

# NEW ERA COLORADO

**2023 Annual Report**

# A Note from the Executive Director

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Friends,

New Era Colorado started out the year riding the high of the 2022 midterm election where young voters turned out at record levels to quite literally save democracy. But our work has never just been about turning out young people — **it's about young people building political power to create a better world for all of us.**



That's why we spent 2023 fighting for the Youth Agenda to work towards a future co-created by young people, for all people. During the legislative session, we worked with COLOR to pass SB23-190, a landmark bill that regulates the deceptive advertising practices of anti-abortion centers to limit their ability to prey on people who are young, low-income, or from immigrant communities. Another first for New Era: We launched our new regional hub model with permanent lead organizers in five regions across the state (Boulder, Denver, Northern, Southern, and Western). Organizers across the state are now working year-round to build a base of members, engage young people in local policies and elections, and develop the next generation of leaders.

All the while, we've been readily preparing for 2024. Colorado will be one of the many states running a proactive abortion rights ballot measure next year, but one of the only states in the country to proactively break down a barrier to access and affordability: the state insurance coverage ban. We'll focus on turning out young people in support of this initiative, which we anticipate will be a driving force behind youth turnout in 2024. We also have exciting changes to our 501(c)(4) political work coming soon, including more targeted electoral work to identify and elect Youth Agenda champions to state and local offices.

This month marks my fourth anniversary at New Era. I am constantly in awe of how we've grown from an organization that primarily mobilized to one that truly organizes and builds power for young people. Read the rest of our report to learn about our incredible team and how New Era is fighting every day to build power with young people, by young people, for all people.

Onward,



**Nicole Hensel, Executive Director**

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# About New Era Colorado

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In 2006, a group of CU Boulder students founded New Era Colorado with the belief that young people deserve a seat at the table to remove barriers to meaningful civic engagement and build youth power in our democracy.

## OUR MISSION:

New Era Colorado harnesses young people's political power to create a Colorado that serves **all people**.

We believe that change is possible through a combination of inside- and outside-system forces: civic engagement, base building, leadership development, advocacy, and electoral organizing. We create opportunities for young people to make change by working at the grasstops and grassroots levels to make progress on the Youth Agenda, and ultimately build the world we want to live in.



**New Era Colorado Foundation** organizes young people to participate in the political process, develop as leaders, and find a political home.\*



**New Era Colorado Action Fund** organizes young people to win on the Youth Agenda through elections and policymaking.

*\*New Era Colorado Foundation does not participate in any partisan activities.*

# 2023 At a Glance: Our Goals

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## ① Win on the Youth Agenda

- a. Significantly influence at least one Youth Agenda win at the state level and one at the local level
- b. Understand how young people view our policy priorities through polling and research
- c. Collaborate with Black, Indigenous, and communities of color and youth-serving partners on major initiatives

## ② See more elected officials name commitments to the Youth Agenda

- a. Educate young people about local elections and build relational power with mayors and city councils
- b. Influence the position or vote of at least five decision-makers
- c. At least three legislators see New Era as the authority on young people's issues
- d. Support and promote Youth Agenda Champions in the legislative session
- e. Create a comprehensive c4 strategy for 2024

## ③ Deepen engagement with our base of young people

- Develop the staffing, training, and relationships to meaningfully engage in at least three local regional hubs
- Train 20-50 young people with 80% naming that the training helped them develop better organizing and activism skills
- See 1,000 young people take action with us and 100 take two or more
- Grow our base by 2,000-5,000 young people

# No Such Thing as “Off” Years

## Major Wins:

- ✓ Advocated for reproductive rights, a Youth Agenda priority, to pass a state law that regulates anti-abortion centers. This included mobilizing 200+ public comments to influence medical boards hearings.
- ✓ Polled young people across Colorado to publish comprehensive polling and data analysis on housing affordability’s impacts.

### THE DENVER POST

Majority of young Coloradans are rent-burdened and want rent stabilization, new survey shows



- ✓ Made Denver mayoral candidates eat spicy wings and answer hotter questions at the hottest events of the election, our sold-out “Hot Ones Forum.”

- ✓ Awarded two Youth Agenda Champions, Sen. Faith Winter and Rep. Elisabeth Epps, for their tireless efforts to fight for young people in Colorado.
- ✓ Launched five regional hubs across the state and engaged in five local elections in targeted cities.
- ✓ Influenced Boulder County Commissioners to raise the minimum wage to \$25/hr by 2030.
- ✓ Turned out young people 3 points above the state average to flip the Boulder mayoral race in Boulder’s first ranked-choice voting election.
- ✓ Grew the progressive majority on The Fort Collins City Council.

## By the numbers:



3,052  
new members  
of our base



16,394  
calls  
made



44,065  
mail pieces  
sent



5,679  
doors  
knocked



149,000+  
digital  
impressions



253  
young people  
trained in civic  
engagement



48  
volunteers

# Winning on the Youth Agenda

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**Abortion Rights** | This legislative session, we successfully passed SB23-190, a first-in-the-nation policy to regulate anti-abortion centers' deceptive practices and their unethical use of "abortion pill reversal" treatment. The idea for this bill grew from conversations with CU Boulder students, who shared stories of how they were lured into these centers by deceptive advertisements on campus and met with misleading anti-abortion messaging.



