



WESTERN
GOVERNORS'
ASSOCIATION

2026



ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends and Colleagues,



Twice a year, during WGA's Annual and Winter Meetings, Western Governors come together for a private dinner. There are no cameras or reporters, no industry or organization representatives – not even members of the Governors' staff are present. Just the Governors and yours truly.

In this relaxed setting, the titles and ceremony quickly fade away, and the room begins to feel less like a gathering of elected officials and more like a group of old friends swapping stories and passionately discussing the issues of the day.

During the dinner, I am always struck by the genuine collegiality and fellowship around the table. In many ways, it feels like a family dinner during the holidays – complete with storytelling, spirited debate, and perhaps most importantly, a lot of laughter.

At this year's Annual Meeting in Deer Valley, Utah, Governor Spencer Cox said he wished the entire country could sit in on one of these dinners to see how the Governors – who come from very different backgrounds and political beliefs – discuss difficult issues with candor, respect, and a shared commitment to finding common ground.

While these private gatherings tend to only happen at WGA's Annual and Winter Meetings, the Governors actively meet with and support each other throughout the year.

Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon traveled to Salt Lake City for the final workshop of Governor Cox's WGA Chair initiative, *Energy Superabundance: Unlocking Prosperity in the West*. Idaho Governor Brad Little hosted Governor Cox at the Idaho National Laboratory for another Energy Superabundance workshop. New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham flew all the way to Maui for WGA's 2026 Policy Forum where she spent two days talking with Hawai'i Governor Josh Green about disaster recovery.

This year, thanks in part to Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs, Colorado Governor Jared Polis, and Governor Little – all of whom hosted workshops in support of Governor Cox's WGA Chair initiative – WGA released an initiative report that includes a robust set of federal policy recommendations to expand the nation's capacity for producing, transmitting, and storing energy.

These reports don't just look pretty and sit on the shelf. They have proven to be an effective mechanism for advancing western priorities in Washington, D.C. Several of the recommendations outlined in Governor Lujan Grisham's WGA Chair initiative, *Building Resilient and Affordable New Developments in the West* (BRAND West), were incorporated in the recently enacted 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act. Congress also adopted policy recommendations related to the Carbon Dioxide Removal Purchase Pilot Prize program that were developed through Governor Gordon's WGA Chair initiative, *Decarbonizing the West*. We expect similar results to stem from Governor Cox's Energy Superabundance initiative.

In addition to the initiative report, the Governors also approved 11 bipartisan policy resolutions this year on issues ranging from housing and broadband connectivity to permitting and agriculture. Summaries of all 11 resolutions can be found on pages 11 through 13 in this report.

None of this work would be possible without the Governors' commitment to working together to solve shared challenges. I want to especially thank Governor Cox for his outstanding leadership and stewardship as Chair this past year. His brand of politics is not only refreshing, but reflective of WGA's proud bipartisan history of working together to accomplish great things for the region.

As we welcome several new governors in the coming year, the Association could not be in better hands than those of its newly elected Chair, Hawai'i Governor Josh Green. Few leaders embody WGA's bipartisan spirit more fully, and we look forward to carrying that spirit forward through his Chair initiative, *Health Beyond Healthcare*, while embracing the aloha spirit that defines his leadership. Of course, that means you will all have to come to WGA's Winter Meeting on O'ahu, Hawai'i, from December 10–12.

The relationships the Western Governors have developed over the years have paved the way for meaningful policy that will have a lasting impact across the region for generations to come. This year's gathering was no different, and we expect more storytelling, more spirited debate, and yes, more laughter, in the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Jack Waldorf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "J" and "W".

Jack Waldorf
WGA Executive Director



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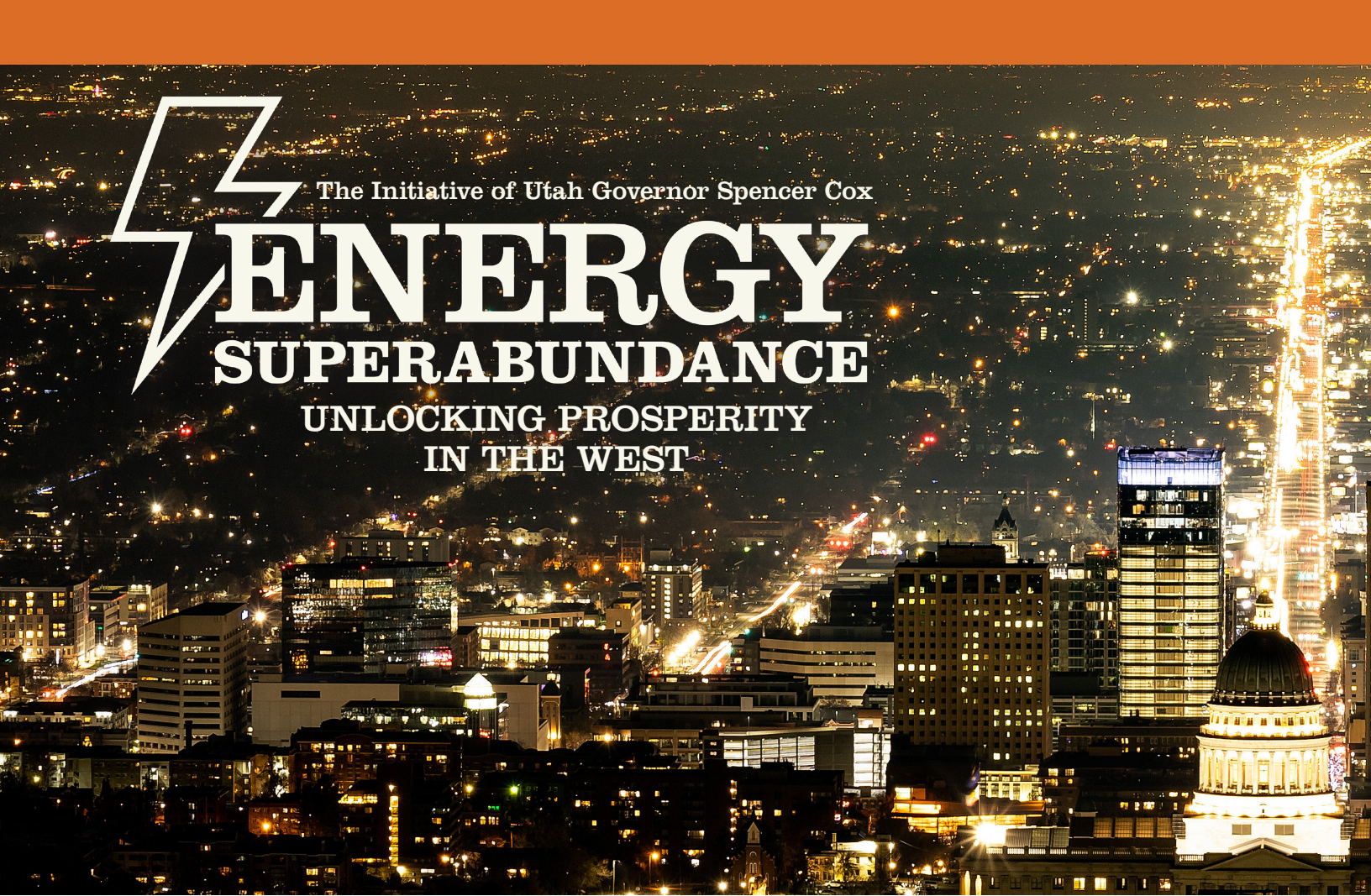
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The Initiative of Utah Governor Spencer Cox **ENERGY** **SUPERABUNDANCE** UNLOCKING PROSPERITY IN THE WEST

