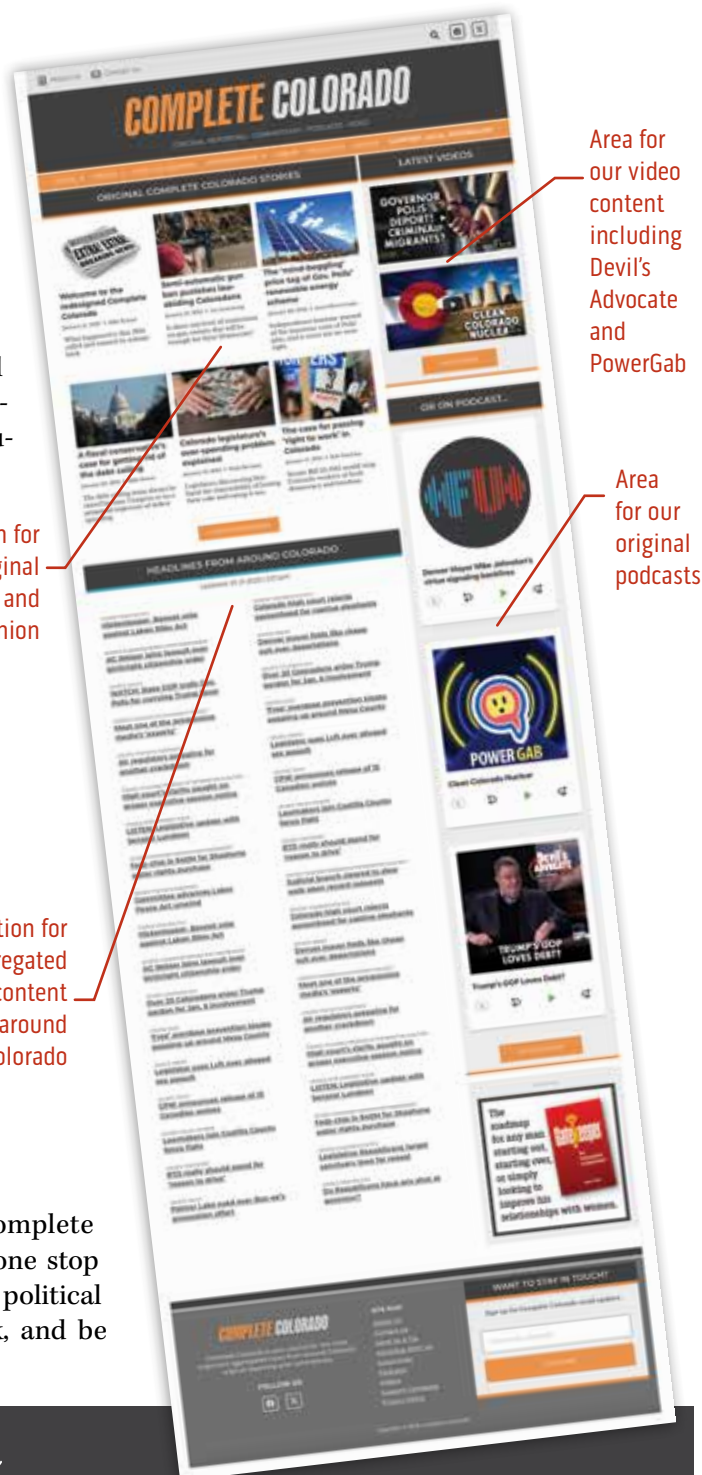
If you are a regular, or even occasional visitor to Complete Colorado, our website for original reporting and commentary, then you may have noticed things look a bit different. We launched a redesigned site in early January. Let me explain why.

What happened is that 1995 called and wanted its website back. Kidding, kind of. The old Complete Colorado was actually two different websites; the Drudge Report-style news aggregator (Drudge actually first launched in 1995, and has been Complete's brand for more years than we care to count) and then Page Two, where we published all of our original reporting and political commentary. It's just how things evolved as Complete continues to grow in audience and influence. And as part of furthering that growth, it was time for an upgrade.

So, now we've merged the two sites into one stylish and easy-to-navigate site that incorporates the original content and news aggregation, along with with video and audio podcasting for good measure. Above the fold (that's the top of the site for those too young to have ever read a broadsheet newspaper) you'll find all of Complete Colorado's original investigative journalism and political commentary, while below that you'll find the most topical Colorado headlines from around the state, human-curated from a variety of pay-wall-free news sources, and still updated daily.

