



April 20, 2026

Senate Transportation & Energy Committee
Colorado General Assembly
200 E. Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Re: SB26- 142 Development of Thermal Energy Resources

Dear Transportation & Energy Committee.

My name is Ann Sutton, living in Westminster CO. This testimony represents the position of the League of Women Voters of Colorado in Support of SB26-142 that is intended to advance the development of clean geothermal energy and to provide employment opportunities for coal-transition communities.

The League supports the use of a variety of energy sources, with emphasis on conserving energy and using energy-efficient technologies. We support energy development in consideration of the physical suitability of the land and the capability of the area to support an adequate employment base for current and future populations.

SB-142 aligns with our continued support for Just Transition away from a coal-based electrical energy economy.

Our thanks to the sponsors for promoting geothermal energy development and for providing encouragement to our citizens and communities.

We ask the Committee for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ann Sutton". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light blue rectangular background.

Ann Sutton Volunteer Lobbyist
League of Women Voters of Colorado
110 16th Street Mall
Suite 1326
Denver, CO 80202



Senate Transportation & Energy Committee 1:30 April 22, 2026

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, I am writing in support of SB 142. My name is Jessica Burley, Sustainability & Parking Manager for the Town of Breckenridge and Chair of the Colorado Communities for Climate Action; a coalition of local governments representing over 1/3 of Coloradans. I am here to express our coalition's support for Senate Bill 26-142.

Breckenridge is actively exploring the feasibility of a thermal energy network to serve some of our most energy-intensive public facilities and nearby neighborhoods and businesses. As in many mountain communities, fossil gas heating represents one of our largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions. We also happen to be a gas constrained community. This presents meaningful opportunities for thermal recovery and shared infrastructure.

For example, our Town Hall, Professional Building, and S. Gondola Parking Garage all sit downtown where dense building loads could be connected through a shared ambient temperature loop. We are evaluating opportunities to capture waste heat from our buildings and snowmelt systems—a resource that is currently vented to the atmosphere. In reframing how we look at waste heat, this bill identifies and solves for what is currently a lost opportunity for industrial, commercial, and government facilities.

Breckenridge is already participating in the Gas Planning Pilot Communities Program authorized by HB24-1370 pursuing neighborhood-scale decarbonization strategies alongside other CC4CA members Winter Park, Boulder, and Golden. SB26-142 builds the statutory framework we need to turn pilot work into real-world implementation.

To illustrate, SB142 directly addresses the legal and financial barriers we face as a small mountain town. The absence of explicit authority increases costs and uncertainty leading to unnecessary delays—burdens that fall disproportionately on small and rural communities like ours that can't realize urban economies of scale. These costs can eclipse the early-stage budgets of communities trying to innovate and lead the way in the energy transition.

Under this bill, Breckenridge would gain several important tools that directly support the work we're doing. First, we'd finally have the clear authority to aggregate



thermal energy demand across our municipal buildings and with willing private partners. The authority is essential for designing a coordinated, efficient system rather than a series of isolated projects.

We would also have the option to issue revenue bonds specifically for thermal energy infrastructure. In a mountain town where construction costs run high and economies of scale are limited, having this financing mechanism is critical.

And finally, SB142 gives us a clear and practical pathway to explore waste heat recovery from our own infrastructure without triggering unintended utility regulations.

In the end, this bill supports equitable energy outcomes, avoiding a future where lower-income households are left paying for an aging gas infrastructure while others move to cleaner systems. Thermal networks improve indoor air quality and help create a more just energy transition.

For Breckenridge, this bill is the difference between a promising feasibility study and a shovel-ready project that reduces emissions, strengthens resilience, and lowers long-term energy costs for residents and businesses.

I understand there are some amendments under consideration, CC4CA is supportive of those efforts. I respectfully urge your support today for SB26-142 expecting amendments will be made at a later date. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Burley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Jessica Burley

Sustainability & Parking Manager for the Town of Breckenridge

4-21-2026

Senate Bill 26-142

Ameresco offers its testimony in support of Senate Bill 26-142 as legislation that removes barriers for the development of Geothermal Energy Projects in the State of Colorado.

Ameresco, a publicly traded company (AMRC, NYSE), has been operating in Colorado for 24 years, has 95 projects completed or in progress across the state, valued at over \$258 million. Our clients have included cities, counties, and school districts as well as higher education, utilities, and commercial entities.