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Utah Governor Spencer Cox, as Chair of the Western Governors' Association, launched the *Energy Superabundance: Unlocking Prosperity in the West* initiative in July 2025. The initiative examined challenges and opportunities for expanding production, transmission, and storage options across the energy spectrum to unlock more reliable, secure, and affordable energy to meet growing demand and achieve energy abundance across the West.

The West is rich in diverse energy resources, offering significant opportunities for both traditional and renewable energy development. Vast reserves of oil, natural gas, coal, and hydropower; high-quality wind, solar, nuclear, and geothermal resources; and plentiful critical mineral deposits position western states as leaders in both energy production and innovation.

The initiative examined many key elements of energy

development, from energy resources and supply chain challenges to electricity generation and transmission, as well as workforce development and permitting issues.

Despite our immense resource abundance, growing energy demand driven by factors like changing populations, the increased electrification of our society, and the proliferation of energy-intensive industries like artificial intelligence, is adding strain

to our current electricity systems. Achieving energy abundance will require more energy from a broader spectrum of energy sources.

The viability and opportunity for different types of energy generation varies across states and applications. While there are numerous methods of energy production, collaborative work on transmission stands out as an area where the West can realize an important benefit.



Utah Governor Spencer Cox hosted the final workshop for his WGA Chair initiative, *Energy Superabundance: Unlocking Prosperity in the West*, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Permitting and regulatory challenges are also key aspects of achieving energy superabundance. Inefficient and cumbersome permitting processes significantly hinder the development of energy projects by creating delays, increasing costs, and adding uncertainty to investments. These barriers slow the deployment of energy resources, preventing critical infrastructure from keeping pace with growing demand. Streamlining permitting and modernizing regulations are essential elements to accelerating energy development and ensuring a more resilient and abundant energy system.

Western Governors contributed their personal resources and effort to the initiative by hosting workshops in their states. WGA is especially

indebted to these workshop hosts: Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs, Colorado Governor Jared Polis, Idaho Governor Brad Little, and Utah Governor Spencer Cox. The workshop sessions are available for viewing on WGA's YouTube page, and additional information about the initiative can be found at WGA's website.

The initiative received an enormous amount of input from a wide variety of interested stakeholders, including state and federal energy experts, private businesses, and non-governmental organizations. The report developed as a result of the *Energy Superabundance: Unlocking Prosperity in the West* initiative incorporates these stakeholders' consensus

recommendations to put western states on a path toward a future of energy superabundance that is reliable, secure, and affordable – a future that provides our western communities with the energy they need for unbridled economic opportunity and improved quality of life.

The efforts of the *Energy Superabundance: Unlocking Prosperity in the West* initiative establish a solid foundation to address some of the most challenging aspects of achieving energy superabundance. Western Governors encourage federal decision makers and our partners to implement these recommendations and work to secure an environmentally responsible, affordable, and abundant energy future for the West.



POLICY PROGRESS

Western Governors take a strongly bipartisan, common-sense approach to address the most pressing policy challenges in the West. This bipartisan ethic is proving to be effective in Washington, D.C., as Western Governors' policy shows practical paths forward while much of the nation is mired in partisan division.

Over the past year, WGA shared Western Governors' bipartisan policy recommendations with federal agencies and Congress on 37 rulemakings and pieces of legislation. Topics ranged from permitting and housing to workforce development and land management. Many of those recommendations have since been reflected in federal policy, with agencies incorporating Governors' priorities into regulatory frameworks and organizational structures. Congress has also taken steps to advance Governors' policy through federal statutes. The federal actions listed below provide a brief description of how Western Governors' policy priorities were incorporated into federal policy.

COMMUNITY & OPPORTUNITY

Housing

21st Century ROAD to Housing

Act: The bipartisan 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, which became law in July 2026, implements key recommendations from New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's WGA Chair initiative, *Building Resilient and Affordable New Developments in the West* (BRAND West). This includes provisions designed to increase housing development in Opportunity Zones, eliminate the permanent chassis requirement for manufactured homes, reauthorize the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, and make reforms to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Housing Service programs by decoupling rental assistance from maturing mortgages. (Public Law 119-101)

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

(LIHTC): Congress expanded the LIHTC program – the primary federal financing tool for affordable rental housing – by permanently increasing the state allocation cap for 9 percent credits by 12 percent, starting in



Western Governors at WGA's 2025 Winter Meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona, spoke with Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum. Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Services, also provided a keynote.

fiscal year 2026, lowering the private activity bond financing threshold from 50 percent to 25 percent, and providing a 30 percent basis boost for projects in rural and tribal communities. These changes are intended to provide states with greater financing flexibility and accelerate the preservation and development of affordable housing, particularly in underserved areas. (Public Law 119-21)

Removing Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing Construction:

To reduce regulatory, permitting, and financing barriers on housing development, President Trump issued

an executive order that focuses on streamlining federal processes and promoting the development of single-family, modular, and manufactured housing. (Executive Order 14394)

Agriculture

House Farm Bill: The House passed the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026, also known as the 2026 Farm Bill, which reflects many of Western Governors' agriculture policy priorities, including the authorization of programs related to specialty crop assistance, the farm safety net, conservation, and critical agricultural research programs. (H.R. 7567)