The new Complete Colorado also includes the ever-growing menu of video and audio offerings from Independence Institute, the publisher of Complete, including the public affairs television show *Devil's Advocate* (hosted by Jon Caldara), as well as *Power Gab*, the Institute's energy policy podcast. Audio only versions of both programs are also available, as are the Institute's *Freedom Unaffiliated* and *Constitutional Comments* podcasts. Those are found on the right hand side of the site.

We hope you enjoy the new Complete Colorado, now more than ever your one stop shop for all the very best in Colorado political news. Please keep coming and back, and be sure and tell a friend or two about us.



Mike Krause

Mike Krause is Editor-in-Chief of *Complete Colorado*. A former ski instructor and construction carpenter, Mike was a Senior Fellow and editorial writer at II before heading up *Complete Colorado*.



94,000 Visits to i2i.org



**CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT
PROJECT**

300+

Citizen Involvement Project
class attendees



4

Issues of our
Independent Inking
magazine

0% Funded by government
handouts



100%

Funded by our donors

39,000 Users of the
school choice for
kids website



6,832

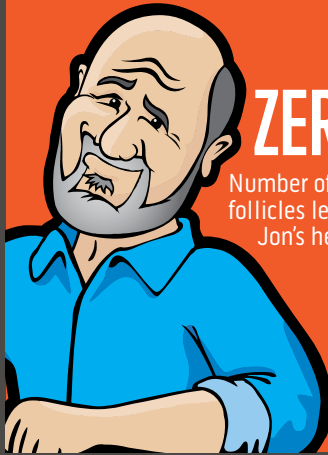
Clay pigeons shot at
our ATF Party

9 Presentations to
future teachers



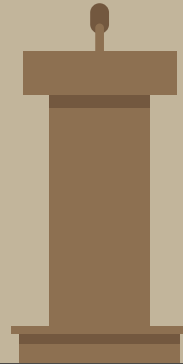
ZERO

Number of hair
follicles left on
Jon's head



11,218

Attendance at
speaking
engagements



32 Number of Rob
Natelson's articles
in Epoch Times



16

Op-eds
placed in
major
media



1,229,000

Visits to CompleteColorado.com



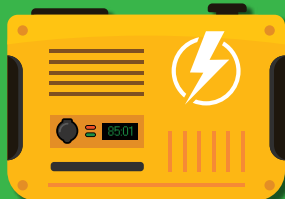
9,080



Podcast
downloads

32

Times Amy Cooke said
"get a generator"



5

Invitations to
testify before the
legislature



302

CompleteColorado.com
Articles



2,638

Number of people
with whom Kathleen
Chandler spoke



52

Devil's Advocate interviews

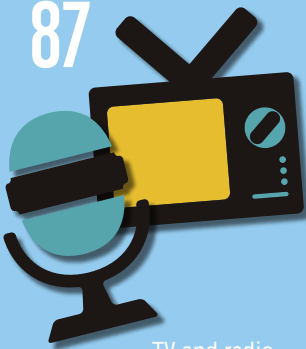


1

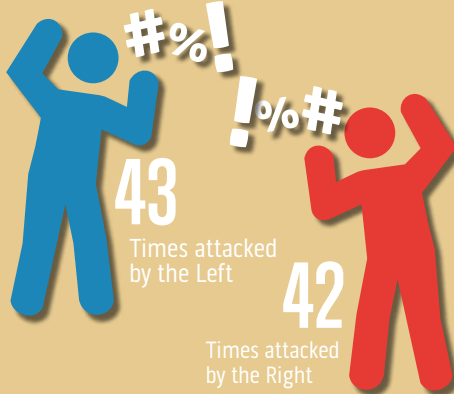
Number of times we
lowered the income
tax (again!)



87



TV and radio
appearances by II
staff



2,400

Visits to
independent
teachers



14

Future leaders
funded through the
Liberty Scholarship



16

policy reports and
briefs published



731

cans of Diet Coke consumed
by Citizen Involvement
Project's Kathleen Chandler



125

Coalition meetings
held at II



2,460

Number of donations



247

New donors!



1,142

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The Case for “Right to Work”

By Rob Natelson

Colorado Senate Bill 25-005, sponsored by 44 far-left state lawmakers, would strip Colorado workers of the right to opt out of union membership.

Historically, the general idea behind federal labor law is that workers should be herded into very large negotiating groups, which then would negotiate collectively with very large business entities. As a result of pressure from the union lobby, Congress forced businesses to negotiate with unions. Moreover, Congress decided that once a majority of workers in a “unit” voted for union representation, dissenters would lose the right to represent themselves.

Because dissenting workers would thereby receive union representation “services” (even if they didn’t want them), the union lobby further argued that anyone who doesn’t join the union is a “free rider.” Workers were forced to join the union or lose their jobs.

