

# SOUTHERN COLORADO SOAP BOX DERBY TRIBUTE

HON. SCOTT R. TIPTON

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

**Mr. TIPTON.** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Southern Colorado Soap Box Derby and the individuals—participants, parents and organizers—who have made it an enriching community event to look forward to. On July 8, 1937, boys ages 9–12 entered cars they designed out of soap boxes, wood and metal for the very first Southern Colorado Soap Box Derby, which took place on West Street in Pueblo, Colorado. At the end of this event, the first-place winner was sent to compete in the national championship in Akron, Ohio.

One year later in 1938, the races stopped due to World War II. They began again almost 20 years later in 1962, this time taking place on Constitution Hill with 62 racers ages 9–15. With the help of 28 orphans from Sacred Heart Home and Youth Center and several convicts of the Colorado State Penitentiary, all of the derby cars were successfully built by race time. The revived competition led to some new additions, one being the implementation of a Derby Queen who was chosen from the list of names submitted by the racers. The very first Derby Queen was Sharon Galbraith of Pueblo.

As the race evolved, by 1966 standard wheels and steering assemblies were required to give equal opportunity to all racers. Joplin Hill on Pueblo's east side was determined to be the best hill for gravity and the competition moved once again. Boys from communities including Pueblo, Denver, Boulder, Greeley and Loveland traveled to participate in the derby competition. Attendance steadily increased, ranging from a few hundred to 5,000 spectators.

Unfortunately, three years later, the derby was once more on the brink of shutting down due to a lack of funding. Only one more race was scheduled to be held. This lack of funding threatened derby winner Steve Espinosa's chances of going to the national competition in Ohio. However, thanks to the generosity of the Pueblo Star Journal and radio station KKAM's manager Dwight Shaw, enough funds were donated to send Steve to Ohio.

In 2006 after a long 37 years, the Southern Colorado Soap Box Derby started up again and has been held every year since. In that time, many positive changes have been instituted to be more inclusive, fair and safe: it's now open to both girls and boys

ages 7–21; all derby cars have been built from a kit with strict adherence to all nuts and bolts; and contestants must qualify for one of three divisions to race. Since 2006, the highlight of each race has been Officer Randy Belisle of the Colorado State Patrol using his radar gun to clock the speed of each racer as he or she comes down the hill. With speeds ranging from 28 to 31 mph, Officer Belisle then issues each racer a “ticket” for speeding.

Mr. Speaker, the Southern Colorado Soap Box Derby is a fun and important part of the culture and history of Pueblo, Colorado. Throughout the years, this great event has enhanced community engagement and served as a way to teach youth the skills of workmanship and perseverance to complete the task at hand. I look forward to watching the races and I wish all the contestants good luck.