Rural Development

Secure Rural Schools: Congress reauthorized the Secure Rural Schools program, which provides federal funding to rural counties to support schools, roads, and essential services in areas with significant federally owned land. It also provided the past two years of lapsed payments. (Public Law 119-58)

Payment in Lieu of Taxes

(PILT): Congress fully funded PILT, which provides federal payments to local governments that help offset losses in property taxes due to the presence of nontaxable federal lands within their boundaries. (Public Law 119-74)

Workforce

Workforce Pell Grants:

To expand access to training that leads to in-demand jobs, Congress expanded eligibility for Pell Grants to include high-quality, short-term, workforce-oriented programs. (Public Law 119-21)

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Air Quality

Promoting Prescribed Fire: After engaging with Western Governors, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued guidance directing its regional offices to work with their state partners to address regulatory barriers for the expanded deployment of prescribed fire. While this guidance is focused on the implementation of the Exceptional Events Rule, the agency is also taking additional actions to promote prescribed fire via the Regional Haze rule and other pathways.



The Energy Superabundance workshop at the Idaho National Laboratory featured a discussion on workforce development in the nuclear energy industry with Bethany Coates, Chief Executive Officer at BreakLine; Michelle Fussell, Legislative Representative at Iron Workers International; Chris Hayter, COO & Co-Founder of Hi Tech Solutions; and Jimmy McDonough, Assistant Commissioner for the State of Utah Education Workforce Programs.

Energy

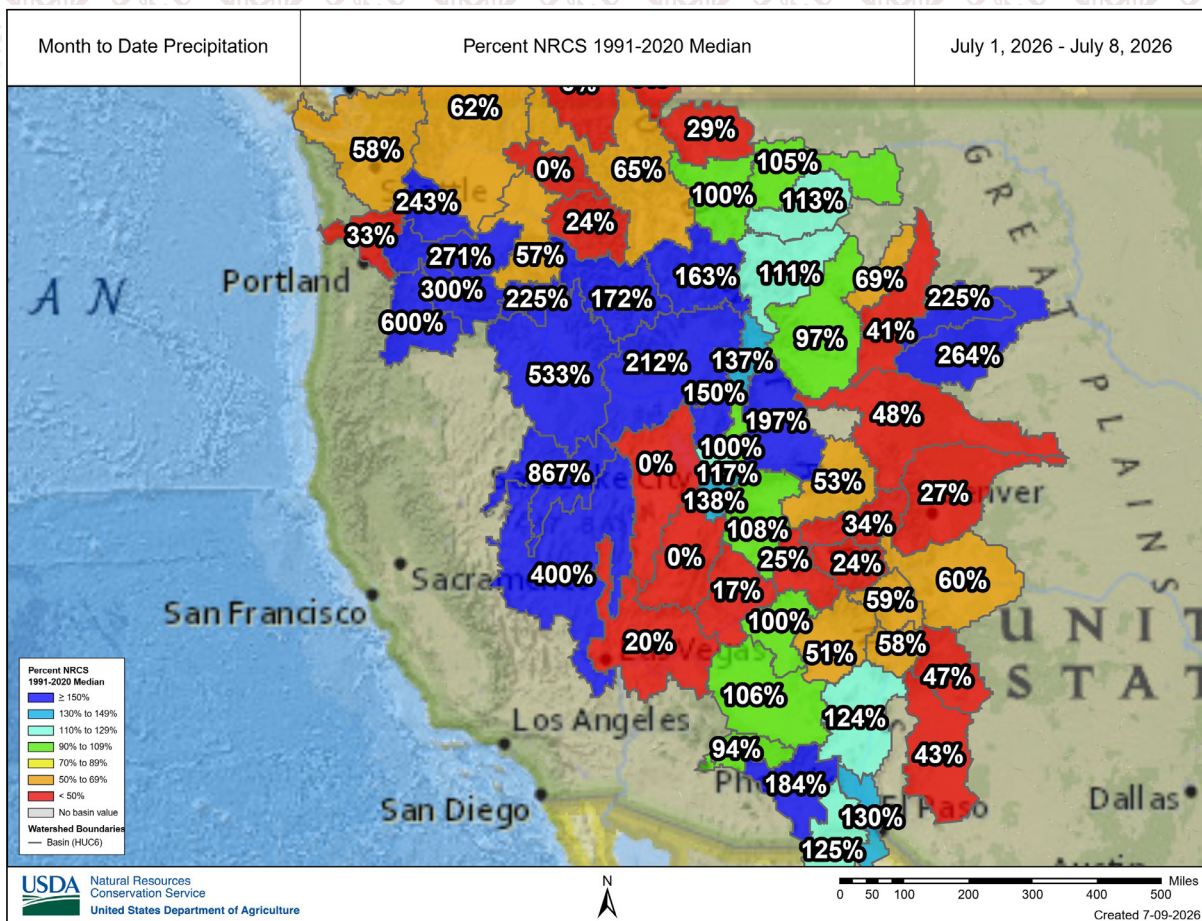
Carbon Dioxide Removal:

The Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) Purchase Pilot Prize, which is a U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) competition designed to accelerate the development of high-quality carbon dioxide removal technologies and markets by enabling companies to sell verified CDR credits directly to the federal government, was allocated \$45 million this year. (Public Law 119-37)

- Of that funding, \$4 million will be used to develop measurement, monitoring, reporting, and verification (MMRV) standards that will inform the purchase prize, offtake agreements, and other federal incentives.
- Congress also restructured the Section 45Q Tax Credit for carbon capture and sequestration to provide equal credit value, regardless of whether carbon is sequestered, utilized, or used for enhanced oil recovery.



Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon stands in front of the Dry Fork Station just outside of Gillette, Wyoming, where the state tests carbon capture technology. Several of the policy recommendations in his WGA Chair initiative, *Decarbonizing the West*, were adopted by Congress this year.



Mining

Good Samaritan Pilot Program:

Following the passage of the Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act of 2024, EPA has worked to launch the Good Samaritan Pilot Program – which will allow certain individuals or organizations to undertake remediation without facing environmental liability risks – by establishing guidance for financial assurance requirements and working with state, tribal, and federal partners to develop and define future permitting processes for pilot program applicants. (Public Law 118-155)

- EPA also established the Good Samaritan Mine Remediation Fund within the U.S. Treasury to allow the Good Samaritan Program to receive funds through appropriations,

reprocessing proceeds, and other mechanisms to facilitate improved annual resource plan development. EPA plans to launch the first of three phases of program implementation later this year.