Congress eventually made some concessions to common sense. One of them was to recognize that states retained power to protect employees from being forced into a union. Laws protecting employees from forced unionism are called “right to work laws.” Most states (26) have adopted them, Colorado has not.

In 1943, Colorado businesses, unions, and politicians cut a deal that the general assembly adopted as the “Labor Peace Act.” The law did not abolish forced unionism, but placed some modest curbs on it.

The Labor Peace Act says that before union and management can create an “all-union agreement,” the workers must consent in a special election. Either three-fourths of those voting or a majority of all employees (whether or not voting) must agree before dissenters can be roped in by force.

The Labor Peace Act compromise has prevailed for over 72 years, but the sponsors of Senate Bill 25-005 seek to upend it. They want to deprive workers of the right to vote at a special election and instead leave their fate to the tender mercies of union and company bosses. So much for the Left’s commitment to “democracy” and “freedom.”

Since Colorado “progressives” have decided to blow up the long-standing Labor Peace Act, the rest of us have an opportunity to replace it with something better. We can adopt the right to work constitutional amendment known as the “Colorado Workers’ Rights Act.” It protects employees’ freedom to either join or not join a union.

Passing the Colorado Workers’ Rights Amendment is a way we can use the voter initiative process to protect freedom from the depredations of the Left.

When I was a young man, I served as a lifeguard at a New York State park. Management treated us very badly. Some of management’s practices also endangered the park patrons we were trying to protect. So we formed a union. I was one of the three leaders and chief negotiators. In union lingo, I was a “shop steward.”

After a tough struggle, we succeeded in bringing about changes that were good both for us and for the bathers under our care.

I tell the story to show that I am not anti-union. I believe unions can serve valuable purposes and I become uncomfortable when people start bashing unions in general. And I’m very grateful that Americans enjoy the freedom to join unions. We also had a few dissenters who said they didn’t want to join. But we never once thought of forcing them to do so.

Freedom works both ways.



Rob Natelson

Rob Natelson is Senior Fellow in Constitutional Jurisprudence at the Independence Institute and a former constitutional law professor at the University of Montana. He is the author of *“The Original Constitution: What It Actually Said and Meant”* (3rd ed., 2015).

Special Guest Jennifer Sey for Independent Women's Luncheon

By Julie Mallon

Back by popular demand!

Since Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is now a thing of the past, the ladies of Independence Institute are thrilled to exclude the men at the office as we re-launch the Independent Women's Luncheons.

Please join us for the 2025 Independent Women's Luncheon with special guest and keynote speaker, Jennifer Sey.

Jennifer Sey is an American author, filmmaker, business executive, and retired artistic gymnast. She was a seven-time member of the U.S. Women's National Team and was the 1986 U.S. Women's All-Around National Champion.

Her first memoir, *Chalked Up*, was released in 2008 and detailed abuse in the sport of gymnastics.

Sey also produced the 2020 Emmy-award winning documentary film, "Athlete A" on Netflix, which connected the crimes of Larry Nassar to the broader abuses in the Olympic movement.

Sey began working at Levi Strauss & Co. in 1999, rising to chief marketing officer and then Brand President. She was named one of *Billboard's* Most Powerful People in Music and Fashion in 2016 and was twice named to *Forbes'* Most Influential CMO list in 2019 and 2020.

Starting in 2020, she risked her reputation, community, and friendships to speak up against the harm being done to children due to the extended closure of San Francisco's public schools.

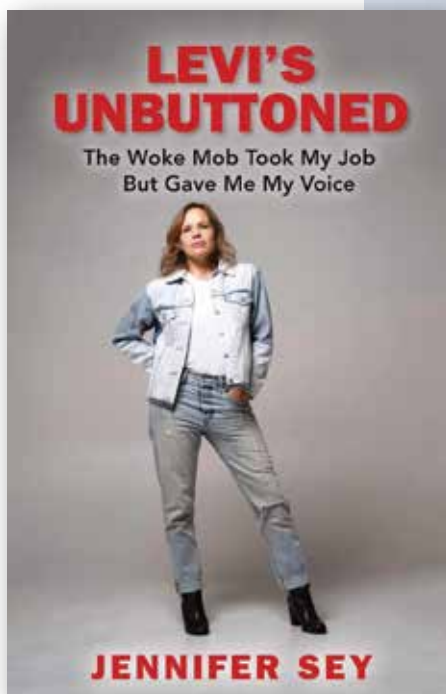
She resigned from Levi's in 2022 and is now the founder and CEO of her own clothing brand, XX-XY Athletics – the only athletic brand to stand up for women's sports and female athletes.