**Economic Justice** | New Era also worked in coalition to pressure Boulder County Commissioners to increase the minimum wage. We connected with young people to provide testimony, mobilized young people to contact their local representatives through a digital campaign, and got LTEs from young people published in local newspapers throughout the summer and fall. Our efforts were successful and Boulder County committed to raising the minimum wage to \$25/hr by 2030, securing a major win on economic justice to provide a livable, sustainable wage for all.



**Research & Polling** | We started working with the youth polling firm Generation Labs to better understand the economic justice, housing, and reproductive rights policies that young people want to pursue. We then built policy priorities based on our communities' needs, prioritizing responses from young people of color. Based off this knowledge, we plan to focus on housing affordability and renters' rights in 2024 as young people in Colorado continue to struggle with the increased cost of living and housing prices.

# Meet our Regional Lead Organizers

A critical part of our theory of change is focused on getting involved at the local level to forge deep relationships in and with community. Our new regional organizing model allows our team to serve as expert connectors between young people and people in power to create meaningful political progress.

**Boulder Lead Organizer Kate Kelly** (she/they) has continued New Era’s strong legacy at CU Boulder and broadened our work beyond the university. This year, she has been key in organizing support for (successfully!) raising the minimum wage.

**Northern Lead Organizer Kimberly Carracedo** (she/ella) continues to build on relationships she forged as a CSU Fort Collins student through the U + 2 campaign that tackles the city’s restrictive occupancy limits to make the region a more affordable home for young people.

**Denver Lead Organizer Trish Hyde** (she/her) is ready to talk to you about your experience with housing. She’s excited to embark on a housing listening tour in 2024 to shape New Era’s work in Denver driven by members of the community.

**Western Lead Organizer Aaron Hackett** (he/him) wants everyone to appreciate the unique nature of rural communities on Colorado’s Western Slope. He’s focused on building coalitions to build connections between students at Fort Lewis College and the wider community.

**Southern Lead Organizer Jorge Hernández** (he/él) is a master at making connections through language, especially at CSU Pueblo. As Jorge works to establish New Era’s southern presence, he likes to hold his meetings in Spanish at every possible opportunity to build deeper relationships.

*Pictured from left to right: Kate Kelly, Kimberly Carracedo, Organizing Director Arianna Morales, Trish Hyde, Aaron Hackett, and Jorge Hernández*





# Equity Update

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Since we released our [first equity statement](#) in 2020, New Era has committed to regular updates on our progress to hold ourselves accountable to our transformation. [Check out some highlights from our 2023 update and our commitments moving into 2024:](#)



## Healing is Resistance

- While lengthy and tumultuous, unionizing truly transformed New Era's culture. Not only do all staff members now have an equitable seat at our decision-making table, but we also have competitive pay that has enabled us to better foster longevity at the organization. Each of us is committed to moving New Era forward together in partnership.
- We did multiple healing and transformative justice sessions with the help of stellar facilitators Barbara Bonner, Enid Carlson, and Regan Byrd. We have committed to a long-term project with Regan Byrd to bring more transformative justice practices to our internal conflict resolution work.
- We completed an analysis of our hiring data and found that while applicants of color move through our system equitably (we see a higher % of applicants of color as the hiring stages progress), our initial pool still does not reflect the racial diversity of Denver, where our primary offices are located. This finding means we must improve our practices to diversify the pool and recruit diverse candidates intentionally and individually.
- Our new regional organizing model is centered on fostering leaders by giving young people, especially young people of color, the tools and autonomy to lead in their communities. We hope to further integrate our leadership development with a hyper-focus on young people who are already leaders of these local communities to connect them with the tools and autonomy to build their own political homes.
- We read "The Whiteness of Wealth" by Dorothy A. Brown for our staff-led book club to learn about the racist roots of the U.S. tax system. Then, we brought our learning full circle with the Colorado Fiscal Institute to analyze Colorado's tax system.

# Looking Ahead: 2024

2024 once again brings another major election cycle, and all eyes are already on young people to turn out. **Our response? Young people turn out for candidates who center their issues and deliver on their promises.** Candidates should spend less time pressuring young voters and more time genuinely engaging and fighting for the issues they care about.

## We've got big plans:

- During the 2024 legislative session, we'll fight for renters' rights and housing affordability. We'll uplift and award Youth Agenda champions who show up for young people and vote with their futures in mind.
- We'll gather signatures, educate, persuade, and mobilize young people to turn out in support of the 2024 reproductive rights ballot measure to codify abortion protections in our state constitution, regardless of a person's insurance coverage.
- The path to winning the U.S. House runs through Colorado's 3rd and 8th Congressional Districts. Our Regional Lead Organizers in Durango & Pueblo (CO-3) and Greeley (CO-8) will focus on registering voters, building a base, and mobilizing young people ahead of the November general election. We will scale up with full- and part-time canvassers to contact as many young voters in these districts as possible.
- We will launch new entities on our 501(c)(4) to directly support and elect Youth Agenda champions to state and local offices. We will endorse young candidates of color at the state and local level and organize to get them elected.

*And as always, we will be here the day, weeks, and months after the election until young people get the representation they deserve in our democracy. **Support our youth movement and invest in the future of Colorado with a donation today!***

**Onward,**

*The New Era Team*