Minerals Mapping: Congress maintained FY24 funding levels for the Earth Mapping Resources Initiative, which was launched to modernize the nation's surface and subsurface mapping with a focus on critical mineral resources. (Public Law 119-74)

Water

Water Forecasting: The Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program, which supplies snowpack measurements, precipitation data, and seasonal water supply forecasts to support water

management in the western United States, was allotted \$16.7 million, \$2 million more than FY25. (Public Law 119-37)

State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG): STAGs are

a crucial tool that enable states to execute their environmental management duties under federal environmental statutes. They are EPA's operational mechanism for cooperative federalism, and they fund a spectrum of management activities across environmental domains. This year, Congress rejected a proposal to eliminate STAGs and instead appropriated \$3.6 billion to the account, which is \$27 million more than FY25 enacted funding levels. (Public Law 119-74)

HEALTH & PUBLIC SAFETY

Disaster

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC): Pre-disaster mitigation and risk reduction are among the most cost-effective ways to protect lives, property, infrastructure, and the environment from natural and human-caused hazards. On March 25, 2026, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reinstated the BRIC program, a major federal grant initiative supporting infrastructure and hazard mitigation projects that reduce disaster risk and strengthen community resilience.

Health Care

Indian Health Service (IHS): Responsible for providing direct medical and public health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives, IHS received \$5.31 billion in advance appropriations for FY27 — a \$72.8 million increase over FY26 advance appropriations. (Public Law 119-74)

Rural Health Transformation

Program: Established by the FY26 Budget Reconciliation Act, the \$50 billion Rural Health Transformation Program will provide states and territories with funding to improve health and well-being in rural communities by prioritizing the rural clinical workforce, rural health infrastructure and technology, care coordination, and payment reform. (Public Law 119-21)

Radiation Exposure Compensation:

Congress reauthorized and expanded the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) to compensate individuals who contracted certain cancers and other serious diseases after exposure to radiation released from atmospheric nuclear weapons tests or following occupational exposure to radiation while employed in the uranium industry. (Public Law 119-21)

Great American Recovery Initiative:

48.4 million Americans, or 17 percent of the U.S. population,

suffer from substance use disorder (SUD). Many of these people, however, do not receive the care they need. To coordinate a national response to the disease of addiction, President Trump launched the Addressing Addiction Through the Great American Recovery Initiative to increase awareness and advise agencies on implementing programs and grants related to SUD. (Executive Order 14379)

DEA Telehealth Extension:

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) jointly with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued the Fourth Temporary Extension of COVID-19 Telehealth Flexibilities for Prescription of Controlled Medications. The rule extends the ability for practitioners to remotely prescribe controlled substances to patients, without an in-person medical evaluation, through December 31, 2026. (90 FR 61301)



Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. spoke with Western Governors at WGA's 2025 Winter Meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona, about rebuilding public trust through greater scientific transparency and collaboration with Governors.

LAND MANAGEMENT

Forestry and Fire

U.S. Forest Service State Directors:

USDA released its department reorganization plan in July 2025. In March 2026, after corresponding with Western Governors who recommended that transitioning the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to a state-based organizational model would provide an essential conduit for state-federal coordination on land management, USDA announced that the USFS would transition to a State Director model.

Forestry in the Farm Bill: The Forestry title in the 2026 Farm Bill that was passed by the House this year reflects nearly every Farm Bill policy priority regarding forestry that WGA recommended to Congress. These priorities include reforming the Good Neighbor Authority, supporting reforestation supply chains, incentivizing forest restoration activity through biomass utilization grants, and more. (H.R. 7567)

- Additionally, the 2026 Farm Bill incorporates provisions from the Fix Our Forests Act, elements of which WGA has also been supportive of, including improvements to Shared Stewardship agreements, expanding the use of prescribed fire, and the establishment of fireshed management project strike teams with the express purpose of accelerating environmental review, site preparation, and project implementation.

Statutory Compensation

Limits: Congress extended a waiver allowing wildland fire professionals – including firefighters, incident



Western Governors listen to the keynote address from U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz at WGA's 2026 Annual Meeting. Immediately afterwards, he joined a panel discussion with the Governors about how states and the federal government can more effectively partner to mitigate wildfire risk.

managers, dispatchers, and more – to exceed the statutory compensation limit for performing emergency wildfire suppression activities. (Public Law 119-37)

Smoke Exposure: Congress encouraged EPA to expand its support for smoke monitoring in areas with sparse monitoring infrastructure and directed it to reduce the administrative burden on states and tribes that use the Exceptional Events Rule for prescribed burns.

- Western Governors also advocated for the Fire Improvement and Reforming Exceptional Events Act, or the FIRE Act, which passed the House. If enacted, it would require EPA to revise its regulatory treatment of wildfire smoke. (H.R. 6387)

Domestic Timber Production: President Trump issued an executive order that directs the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce to increase timber production and decrease timber supply volatility. WGA was asked to consult on the forthcoming Timber Plan. (Executive Order 14225).

Hazard Pay for Prescribed Fire:

To help recruit and retain an effective land management and wildland firefighting workforce, the U.S. Office of Personnel and Management issued a proposed rule which, if finalized, would provide additional “hazard pay” for federal employees conducting prescribed burns. (91 FR 19081)

Landscapes

Grazing Allotments:

Congress directed the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and USFS to make vacant grazing allotments available to a holder of a grazing permit or lease when that permittee's lands are unusable due to drought or wildfire. (Public Law 119-74)

- Congress also provided funding to address the backlog of allotments still requiring National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses.



RESOLUTIONS

Western Governors formally approved 11 policy resolutions in FY26. The resolutions represent the Governors' collective policy on a broad range of issues affecting the region including permitting, housing, disaster preparedness and response, agriculture, broadband connectivity, the missing and murdered indigenous persons crisis, and much more.

Policy Resolution 2026-01 Federal-State Land Exchanges and Conveyances

Across the West, a fragmented pattern of land ownership shaped by federal, tribal, military, state, and private holdings creates complicated and costly land management challenges. Existing mechanisms to address checkerboard land management issues, including the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the Federal Land Transaction and Facilitation Act (FLTFA), and individual congressional acts can be burdened by complex requirements

and regulations. In this resolution, Western Governors call on Congress to simplify and expedite federal-state land exchanges, sales, and conveyances and to improve disposition processes. The resolution also calls for improvements to appraisal and valuation processes, modernization of outdated thresholds for expedited exchanges, and enhanced coordination between federal, state, tribal, and local governments. The resolution also encourages improved coordination for common management of adjacent state and federal land.