JOIN US

Wednesday, April 9, 2025
Denver Country Club

Tickets are available at
www.i2i.org/IW

\$75 includes lunch, presentation, and an autographed first edition of Jennifer's most recent book, *Levi's Unbuttoned*.



Scan for event information and to register



Julie Mallon

Julie Mallon is our donor relations manager. She's re-joining Independence Institute's development team after working in the event planning world, where most recently she managed guest experiences at an upland hunting ranch in Northeast Wyoming.

My Internship at II

By Bhav Ninder Singh

I am a dedicated legal professional with a strong background in criminal law in India. Prior to pursuing my LL.M. at the University of California, Irvine School of Law, I gained extensive experience in handling complex criminal cases, offering skilled advocacy and counsel. I am deeply committed to advancing personal and economic freedom and I aim to leverage the knowledge and skills acquired at Independence Institute to further my academic and professional journey in public policy.

My time in Independence Institute's Future Leaders Program has been the richest learning experience I have experienced since I've been in this country as a master's student. The work done here has major relevance to the State of Colorado and afar. During my internship, I had the opportunity to work on many relevant issues, such as the nullification of Colorado's tax-related constitutional provisions through judicial activism, de-banking, election security, and many other important issues.



The mentorship offered has been a key influence on my future career plans. My supervisor, Mr. David B. Kopel, has been an excellent legal academic whose experience in the field can only be fully appreciated by engaging with him on issues. Not only have I been fortunate enough to work under his supervision, but he has gone above and beyond to mentor and guide me toward my own career decisions and work ethic. This opportunity has cemented my decision to pursue a career as an academic and to achieve this Dave has helped me learn how to engage readers through proper legal writing and identify legal issues that plague constitutional protections.

My circumstances when I entered this workplace were quite different from those of the typical intern seeking experience to get into law school or other public policy-related jobs or programs. I was already a qualified lawyer from India and had completed an LL.M. Not only was I looking for something that could challenge me, but also something where I could learn more than what I already was exposed to. The topics and issues handled by Independence Institute are more than just your everyday legal problems. These complex issues required major research and comprehension. While I had been exposed to legal research during law school and beyond, the topics I have worked on here are quite distinct from what I encountered in my academic studies.

For instance, I had the opportunity to support Dave with research on the history of machine guns. Working on such a unique and novel topic was a new and enriching experience that broadened my perspective. Not only did I get to support him with the proofreading and footnotes, but I was also allowed to participate in a seminar on "*National Firearms Act: A Discussion on its Historical Legal Relationship w/ Second Amendment*" at the University of Wyoming College of Law, where that paper was presented. I had the opportunity to witness various experts on the topic speak about their respective works. The experience has been one of the high points of my internship, and after that, I was determined to stay here to embrace more such connections.

As I begin to navigate my future legal career in the United States, I have received much valuable advice and encouragement from my colleagues. The warm workplace environment and inviting people have been one of the best memories of my time interning at II.

Currently, I've been fortunate to collaborate with Dave on two papers, one focuses on Mexico's lawsuit against firearms manufacturers in the U.S., and the other explores how financial and social media regulators act as gun control powers. Both papers are currently under review for their respective law journals, and I'm hopeful they will soon be published. Opportunities like these are rare, and I'm grateful to have had the chance to fully take advantage of them. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the Liberty Scholarship provided by Bob and Elaine Collins, for which I will be forever grateful.

Nuclear Fission is Having a Moment

By Jake Fogleman

Look around at the news, and you'll quickly recognize that nuclear fission is having a moment.

Innovations in Artificial Intelligence, the growth in data centers, and public policies designed to spur the consumer adoption of electric vehicles and home-heating systems have lawmakers and utilities across the country scrambling to find abundant sources of power to meet suddenly skyrocketing demand. Many are turning to the country's largest and most reliable carbon-free energy source.

In just the last year, multiple big tech companies have unveiled partnerships with advanced nuclear companies to help bring their reactors to market, utilities have kickstarted plans to re-open shuttered nuclear facilities, and dozens of states passed pro-nuclear legislation to facilitate the build-out of new power plants.

Yet Colorado has been conspicuously absent from these developments—if not outright hostile to them—even as it finds itself just as vulnerable to impending supply crunches and spiking energy bills. To help remedy this, Independence Institute has been hard at work doing what we do best: educating the public and working to change Colorado's political culture.

In the last two years alone, we've produced a series of three empirical studies touting the cost-saving and reliability benefits of Colorado embracing nuclear. We testified in legislative committees to that effect. We conducted multiple polls identifying voters' concerns with reliable and affordable energy, as well as their bipartisan support for including nuclear energy in the state's portfolio of clean resources. And we've produced dozens of PowerGab podcast episodes, op-eds, and blog posts sounding the alarm over the state's current policy trajectory and urging the powers that be to chart a new course.

