

By Lynn Bartels

The Colorado County Clerks Association's winter and summer conferences are amazing. Don't just take the clerks' word for it. The vendors and national speakers who participate are quick to heap praise on Colorado.

History repeated itself in Pueblo where the clerks gathered for their 2026 winter conference.

Pueblo County Clerk and Recorder Candace Rivera welcomed conference goers, touting her city's rich cultural heritage, famous green chile and riverwalk. She also selected the black-tie theme of the banquet on the final evening, Jan. 21, which included a red carpet, music, dancing and the swearing in of new officers.

These are tough times for election officials who are dealing with false charges of stolen elections, and the theme of endurance emerged during the final speeches.

In addition to elections, most county clerks handle motor vehicle registrations and the recording of documents, such as property records and marriage licenses. The conference included a number of sessions about updates to equipment and procedures coming this year – which clerks and their staff were grateful for



Lincoln County Clerk Corinne Lengel said she “thoroughly enjoyed being in Pueblo.”

“The food was great, the activities — especially karaoke and the banquet — were loads of fun, and I felt an immense sense of camaraderie and assimilation,” Lengel said.

“We enjoyed some amazing entertainment, had a great time visiting Brue's Alehouse and The Clink (quaint little place!), and interacted both professionally and socially with vendors, other clerks, and staff.”



And Lengel said seeing former Secretary of State Wayne Williams at the banquet “was a welcome surprise and rounded out a fantastic week!”

Prowers County Clerk Jana Cohen said three individual sessions each day, Recording, Motor Vehicle and Elections, allowed her to attend the full sessions for each area.

“Attending these conferences is extremely important due to the amount of information shared during each session,” Cohen said. “I also enjoy networking with other clerks across

the state to learn about the processes and procedures used in their offices, which often gives me great ideas to bring back to my own office.”

Conferences have always energized the clerks and their staff, but in these trying times solidarity feels even more important.

That’s a theme that the outgoing association president, Jackson County Clerk Hayle Johnson, and the new association president, Weld County Clerk Carly Koppes, noted in their speeches during the final night of the conference.



“This is our safe place,” Johnson said. “This is our strength. At a time when misinformation spreads faster than the truth, it feels as though we are being attacked from every direction, it is essential to say this clearly and out loud:

“You matter. Your work matters. And you are not alone.”

Koppes talked about misunderstanding endurance.



“We imagine it as gritting our teeth, lowering our heads, and pushing forward no matter what. We praise resilience as if it means never slowing down and never needing help,” she said.

“Real endurance, the kind that lasts, isn’t about isolation. It’s about connections. Endurance is not saying, ‘I can handle this myself.’ Endurance is saying, ‘I don’t have to.’”

Among those praising the speeches was Matt Crane, executive director of the Colorado County Clerks Association.

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*Lynn Bartels formerly worked as a reporter for the Rocky Mountain News and The Denver Post, and handled communications for Secretary of State Wayne Williams.*

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