Policy Resolution 2026-02 States' Share of Royalties and Leasing Revenues from Federal Lands and Minerals

In many western states, significant portions of land are owned and managed by the federal government. Many of those lands contain valuable resources including fuel and nonfuel minerals, timber, and sites for energy development that generate significant revenue through leases and sales. To compensate states and local governments for these nontaxable lands, Congress established revenue-

sharing programs that direct a portion of royalty and lease payments back to states and counties. Although they are not discretionary expenditures, funds have at times been delayed, reduced, or diverted by the federal government for budget purposes. In this resolution, Western Governors call on the federal government to fully honor its statutory obligations to share royalty and lease revenues with states, ensure transparency and timely distribution, and provide greater state involvement in decisions affecting these revenues. The resolution also calls for the Department of the Interior to clarify processes that may affect how and when royalties' payments are reconciled to ensure stable and predictable revenue flows to states.

Policy Resolution 2026-03 **Tax-Exempt Federal Lands** **and Secure Rural Schools**

This resolution articulates Western Governors' support for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) programs. The federal government must honor its historic PILT agreement to compensate states and counties in the West for the presence of tax-exempt federal lands within their borders. Western Governors also support efforts to ensure counties and states receive full and predictable payments under SRS, including measures that create a permanent endowment fund to replace the current SRS payment system.

Policy Resolution 2026-04 **Housing is Foundational to** **the Success of the West**

This resolution highlights Western Governors' policy related to the availability and affordability of housing in western states and territories. While many of the policies and programs affecting housing

are within the jurisdiction of local governments, a variety of federal programs influence housing markets and housing development. In the resolution, the Governors recommend actions to improve federal housing programs and resources so that they function more effectively for western states and territories. The resolution also includes recommendations contained in the final report of WGA's *Building Resilient and Affordable New Developments in the West* (BRAND West) Chair initiative.

Policy Resolution 2026-05 **Disaster Preparedness** **and Response**

The resolution recognizes the critical role the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) plays in disaster response and the responsibility Governors have in coordinating the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. It also highlights federal agencies' roles and emphasizes the need for cooperation and clear communication between all levels of government and members of the public. In any disaster or emergency situation, good communication is key to developing and executing an effective response, promoting public confidence in that response, and empowering citizens to make informed decisions about their safety and welfare.

Policy Resolution 2026-06 **Western Agriculture**

Changes in climate, the prevalence and severity of extreme weather events, extended drought, and federal agricultural policies can have a dramatic effect on the success of American agriculture. Western Governors support an array of funding, trade, education, research, nutrition assistance, and workforce development programs that

promote agricultural contributions to the economies and quality of life in western states. The Governors highlight the production and conservation benefits of precision agriculture technologies and provide recommendations to support this growing sector. The federal Farm Bill provides an opportunity to advance Western Governors' policy which supports, protects, and advocates for the continued health of western agricultural communities and their economies.

Policy Resolution 2026-07 **Rural Development**

Healthy, vibrant, and prosperous rural communities are critical to the overall economic health of western states, supporting the food supply, stewarding natural resources, and welcoming tourists from across the globe. Rural communities, however, face a variety of challenges on economic development opportunities, infrastructure deployment, and quality of life. This resolution details policies and recommendations to strengthen rural communities and businesses and ensure that state and federal programs are accessible to rural communities.

Policy Resolution 2026-08 **Broadband Connectivity**

Vast distances, unforgiving terrain, and complicated permitting processes present unique difficulties for broadband deployment projects in western states and territories. Western Governors support modernizing federal broadband policy with higher broadband speed standards, scalable infrastructure investments, and stronger coordination between federal, state, territorial, and tribal partners. The resolution urges federal agencies to align broadband funding decisions



with state deployment plans, improve data collection, and streamline permitting and environmental review processes. Governors also support greater flexibility for states and territories to address remaining coverage gaps and evolving broadband needs and strengthening the capacity of state and territorial broadband offices.

Policy Resolution 2026-09 Veterans

As they return to civilian life, military veterans struggle with higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, food insecurity, and physical and psychological wounds. The resolution outlines Western Governors' priorities for strengthening access to veterans' services, with a focus on veterans living in rural communities. Governors support expanding telehealth services, increasing provider participation in VA programs, and improving community care options to ensure veterans can access timely, high-quality health care and mental health care services. The Governors note the

importance of expanding support for women and tribal veterans, strengthening the health care workforce, and improving coordination between federal, state, territorial, tribal, and community partners.

Policy Resolution 2026-10 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons

American Indian and Alaska Native people, particularly women, are disproportionately likely to experience violence, be murdered, or go missing. While many of the policies and programs addressing the crisis are primarily within the jurisdiction of state and tribal governments, a variety of federal policies influence the resources available to tribes and states. In the resolution, Western Governors recommend actions to expand law enforcement capacity, shore up survivor support systems, and improve collaboration and coordination between all levels of government.

Policy Resolution 2026-11 Permitting

A clear, consistent, focused, and effective environmental review process is essential to protect environmental resources, ensure public participation, and facilitate timely decision making in the design, financing, and execution of critical infrastructure and land management projects. These review processes can be improved and streamlined while still providing meaningful opportunities for public input and promoting a safe and healthy environment for our citizens. This resolution makes several recommendations for Congress and the Administration to consider as they continue evaluating permitting processes. The resolution also emphasizes that federal permitting policies and efforts to streamline permitting processes should be flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of local communities and include transparency, accessibility, and agency accountability for all projects.



Visit WGA's website for full details on all 28 of WGA's Policy Resolutions



From left to right: Idaho Governor Brad Little, Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs, Utah Governor Spencer Cox, Hawai'i Governor Josh Green, and Montana Governor Greg Gianforte at the 2025 Winter Meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona.



MEETINGS

2025 WINTER MEETING

It's roughly 2,300 miles from Washington, D.C., to Scottsdale, Arizona, where the Western Governors' Association held its 2025 Winter Meeting. However, listening to the bipartisan discussions there, you'd have thought the two cities were worlds apart.

"One of the best parts of these gatherings is that political labels tend to fade away," WGA's Chair, **Utah Governor Spencer Cox**, said.

"While we certainly don't agree on everything, and you will see some robust disagreement, I think many of those who attend these meetings leave with a renewed sense of

camaraderie and faith in the power of bipartisanship. My hope is that over the next few days, the rest of the country can see that same spirit in action and be reminded that working together actually still works."

