



# **Citizens' Climate Lobby**

A Geiman Fellows Project by Adam Engleman, Heidi Immel,  
Meghan LaHatte, Evelyn Luna, and Hannah White

## GUNNISON VALLEY CCL CHAPTER FOUNDERS



### HEIDI IMMEL

Hi, I am Heidi Immel. I am currently a sophomore at Western Colorado University majoring in Business Management and minoring in Psychology. I have been the Community Outreach Coordinator for our "Climate Changers" group and am so proud of our group for coming this far and successfully creating a Gunnison Valley CCL Chapter for the Western and Gunnison Valley community. I am passionate about climate change because I am a big outdoors lover and would like the future generations to have the luxury we all have now in our beautiful valley. With education, dedication, and hard work; I believe we can all make a better global impact on our environment.

### HANNAH WHITE

Hi I'm Hannah White! I'm currently a senior at Western studying Politics and Government with an emphasis in Global Studies and minors in Philosophy and Environmental Sustainability. As a 2019-2020 Geiman Fellow I was excited when it was suggested our group focus on climate change. I took on the challenge of being our Project Manager for our Citizens Climate Lobby chapter at Western, it has been such a great time working with other passionate individuals. Climate change is an international problem, but we have to start local to really make a change. And CCL has been the perfect organization to bring our community together to rally behind this problem! Together we can really make a difference.



### ADAM ENGLEMAN

Hi I am Adam Engleman. I am a Business Administration major with a double minor in Biology and Recreation and Outdoor Education. I am a Lifeguard at the Gunnison Rec. Center as well as a fishing and rafting guide at Three Rivers Resort. I am a member of the Geiman Fellows and have been playing the role of coordinator with the City of Gunnison. My main goal is to get the City to endorse the Carbon Dividend Act to help fight climate change.

### EVELYN LUNA

My name is Evelyn Luna and I am studying business administration with an emphasis in finance and minor in economics. I am very passionate about climate change because I always grew up with nature in my backyard. I want the future generations to enjoy everything that I have from fishing, hiking, paddle boarding and much more. In starting a CCL chapter at Western I have learned so much more about climate change and how much our world is changing. My role in our group is to look at the statistics behind climate change. With a CCL chapter now in the Gunnison Valley I am confident that we as a Western community and Gunnison Valley, we can make a difference for our future generations.



### MEGHAN LAHATTE

Hi my name is Meg LaHatte and I'm the visuals director for our CCL chapter. I'm currently a junior at Western studying Communication Arts and Art, with plans to receive a BFA in photography. When I am not in the classroom, you can typically find me climbing at the local crags or skiing at the resort. I am incredibly passionate about climate change because I am an avid adventurer and lover of the outdoors. I believe that everyone should have equal opportunity to play outside and access the bountiful resources of the earth which is why I believe we must protect our planet. I am extremely excited to see our chapter grow into a cohesive and bipartisan group ready to advocate for our climate.

# Organizations We Have Partnered With:



Sustainable Development  
Strategies Group



*Formerly Western Colorado Congress*



**WESTERN**  
COLORADO UNIVERSITY

## Executive Summary

This year, the Geiman Fellows were presented with the topic of Climate Change as the basis of our group project. Five of the fellows, Adam Engleman, Heidi Immel, Meghan LaHatte, Evelyn Luna, and Hannah White decided to tackle this topic through creating a fulfilling and educational project. In the preliminary stages of the semester, our group debated on different ideas pertaining to sustainability and climate change. Through this brainstorming, we produced these various concepts that involved recycling, education, and other sustainable topics. However, we found that there was already several of these initiatives present on campus and in the Gunnison Community.

When Heidi and our professor, Kim Sherman, attended a Citizens' Climate Lobby conference in the fall at CU Boulder, they listened to campus leader Kelsey Grant give an inspiring speech about how she founded the Boulder CCL (Citizens Climate Lobby) Chapter. After this our group decided to pursue establishing our own CCL Chapter in Gunnison.

Under Kelsey's leadership, our team underwent extensive trainings through CCL's student leader advocacy program to gain the experience and knowledge needed to set up this chapter. These trainings involved lobbying to congress, writing letters, social media management, and many other topics. Whilst we attended these trainings, we began extensive grassroots outreach throughout the valley. Our group began to work with organizations such as LEAD Sustainability and Sustainable Crested Butte through tabling events throughout the fall semester. At these tabling events, we handed out flyers and sign-up sheets for the CCL which resulted in a multitude of students and community members showing interest in the group.

As we continued the grassroots outreach, we also developed a plan to present our project to the Gunnison City Council. This required key communication between our group and Mayor Gelwicks. After an initial meeting with the mayor, he invited us to present our group to the council and community members. After presenting to city council and gaining their attention, we set up another time to specifically propose the Carbon Dividend Act to them in hopes they would write a letter of support of it to Rep. Scott Tipton.