Over the past 24 months, since ITC/IRA funding for Solar and Wind has been sunset, the demand and interest for geothermal energy has dramatically risen. In past 12 months, Ameresco has conducted advanced conversations on the potential for geothermal energy from our state's largest cities to its smallest towns.

Two of the biggest hurdles are access to data which is costly to self-fund, and approvals processes for jurisdictions, both of which this bill seeks to remedy.

Ameresco is currently engaged in the research, development and feasibility of projects in 6 local Colorado locally controlled jurisdictions. There is a lack of access to standard data and possible obstructionist challenges at the ballot box preventing communities from pursuing action

Statewide, Colorado is known to have tremendous geothermal potential. Oxychemical is currently engaged in a test-plant in Weld County¹. There are countless orphaned O&G wells², some with Geothermal potential, and the National Laboratory of the Rockies has recently updated its Geothermal map, showing greater levels of detail about localized geothermal potential³.

There are several firms actively exploring and developing projects to capture and harness the stable, clean and abundant energy beneath our feet in the State, using Colorado based firms and local labor. Geothermal energy also represents tremendous employment potential for Colorado's workforce from utility scale solutions to ground-source heat pump HVAC projects. All these market conditions mean that additional demand will continue, and impediments to progress will result in costly delays to projects that can position Colorado for renewable Energy Dominance. With Federal resources dwindling, it is incumbent on our state government to

¹ <https://www.cpr.org/2026/03/03/fossil-fuel-geothermal-colorado-deep-hole-oil-gas-industry/>

² <https://ecmc.colorado.gov/regulation/orphaned-well-program>

³ <https://maps.nlr.gov/geothermal-energy-atlas/data-viewer?b=%5B%5B-116.196808%2C35.608584%5D%2C%5B-93.187385%2C42.973889%5D%5D&vL=68cb15879a2c07f582d56870%2C685c850a77a7c73f0a473a5e%2C68f81506884800254f93e8ad>

leverage the resources we have in abundance and ensure the local workforce can remain gainfully employed.

At the Federal level, Ameresco is actively engaged in a project at the Denver Federal Center, drilling 416 vertical bores and wells to a depth of 500-feet. The impact of this is an estimated Year 1 cost savings of \$584,000, a 10% reduction in electricity, a 59% reduction in natural gas consumption, and a 2% water use reduction, along with the carbon-equivalent reduction of 4.3 million kg/yr.

Also at the Federal level, Ameresco completed geothermal heating projects at Fort Polk to upgrade the systems at military family housing. These upgrades are projected to reduce the annual electrical consumption by 30% and deliver more than \$2.6 million in annual utility and operational cost savings. Most importantly, this modernizes the residential energy systems and improves efficiency across 3,600 homes, in addition to fostering local economic growth by investing in the community and supporting the local workforce.

The installation spans more than 198,000 acres in the heart of Louisiana's Sportsman's Paradise. Fort Polk is now the first Army installation to complete a full geothermal transition across all homes, strengthening resiliency, and long-term sustainability.

If the Department of War can complete geothermal heating and cooling in the State of Louisiana, the State of Colorado should be able to do it here.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh McIlwain".

Josh McIlwain, SFP, LEED Green Associate

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April 22, 2026
Senat Transportation & Energy Committee

Amend SB26-142 Development of Thermal Energy Resources (Sen. Ball / Reps. Joseph & Gonzalez)

Thank you, and good afternoon, Chair Cutter and Members of the Committee:

My name is Clare Valentine, and I am a Senior Policy Advisor at Western Resource Advocates (WRA), where I advocate for policies that accelerate transitioning power generation to clean resources while maintaining affordable and reliable electricity for Coloradans. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. WRA is speaking today in an amend position on SB26-142 brought forward by Senator Ball, and with the adoption of amendment L.003 we will be moving to support this bill.

WRA strongly supports the development of geothermal energy and thermal energy networks in the state, and we share Senator Ball and proponents' interests in advancing these resources. As Senator Ball explained, the development of geothermal energy projects for electricity generation has strong potential in Colorado—it could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector while offering near-24/7 power that complements wind and solar energy. Likewise, thermal energy networks can offer space and water heating solutions that can contribute to decarbonizing heating needs across entire neighborhoods, business corridors, and campuses, helping us to achieve Colorado's Clean Heat targets established in 2021.

