

**GOVERNOR BILL RITTER**

**Saturday, March 14, 2009, Starting at 12:00 PM  
Community Room at Cliff Lanes**

**Jess Price, Mayor of Westcliffe introduced Governor Bill Ritter to the audience and stated today's discussions would involve the economy, federal stimulus package and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and what it means to our region.**

**Governor Ritter thanked everyone for their participation and attendance. He remarked having the Sangre DeCristo Mountains as a backdrop in Custer County made it one of the most beautiful areas of Colorado. He quoted the song lyrics "If God doesn't live in Colorado, I bet that's where He spends most of his time".**

**Governor Ritter reported:**

- **Despite the economic downturn, Colorado is under the national average for job loss.**
- **The 2008-2009 State Budget required a reduction of 600 million dollars in a year with an anticipated 800 million dollars (10% of the total budget) in the next year. Higher education received the largest fund reduction.**
- **12% of the population are on Medicaid and require the assistance of human service programs. With the economy downturn there is a higher demand for human service programs as well as increased criminal justice programs.**
- **The federal stimulus package will create jobs in the fields of infrastructure, education and energy savings.**
- **Stimulus package distributions are based on a formula provided by the federal government focusing on schools, transportation and water.**
- **Over 800,000 people are uninsured and the legislative sessions are in progress working on expanded health care.**
- **The state has 125 bridges in need of structural repair and within Custer County itself is the bridge at Highway 69 and Antelope Creek.**

**Governor Ritter opened the session to questions from the audience:**

**Citizen Question: On whether there was a home-owners incentive for using solar energy in Colorado and references a 30% federal incentive program provided in other states?**

**Response: Rebate programs are available through the Governor's Energy Office.**

**Charlotte Havey, Custer County School District:**

**Inquired if the stimulus package provided funding for early childhood programs.**

**Response: The federal stimulus package does not have specific funding set aside for early childhood programs; however the Department of Local Government provides funding under Title 1.**

**Charlotte Havey presented the Governor with a wish-list related to the Kids' Club Facility at 118 Jerry Court in Westcliffe.**

**Citizen Question: Affects of the tax passed on oil and gas producers in Colorado?**

**Response: The tax did not pass but even if it had passed the affect within Colorado would have been minimal.**

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**Citizen Question: Questioned local negative reporting on bio-mass energy sources and asked the Governor for his opinion and support.**

**Response: Bio-mass energy source is more efficient and is better than coal or natural gas because it is a renewable resource. Governor Ritter stated he was in support of bio-mass energy.**

**Jon Wallestad, Wet Mountain Valley Clinic: Inquired if there were any specific funds in the stimulus package for rural healthcare development?**

**Response: The stimulus package does allow funds for electronic health records and broadband for tele-medicine usage in rural communities.**

**Citizen Question: Are there any funds for research and technical conversation of garbage into fuel?**

**Response: The stimulus package is non-specific regarding the conversion of garbage into fuel. This conversion could be considered a renewable energy program through the Governors Energy Office.**

**Governor Ritter stated there has been considerable socialization on stimulus package, some in support; others against and President Elect Barrack Obama requested input from those against the stimulus package. The following top concerns shared were: hyperinflation, the dollar in the international market will fail. He said the programs calculated at 60% for spending and 40% for tax credits.**

**Sue Pitman, Sustainable Ways: Submitted a pamphlet of ideas, proposals and plans for the building of renewable energy resource facilities in Custer County. She shared concern regarding the lapse in emergency services at the clinic and law enforcement during an electrical outage.**

**Response: Schools and school districts are the priority at this time. Governor Ritter advised the community as a whole needs to decide on the priorities and proposed submitting them under a formal proposal with his office, however he would take the presented information with him.**

**Citizen Question: Is there a means to provide a general reserve within the state for raining day funds?**

**Response: In 1992 Tabor was passed restricting state spending and thus not being able to establish a general reserve for the raining day or economy down-turn and we need to re-tool the Tabor Act.**

**Citizen Question: Stated she owned a small construction company that provided health coverage to its employees and the insurance company has raised the premiums 60-300% stating it was a result of the HB 1355.**

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**Response: HB 1355 does not automatically increase premiums but was passed to ensure that all employees can be insured. He said he was concerned that some insurance companies were using HB1355 as a justification to increase premiums. He stressed the need for National Healthcare Reform**

**Frank Lucero, Citizen: Remarked he has attended many community meetings for clean energy reform and yet it has not been initiated to date due to lack of funds. He asked what steps could be taken?**

**Response: Unfortunately clean energy start up is expensive and the Governor suggested that the community prioritize to submit the priorities to the Governors Energy Office. As a community make priorities and address GEO**

**Cindy Howard, Citizen Inquired on the solvency of the unemployment fund?**

**Response: The unemployment fund is very solvent and further added it cannot be dipped into therefore will remain solvent.**

**John Johnston, Citizen Inquired if the state had any funds earmarked at this time.**

**Response: \$.87 of every \$1.00 sent to Washington is earmarked back to the state.**

**John Johnston, Citizen: What are you priorities as Governor?**

**Response: My template would be:**

- 1. Clean and renewable energy.**
- 2. Education: Colorado has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest concentrate of students not receiving diploma's and Colorado is 9<sup>th</sup> in the country with children born into poverty.**
- 3. Healthcare**
- 4. Infrastructure**

**Governor Bill Ritter again thanked everyone for their attendance and participation and offered the following contact information:**

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**The Governor's presentation ended at 1:20 PM**