As our project further developed into the spring, we continued to host tabling activities and attend local events, such as the Gunnison Global Climate Summit, at which we contributed ideas to the comprehensive plan. With COVID-19 shifting our platform to digital, we have begun creating online connections through social media and zoom meetings. This contemporary style of networking is challenging, but still creates a solid foundation of communication for our members.

Currently, our team is looking to make our campus chapter into a valley wide organization. We will need a driven and diverse group of individuals passionate about combatting climate change through political action to sustain this chapter's future.

## **What is the Citizens' Climate Lobby?**

Citizens' Climate Lobby, also called CCL, is a non-profit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy organization focused on national policies to address climate change. CCL was founded in 2006 by Marshal Saunders, a passionate lobbyist and advocate for people and the climate. CCL empowers everyday people to work together on climate change solutions and our supporters are organized in more than 400 local chapters across the United States. Together we are building support in Congress for a national bipartisan solution to climate change. The solution to climate change is democracy, and we believe that climate change is a non-partisan issue as it affects everyone across the globe.

CCL is also a non-profit organization and receives most of its funding from generous donors (63%), foundations (33%), and national conferences (4%). The organization prides itself in being relationship driven, as we believe that meaningful connections and grassroots outreach is the basis to driving change. Through this CCL aims to reach a multitude of diverse groups to be effective in enacting climate solutions on the local, state, and national levels.

The tangible and largest goal of the Citizen's Climate Lobby is to get the Energy Innovation & Carbon Dividend Act passed. This policy will drive down America's carbon pollution while unleashing American technology innovation and ingenuity. This places a tax on fossil fuel emissions from companies and turns those fees into a returned dividend to all American households. We support it because it is effective, bipartisan, revenue neutral and good for the people and the economy. Getting this act passed means reducing America's carbon emissions by 40% in the first 12 years which will immensely improve our environment and health.

Not only does CCL want to promote this act, but also create passionate climate advocates under its training programs. Because it is a well-developed organization, it is incredibly accessible in terms of education and guidance for starting chapter. Using its generous resources and Campus Leader program, we were able to establish our own chapter in Gunnison.

## **The Energy Innovation and Carbon Tax Dividend Act**

One huge aspect that CCL supports is the Carbon Tax Dividend Act. This act (H.R 763) was introduced into Senate in 2018 as a bipartisan bill to fight climate change. This bill would tax all carbon content and fossil fuel producers. The rate will start at \$15 per metric ton and increase by \$10 each year. If fossil fuel producers fail to pay the fee, then there will be an additional charge. All the revenue collected with this tax system will go back to households. This will allow CCL to reach their goal of reducing America's emission by 40% in the first 12 years. This bill will create approximately 2.1 million jobs, about 295,000 lives will be saved due to better air quality, and 80% of low to middle income households will get a boost due to the revenue received from this new tax.

Though this proposed bill would have a lot of positives, not everyone agrees with more taxes. Some argue that it would be possible for those same households to use the revenue received from the tax to continue using fossil fuel because now they will be able to afford it. While this can also be true, we can also look towards other solutions that I have found during my research. Another solution that I have researched is the cap and trade method. This method gives fossil fuel producers a permit which allows them to emit a certain amount of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere, and if they go over their allowed limit, they pay a penalty fee. The goal of this

solution would be to put more of the responsibility on companies for them to become more environmentally friendly. Such as installing solar panels, using less chemicals that harm the environment, etc. The penalty would cost the company more money than to invest in green solutions. On that note, some companies that may not use up all their permits will try to sell their unused permits for a high price and other companies that find it cheaper to buy a permit for a high price or be a little more green for an even higher price will buy those permits. There is no wrong or right way to fight climate change, but something needs to happen now.

### **City Council Relations**

Our team has worked diligently with Mayor Jim Gelwicks and the Gunnison City Council this entire semester. We initially met with the City Council to spread awareness about our chapter and our goals. Later, members of our group met with Jim Gelwicks individually to grow a stronger relationship between our CCL chapter and the city of Gunnison. After this we worked with Western's Student Government Association to endorse the carbon dividend act. Once we had this accomplished, we were able to stir up the courage to ask City Council to endorse the same bill. We then brought this idea up to the council members and gave them more information about the bill. Soon after this (Adam sits on City Council), Adam had an informational discussion with the council members to try and inform them more. Our city council would have endorsed this bill, but COVID-19 put a hold on this. We hope that we can continue working with city council on climate action in the future, but we do not know when life will get back to normal. COVID-19 has put a halt on our efforts, but we will continue to pursue this endorsement once the economic crisis is over.