"We really are trying to find common ground," WGA's Vice Chair, **Hawai'i Governor Josh Green**, added. "There's not as much of that in Washington, D.C. but in the Governors' Association, it really is collegial... and I think today you'll see it in action."

Joining Governor Cox and Governor Green at this year's Winter Meeting were **Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs**, **Idaho Governor Brad Little**, **Montana Governor Greg**

Gianforte, and **New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham**.

In addition to panel discussions about the energy needs for data centers, broadband expansion, and the Farm Bill, the attending Governors also spoke with **Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum** and **Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.**

"I like to think of Western Governors' Association as not just the group that's developing state or regional policy," Secretary Burgum said, "but in many cases, it's the policies that have been formed right here in this room by the teams, the staffs, the Governors' staffs, that actually shape the direction of this country."

2026 ANNUAL MEETING

Ahead of the America 250 celebration, bipartisanship was on full display at the 2026 Annual Meeting of the Western Governors' Association in beautiful Deer Valley, Utah.

"One of the things that always gives me hope as I talk about our country is every time I have the opportunity to be together with my fellow Governors – some red, some blue, some purple – we come together in a bipartisan spirit," WGA's Chair and the host of the 2026 Annual Meeting, **Utah Governor Spencer Cox**, said. "We had a dinner last night, and I wish that America could have been there. What you would have seen is dear friends having a great time talking about hard issues... When we take time to talk to each other and get to know each other better, we find that we all face the same challenges, we're all working to find common-sense, practical solutions, and meetings like this give us an opportunity to do that – to learn from each other, to exchange ideas, to look for common ground, and to benefit from our collective experiences and wisdom."

This spirit of bipartisanship carried through to the many in-depth policy discussions that the Governors led at this year's Annual Meeting.

For these discussions, Governor Cox was joined by WGA's Vice Chair, **Hawai'i Governor Josh Green**, as well as **Colorado Governor Jared Polis**, **Idaho Governor Brad Little**, **Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo**, **New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham**, and **Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon**.

The meeting began with Governor Cox releasing a report culminating his WGA Chair initiative, *Energy Superabundance: Unlocking*



From left to right: Idaho Governor Brad Little, Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon, Utah Governor Spencer Cox, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, Hawai'i Governor Josh Green, Colorado Governor Jared Polis, and Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo at the 2026 Annual Meeting in Deer Valley, Utah.

Prosperity in the West. The report summarizes the key issues that were explored during the initiative workshops in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, and Utah, and presents federal policy recommendations developed from those discussions to help plan, finance, develop, and deploy energy projects across the West.

Immediately following the release of the report, the Governors hosted a panel discussion to examine the report's recommendations with experts from the DOE Office of Energy Dominance Financing, the Idaho National Laboratory, the Western Transmission Expansion Coalition (WestTEC), and Fervo Energy.

"We live in an age of miracles, and every one of those miracles needs an electron," Governor Cox said during the panel. "Because when an electron touches a hospital, lives are saved. When an electron touches a school, ideas come to fruition, and wisdom is learned. When an

electron touches a home, families flourish. By definition, we have to work together if we're going to get those electrons where they need to go, and if we're going to lower prices for the people who call our states home and make life easier and more abundant so that human flourishing can actually happen at levels that we've never experienced before."

Next up was a keynote address from **U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz**, who emphasized the urgent need for active, collaborative forest management as the West faces an increasingly severe wildfire season.

Building upon his keynote, Chief Schultz joined panelists from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, and the National Wild Turkey Federation for a discussion about how Shared Stewardship agreements are redefining land management and fire mitigation to the benefit of our states and the federal government.

That evening, the Governors were joined by the President of the Swiss Confederation, Guy Parmelin, who spoke about the close ties between Switzerland and western states and the great opportunities that exist to strengthen ties between our two countries. The Governors also heard from Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll about some of the challenges facing the United States and the important role Governors have in protecting our national security.

Day two of WGA's Annual Meeting featured panels on protecting state technology ecosystems from foreign influence, FEMA reform, and student literacy, the latter of which was led by Utah First Lady Abby Cox.

"None of the biggest problems that we need to solve are going to be solved if we do not look towards the next generation and make sure that our kiddos have what they need to be successful," First Lady Cox said. "And that means literacy."

The meeting concluded with Governor Cox handing the reins as the Chair of WGA to Governor Green.

"It's just with extreme gratitude that I get to participate with these great people and all of you," Governor Green said. "We genuinely love this work, as you can tell, and we look forward to doing it with you in the coming months and many years ahead."

As the newly elected Chair, Governor Green announced the launch of his WGA Chair initiative, *Health Beyond Healthcare*, which will focus on improving mental health outcomes by expanding access to care while addressing the broader factors that shape health and well-being.

"Access to healthcare is one of the defining challenges facing the

West," said Governor Green. "But health doesn't begin in a doctor's office. It begins where we live, learn, work, and play. Through this initiative, we have an opportunity to work together across state lines to improve access to care, strengthen our communities and advance practical, bipartisan solutions that improve lives."

To learn more about the *Health Beyond Healthcare* initiative and get involved, visit WGA's website.

2026 POLICY FORUM

In recent years, **Hawai'i Governor Josh Green** and **New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham** have been at the forefront of response and recovery efforts following some of the region's most significant disasters.

WGA's 2026 Policy Forum featured Governors Green and Lujan Grisham in a discussion about the lessons that they've learned from those experiences, as well as strategies that they think can

help communities better prepare for, respond to, and recover from future disasters.

The two-day workshop, hosted just a few miles from the newly rebuilt town of Lahaina, Hawai'i, also convened disaster response experts from around the country for panels about lessons from the Lahaina wildfire, rebuilding after disasters, trauma-informed approaches to disaster recovery, the future of disaster management and recovery, and disaster recovery in rural communities.

"I know that you've heard many of the stories," Governor Green said, "but we wanted to bring people with expertise to share what our experience was so that you can take best practices away or areas where we can improve. That's what we're about."

"I want to give Hawai'i and Governor Green a shoutout," Governor Lujan Grisham said. "I thought it was really effective the way in which you're leveraging both private dollars and state dollars so that you just built a community (for wildfire survivors)... I'm going to steal that model, which is exactly why I'm here."



Hawai'i Governor Josh Green and New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham led a discussion at WGA's 2026 Policy Forum about disaster preparedness and response.