In advancing these technologies, however, it is important to consider consumer protections and the costs that will be incurred for the projects. While WRA did have initial concerns with the bill as introduced, related to these issues, we are pleased to see the introduction of amendment L.003. We thank the sponsors for working with stakeholders on this amendment, as it alleviates our concerns with the bill.

SB26-142 as amended by L.003 creates multiple opportunities to harness zero-emissions, thermal energy in our state, with appropriate oversight. As it relates to thermal energy networks, this bill will allow local governments to aggregate thermal energy and provide this service to its constituents and beyond. And as it relates to geothermal electricity generation, the bill will require the Public Utilities Commission to review small and large geothermal projects, evaluate these projects based on their merits, and issue a decision about whether it is reasonable to invest in those projects. We find these to be reasonable and beneficial actions to advance geothermal and thermal energy network projects in Colorado.

With amendment L003, WRA believes SB142 is a good approach for the state. Accordingly, we urge you to adopt L.003 and vote yes on Senate Bill 142 as amended.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Lauren Suhrbier
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April 22, 2026

Colorado Senate Transportation & Energy Committee
Colorado State Senate
200 E. Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Senate Bill 26-142

Dear Chair Cutter and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Clean Energy Economy for the Region (CLEER), I am writing to provide comments regarding Senate Bill 26-142 and to respectfully encourage that any amendments under consideration preserve maximum flexibility for local governments, including special districts, to finance and implement thermal energy networks (TENs).

CLEER has been actively engaged in advancing geothermal and thermal energy network development across Colorado since 2023. This includes contractual work with the Aspen School District, the U.S. Department of Energy Geothermal Technologies Office, The Town of Carbondale, Garfield Clean Energy (representing 9 local governments in Garfield County) and the Colorado Energy Office (via GEGP and GETCO award contracts). We work in close collaboration with a broader cohort of municipalities and districts statewide pursuing TENs - including colleagues such as the Town of Hayden, Eagle County, The Town of Vail and Pitkin County - who are each actively developing thermal energy networks. Through this work, we have seen firsthand that local governments are well-positioned to lead early deployment—but require flexible statutory tools to do so effectively.

Financing Flexibility is Critical

Thermal energy networks are capital-intensive infrastructure projects that depend on long-term, stable revenue streams. Local governments must retain the ability to utilize revenue bonds and other non-general obligation financing tools, where repayment is derived from system revenues rather than taxpayer-backed debt. This structure—explicitly contemplated in the bill—reduces public risk and aligns with established infrastructure financing practices.

In addition, enabling access to low-cost capital, including bond financing and, where available, green bank or similar financing mechanisms, is essential to achieving viable projects. Early-stage TEN efforts across our partner communities often require blended capital stacks to reduce upfront costs.

Long-Term Contracting Authority Enables Project Viability

TEN projects require long-term customer commitments to support financing and cost recovery. The bill's allowance for multi-decade thermal energy service agreements is important and we do not support any contract length specified of less than 25 years. Preserving the ability for local governments to enter into very long-duration contracts—with appropriate governance and annual appropriation structures—will directly impact project bankability and private sector participation.

Avoiding Unnecessary Voter Approval Barriers

Maintaining pathways that do not require general electorate voter approval for revenue-backed infrastructure projects will significantly increase the pace and feasibility of deployment. As reflected in the bill, heating and cooling infrastructure can be advanced without triggering the same requirements as traditional utility acquisitions, reducing administrative barriers while preserving accountability. Avoiding additional requirements that trigger voter approval for revenue-backed TEN projects will help ensure that viable projects are not delayed or foregone due to procedural constraints. We do not support any proposed amendments that would expand the applicability of Section 20 Article X of the State of Colorado Constitution.

Conclusion

Thermal energy networks represent a practical, infrastructure-based solution for reducing emissions, improving energy resilience, and supporting local economic development. CLEER's work with the Aspen School District, the Town of Carbondale, special districts and peer communities across Colorado demonstrates that local governments are ready to lead—but need clear, flexible authority to scale.

We urge the Committee to ensure that any amendments to Senate Bill 26-142 maintain or expand local government flexibility in:

- Revenue-based financing structures
- Access to low-cost capital
- Long-term contracting authority
- Streamlined project approval pathways

These elements are foundational to enabling implementation.

Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership on advancing thermal energy solutions in Colorado.

Respectfully,

Lauren Suhrbier
Strategic Development Director
Clean Energy Economy for the Region (CLEER)