### **The Future of the Gunnison Valley's CCL Founders**

Hannah, Heidi, Meghan, Evelyn, and Adam still plan to be part of the CCL chapter they have created. Evelyn will be graduating spring of 2020 though she is easily a phone call away. The group's plan is to stay as involved as possible though not directly in charge of leading the chapter. All the founders are busy students and all of them will be incredibly involved on Western's campus for the next two years. They hope to be a part of the CCL chapter through Western's campus and create a professional and supportive relationship with the appointed Gunnison Valley CCL Chapter leader. The founders hope to find more Western students interested in this CCL chapter to appoint in liaison positions for the CCL chapter leader to work with. The founders hope to stay involved with this chapter if possible until moving away from the Gunnison Valley or if other life changes get in the way. The main goal for the founders is to make sure they have the upcoming Western students to continue and look after the Gunnison Valley CCL chapter to pursue active political will within the whole Valley.

### **The Future of Gunnison Valley's CCL**

Our hope going forward with our CCL chapter would be to have a Western student serving as a liaison for the chapter, they would be responsible with updating Western students about what the CCL chapter is doing and what current events would be held. We hope to appoint a leader for the CCL chapter that is preferably a community member of the Gunnison Valley that is passionate for being an advocate for climate change. We hope that this chapter leader has

enough time in the week to commit to this, as we believe that this is a top priority job organizing community meetings, tabling events, and hosting training sessions for new members interested in becoming advocacy leaders. Our hope is this CCL chapter will grow and hopefully become a leading example in the Western slope of Colorado, so that all nearby cities may create their own local CCL chapters. Our goal as a chapter is to promote CCL's five levers of political will and to continue to encourage our community to get involved in their civic duties as well as their grassroots outreach. This CCL chapter is open to working with other grassroots outreach organizations if their organization is exclusively bipartisan. This is a key component to work with other grassroots organizations to ensure we keep members working towards the same goal.

As Geiman Fellow Leaders and founders of the Gunnison CCL chapter we have had the honor in introducing CCL to the valley. Our goal is to educate others about climate change as well as taking action in order to make change happen. The challenges we face are who will keep the chapter running, who is a student that is interested in representing Western in the community chapter, what resources can, we as founders, give the new leaders and much more. During the semester, our CCL chapter was able to establish amazing relationships with GVC3, Lead Sustainability, and Sustainable CB to name a few. On the other hand, CCL is "a non-profit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy organization focused on national policies to address climate change." Some of their core values are relationships, optimism, integrity, and personal power to name a few. Our Gunnison Valley Chapter has been able to embody some of those same values in our own chapter. We admire the relationships that we have built and that will continue to build, through our roadblocks we continue to be optimistic, and that we each know it is important to stand up for what we believe in.

### **How a Western student will be a liaison between local groups and Western.**

Western students are often busy with the many entities they are involved with on campus, and sometimes they forget what is going on in the Gunnison Valley community. There are several on campus organizations such as LEAD Sustainability, Organics Guild, the Healing Coalition, and the entirety of the Master's in Environmental Management department that have already been doing great work on campus, so why CCL and why a liaison? The CCL supplies trainings that help prepare people to run organizations, advocate for themselves and others, and how to talk to women and men in power positions in a very respectful way. Having students advocating for themselves and peers goes a long way to helping CCL reach their organizational goals. Having a liaison will allow a student to get the professional development training that the CCL offers, as well as represent student organizations working on sustainability, and student desires in general on the future of climate change work in the Valley.

As previously said, Western has several ways students can get involved in sustainability, but there is not an organization or club on campus that helps students on professional development specifically in the climate policy sphere of things. The skills learned throughout the trainings here help prepare students to not only interact with their congresspeople, but the preexisting organizations where they live.

The student liaison would work closely with the valley chapter and the students on campus involved to coordinate trainings for new members, events: CCL exclusive ones, and ones partnering with on-campus clubs, tabling on campus, and would also work with the local valley organizations on events, letter/grant writing, and whatever new ideas they have.

## **Names of local groups we have been in collaboration with, and how our goals align.**

The Valley organizations that we are now involved with are:

- We Own It
- Gunnison Valley Heat
- Gunnison Valley Climate Change Coalition (GVC3)
  - GVC3 Electrification Committee
- Sustainable Development Strategies Group (SDSG)
- High Country Conservation Advocates (HICCA)
- Sustainable Crested Butte (CB)
- Western Colorado Alliance
- Sierra Club
- LEAD Sustainability

These organizations are all non-partisan and focus on advocating locally for changes that can be seen by the citizens of the Valley. All these groups want to see more climate solutions in the valley, and most want to see a reduction in our carbon emissions by increasing the amount of renewable energy we can produce and use. Most have been informed about the CCL and the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act and think it would be a great steppingstone in the right direction for our country and would like to be a part of our work writing letters to Representative Scott Tipton, encouraging city councils to write letters to Tipton, and overall increasing the knowledge people in the Valley have about plausible climate solutions.

### **Points of Contact:**

- Kelsey Grant: [kelsey.grant@citizensclimatelobby.org](mailto:kelsey.grant@citizensclimatelobby.org)
- David Kline: [lackbeard.kline@gmail.com](mailto:lackbeard.kline@gmail.com)
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