From left to right: Montana Governor Greg Gianforte, South Dakota Governor Larry Rhoden, American Samoa Governor Pula Nikolao Pula, North Dakota Governor Kelly Armstrong, Idaho Governor Brad Little, Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon, U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt, Colorado Governor Jared Polis, Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy, Utah Governor Spencer Cox, Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo, and Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen.

In addition to the workshop panels, Governor Green led attendees on a tour to examine the partnerships, funding, and regulatory changes that enabled the development of modular housing communities that were built for the Lahaina fire survivors. Ka La'i Ola, the area's largest interim housing community for wildfire survivors, is a 57-acre village constructed in just 18 months that consists of 450 homes for 1,500 people through 2029. Next door, FEMA developed Kilohana, a 167-unit modular housing community on 20 acres of state-owned property.

CABINET BREAKFAST

At the invitation of Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, the former Governor of North Dakota, WGA hosted its annual Cabinet Breakfast at the headquarters of the U.S. Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C.

This year's breakfast included 13 Western Governors. WGA's Chair, **Utah Governor Spencer Cox**, was joined by **Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy, American Samoa Governor Pula Nikolao Pula, Colorado Governor Jared Polis, Idaho Governor Brad Little, Montana Governor Greg Gianforte, Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen, Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, North Dakota Governor Kelly Armstrong, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt, South Dakota Governor Larry Rhoden, and Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon.**

The breakfast afforded them the opportunity to meet with several members of President Trump's cabinet, including **Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.**

"It's an honor to be back in the nation's capital alongside Western Governors to convene

timely, solutions-focused policy discussions," said WGA Executive Director Jack Waldorf. "These meetings are always productive—and a powerful reminder of what bipartisan cooperation can deliver. We're grateful to our partners in Congress and the White House, as well as Energy Secretary Chris Wright and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, for being part of these conversations, as well as Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum for hosting us again this year. From energy to economic competitiveness, the West is showing what it looks like to lead—together."

HILL MEETINGS

WGA's policy team traveled to Washington, D.C., multiple times this year to advocate for western priorities on Capitol Hill. During those trips, they met with 95 congressional offices and 74 offices of federal agencies or other federal entities to discuss issues of importance to the West.



STRATEGIC MEDIA AND CONTENT

OUT WEST PODCAST



WGA's *Out West* podcast was downloaded 1,700 times in FY26. This year's episodes included an interview with Utah Governor Spencer Cox about his 2026 Chair initiative, an episode about cleaning up abandoned hardrock mines with U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper, and an exploration of quantum computing with Colorado Governor Jared Polis.

VIDEO



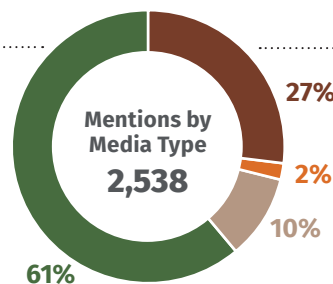
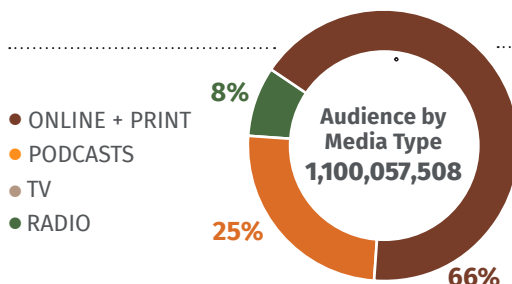
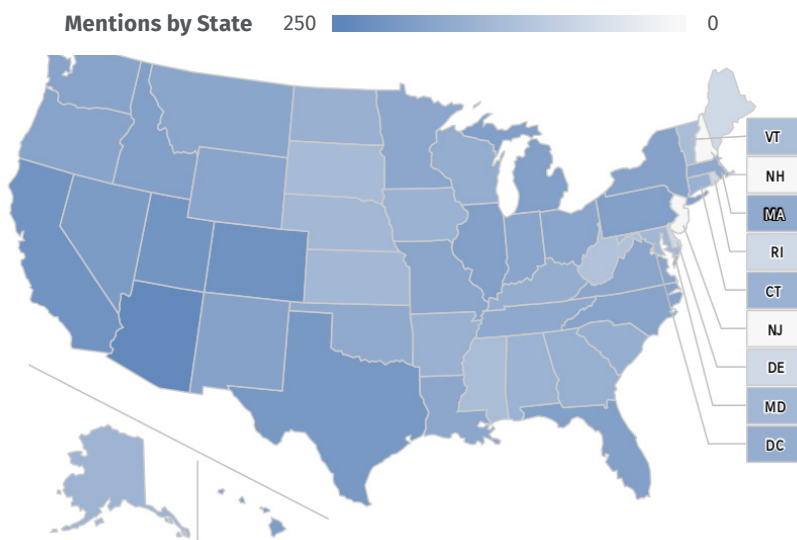
In FY26, WGA's video content was viewed more than 10,500 times for a total of 1,700 hours on YouTube. The most popular videos this year included an interview with former Governors Matt Mead and Steve Bullock, a keynote address from Nuclear Regulatory Commissioner Bradley Crowell, and policy conversations from the Energy Superabundance initiative workshops throughout the year.

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA



WGA's website (westgov.org) attracted 128,000 visitors in FY26, resulting in 218,000 page views. On social media, WGA's content across X, LinkedIn, and Facebook generated 250,000 impressions, and WGA's following grew by roughly 10 percent. Short video content from WGA's meetings and events drove significant growth on social media this year, with video views on social media increasing by more than 200 percent in FY26.

2025 MEDIA COVERAGE



WGA IN THE NEWS

The Western Governors' Association and its policy work were mentioned in more than 2,500 articles and broadcasts this year. Some highlights include coverage of Utah Governor Spencer Cox's WGA Chair initiative, *Energy Superabundance: Unlocking Prosperity in the West*, Western Governors' bipartisan ethos and collaborative problem-solving, housing policy following New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's WGA Chair initiative, *Building Resilient and Affordable New Developments in the West* (BRAND West), and more.



Governor Josh Green speaks to the crowd at the Stein Eriksen Lodge in Deer Valley, Utah, about his inspiration for starting his WGA Chair initiative, *Health Beyond Healthcare*.



LOOKING AHEAD

Health begins where we live, learn, work, and play. These social and environmental conditions have a significant effect on our mental health, long before we see a doctor. *Health Beyond Healthcare*, the WGA Chair initiative of Hawai'i Governor Josh Green, will focus on strengthening mental health outcomes across western states and territories by addressing both clinical care and the broader conditions that are foundational to mental health and well-being.