Fortunately, it's starting to look like that message is sinking in. As the 2025 legislative session commenced this January, Colorado lawmakers introduced HB25-1040. The bill would incorporate nuclear power under the state's statutory definition of "clean energy," an important change that would allow it to qualify for specific project financing programs and permit utilities to use it to meet the state's mid-century decarbonization goals.

And while a similar bill has been unceremoniously killed by Democratic lawmakers in its first committee twice over the last two years, there's some reason to think this time will be different.

Whereas the previous versions were led by a single Republican Senator, this time, the measure has the benefit of bipartisan and bicameral sponsorship from lawmakers representing districts all across the state, a development that should give the bill added heft as it progresses through the legislature.

It's still early stages of the session, and there's no guarantee of success, but the bill's broad base of support would have been unthinkable just a year ago. It's a testament to what a little persistence and a heavy dose of reality can do to bring sober energy policy back to the table.



Jake Fogleman

Jake Fogleman is Director of Policy at Independence Institute. He is a cum laude graduate of Metropolitan State University of Denver, where he studied political science and economics. Jake is a Colorado native.

The Best of Devil's Advocate and Power Gab

By Vanessa Rutledge

Devil's Advocate and PowerGab hosted some truly explosive and eye-opening guests, bringing fresh perspectives and deep insights to various critical issues. From tackling the complexities of immigration and exploring the challenges of renewable energy to exposing judicial corruption and breaking down the intricacies of energy policy, our shows delve into topics that matter. Whether you're passionate about current events, policy debates, or uncovering truths that impact your daily life, there's something for everyone in these engaging and thought-provoking discussions.



Kyle Clark joined Jon Caldara for a passionate—and at times heated—discussion on journalistic integrity and ideological diversity in newsrooms.



Former ICE Field Office Director John Fabricatore sat down with Jon Caldara for an eye-opening and frank discussion on immigration.



Dennis Maes, retired Colorado Supreme Court Judge, discussed judicial scandals in the Colorado Courts.



Jake Fogleman and co-host Amy Cooke discuss the challenges of decommissioning renewables.



Amy and Jake share the bleak truth that Colorado is not headed in the right direction when it comes to energy policy.



Amy and Jake are joined by the Energy Bad Boys—Mitch Rolling and Issac Orr—for a deep dive into the real costs of renewables.



Our Continuing Legal Education Seminar on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (DEI)

By Shayne Madsen

Why would Independence Institute sponsor a seminar on DEI in the current political environment? Answer: Because we can and as in many states, the Colorado Supreme Court mandates that all licensed attorneys satisfy continuing legal education requirements, including the study of “equity, diversity and inclusion”. This subject has been defined by the Court to include studies to address “equal access to the legal system, competent representation of diverse populations or the recognition, elimination or mitigation of bias in the legal system”.

On February 12, 2025, the Independence Institute co-sponsored the Third Annual Continuing Legal Education Seminar with Federalist Society. With tongue firmly in cheek, we sponsored two prior CLE seminars from our own unique perspective. Because the Colorado Supreme Court still mandates DEI training, we sponsored the third and hopefully the last DEI seminar.

The session was convened by Joseph Smith of Bartlitt Beck LLP, a Board member of Independence Institute.

Topics this year included race and election law, trends in Native American law, battling the rising tide of antisemitism and an update on the state of admissions to higher education after the US Supreme Court opinion in *Students for Fair Admissions vs Harvard*.

The seminar was accredited with the Colorado Supreme Court to satisfy the required DEI training. The seminar was recorded and will be posted on Independence Institute’s website for future home study.

Sponsored by:



Speakers included:



Troy Eid, Former US Attorney



Glenn Roper, Pacific Legal Foundation



Scott Levin, former Anti Defamation League regional director



John Zakhem, Honorary Consul for the Republic of Lebanon and local attorney



CU Law Professor Doug Spencer



Kristin Bronson, Executive Director, Colorado Lawyers Committee



William Trachman, General Counsel, Mountain States Legal Foundation



Shayne M. Madsen, General Counsel of the Independence Institute



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Save the Date for our 23rd Annual Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms Party!

September 13, 2025

Enjoy the perks of adulthood, including drinking, smoking, and shooting; the same kind of fundamental rights the left works to take away from us every day. While not everyone who attends actually shoots our PETA-friendly clay pigeons, drinks, or smokes, they value the individual right to do so; and they value the mission of Independence Institute. Keynote speaker to be announced.



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