

# Lawmen schedule public forum on gangs

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Two of Weld County's top lawmen will host a community forum with U.S. Rep. Marilyn Musgrave Monday night, hoping to start a discourse on Weld's gang problems.

District Attorney Ken Buck and Sheriff John Cooke want to hear from residents about how gangs affect them and to inform them about gangs.

"My philosophy is, we don't always know what's best for the community," Cooke said. "We want to hear from

them."

Former Jefferson County District Attorney Dave Thomas also will attend and speak about how a juvenile assessment center in his county helped tackle gang problems. Buck is working to create a similar center for Weld.

There won't be a presentation by Greeley or Evans police departments about gangs at the meeting, Buck said. Rather, he wants input from the community so Musgrave can go back to Washington armed with information about Weld County's needs.

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## WHERE TO GO

■ Community Forum on Gang Violence, 7 p.m. Monday, Evans Community Center, 1100 37th St.

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"That's the most important thing we can do, is make sure our voice is heard in Washington, D.C.," Buck said. "The federal government sets priorities, and where gangs fall along with terrorism and other issues is important."

Musgrave has already met with

police departments in her district, Buck said.

In a press release from her office, Musgrave said she looks forward to hearing ideas from the community.

"Gang activity permeates beyond just those involved in the violence," Musgrave said. "They are a detriment to the members' families and the innocent people living in the surrounding neighborhoods."

Musgrave was one of eight members of the U.S. House who didn't vote on a federal gang deterrence bill last spring.

The bill would authorize spending \$80 million annually between 2006-2010 to investigate and prosecute criminal street gangs, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Monday's meeting will likely be similar to a forum Buck hosted in January at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church in north Greeley. In that setting, Buck took pages of notes from residents who discussed their fear of gangs and hope for the community.

He said he's invited churches, senior groups and various other organizations to the Monday meeting.