The initiative will examine strategies to improve mental health care access and delivery, prioritize prevention and early intervention, expand coverage and affordability of mental health services and supports, and build lifelong well-being and community resilience.

"Access to healthcare is one of the defining challenges facing the West," said Governor Green. "Through this initiative, we have an opportunity to work together across state lines to improve access to care, strengthen our communities and advance practical, bipartisan solutions that improve lives."

The first initiative workshop will be hosted in Bismarck, North Dakota, by Governor Kelly Armstrong on September 1-2. Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon will host the second workshop in Jackson Hole on October 8-9. The third will be hosted by New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham in Santa Fe on November 16-17. A final workshop will be hosted in Hawai'i, though an exact date has not been set yet.



2026 WINTER MEETING

WGA's 2026 Winter Meeting will be hosted by Hawai'i Governor Josh Green at the beautiful Four Seasons Resort O'ahu from December 10 to 12, 2026.



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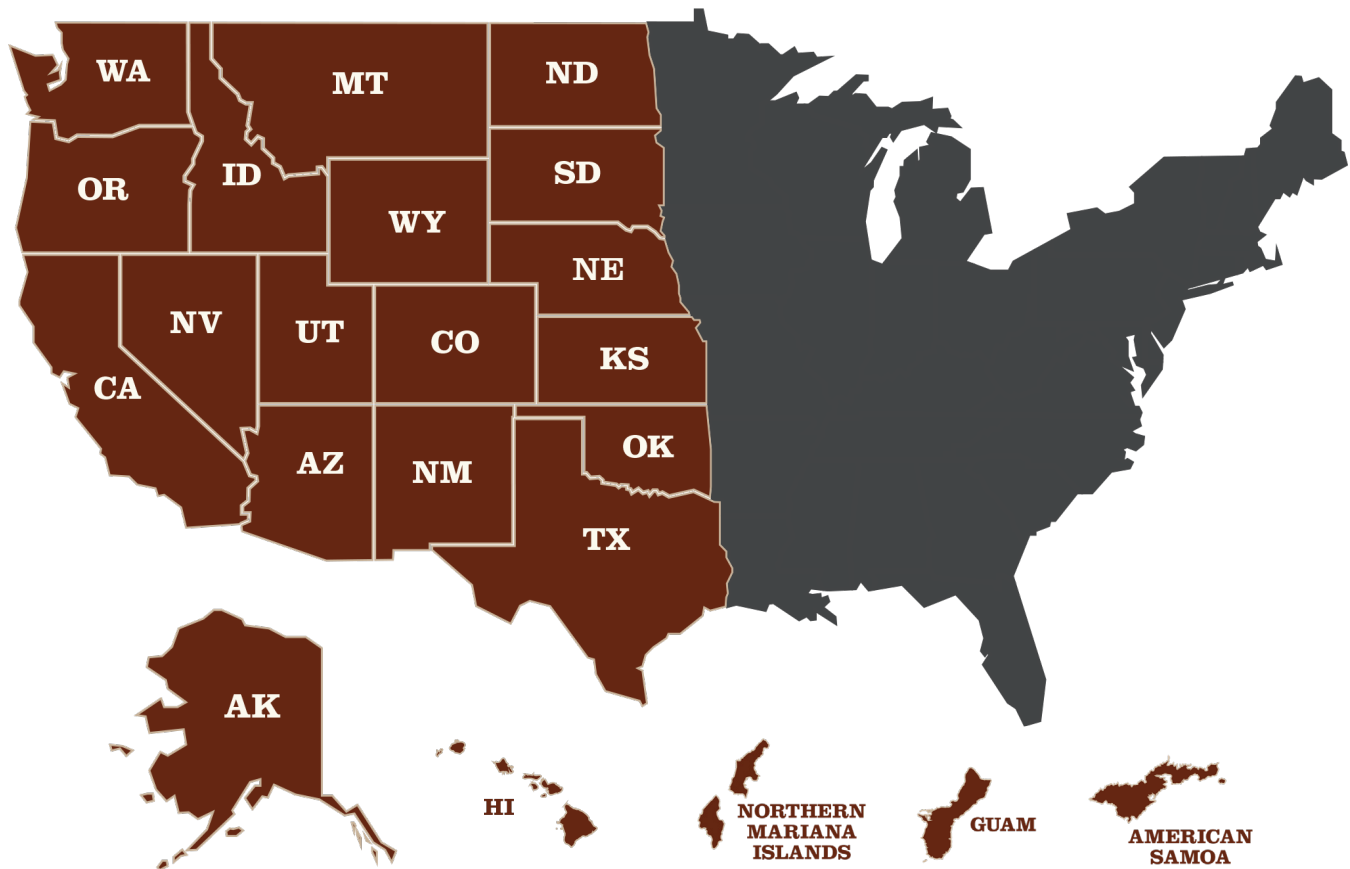
Executive Director

Chennou Xiong

Policy Advisor



THE WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION REGION



“One of the best parts of these gatherings is that political labels tend to fade away. My hope is that over the next few days and weeks, the rest of the country can see that spirit in action and be reminded that working together actually still works.”

WGA Chair, Utah Governor Spencer Cox



“We really are trying to find common ground. There’s not as much of that in Washington, D.C., which sucks, but in the Governor’s Association, it really is collegial. We’ll keep saying that until you guys all believe it, but I think that you can see it in action.”

WGA Vice Chair, Hawai’i Governor Josh Green



“The truth is that Western states share a unique camaraderie. We get along together. We compete sometimes, but I think most importantly, we show up for each other, and that spirit is what makes being a Western governor such a privilege.”

Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs



“As Americans, we have more in common than separates us, but we have to look for it, and that’s what we do here at WGA”

Montana Governor Greg Gianforte



“I like to think of Western Governors’ Association as not just the group that’s developing state or regional policy, but in many cases, it’s the policies that have been formed right here in this room by the teams, the staffs, the Governors’ staffs, that actually shape the direction of this country.”

Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum



“I’m pessimistic about finding common ground on Capitol Hill because it’s so polarized that nobody’s even talking to each other. With the Governors, it’s very different. You and I can talk about things we agree on and disagree on without hating on each other.”

Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.



“There’s been multiple (WGA) initiatives, whether it’s on energy production, whether it’s on wildfire resilience, and those initiatives are super impactful ... Your engagement with us (the U.S. Forest Service) on those topics is so important.”

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz



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