



For Immediate Release

ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS OF NORTHWEST COLORADO (AGNC) RESPONSE TO GOVERNOR POLIS’ VETO OF SB23-256

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The Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC) is extremely disappointed in Governor Polis’ decision on May 16, 2023, to veto SB23-256: Management of Gray Wolves Reintroduction. This common-sense bill would have benefitted all Coloradans including our agricultural and tourism economy. It had broad bi-partisan support in the legislature and passed both chambers by healthy margins.

“SB23-256 represented what the citizens of Northwest Colorado want and need to protect themselves, their families, and their property from the apex predators set to be released in Western Colorado by the end of this year,” stated Executive Director of AGNC, Tiffany Dickenson. “I echo many voices in saying that it is disappointing and disheartening that Governor Polis has disregarded his constituents in Northwest Colorado by vetoing this important bill with the legislative session closed, thus undermining the legislative process.”

Because gray wolves are listed as an endangered species, rules will impact how those living on the Western Slope are allowed to respond to wolf attacks, SB-256 would have potentially delayed the release of the gray wolves for a short time until the 10(j) rule became effective. Although CPW and USFWS have worked diligently to submit the 10(j) rule request, it might not be approved in time for the release in December 2023. We need the 10(j) rule in place to allow both lethal and non-lethal methods to protect our livestock and pets. The rule is authorized under the Endangered Species Act and is necessary to provide flexibility to the state in managing this new wolf population.

SB23- 256 was a bi-partisan bill sponsored by Senator Dylan Roberts (D) Senator Perry Will (R), Representative Meghan Lukens (D), and Representative Matt Soper (R) in response to their constituents on the Western Slope. They reached out to their constituents, local elected officials, and had many stakeholder discussions about the bill to ensure that it represented the needs in our communities. It is a perfect example of how representative government was intended to work. Veto of SB 256 ignores the very real needs of these citizens.

During the committee hearings on this bill, questions were raised regarding the “true reasons” behind the bill. Let us be clear: this bill was never intended to subvert the vote of the people or to stop wolves from being reintroduced. It was not introduced to allow an indefinite delay in releasing wolves on the Western Slope through litigation. Its only purpose was to require that a safety measure be in place

before a population of wolves can be established. This bill would have served to protect our farms, ranches, pets, and families from a brutal animal that will be released in our backyard in a few months.

The Western Slope is facing the release of wolves on people's land when most living here did not vote for it. However, our communities understand and accept that it was voted on and it is happening. Our citizens just want to see it done right. Why not do it responsibly? Why not allow our rural friends and neighbors to protect themselves? With CPW supporting the 10(j) and the representative nature of SB23-256, there is no reason for the governor of Colorado to veto this bill.

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About AGNC: www.agnc.org

The Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado is a council of governments that represents the counties of Garfield, Mesa, Moffat, and Rio Blanco and all the municipalities therein.