



COLORADO
Office of Economic Development
& International Trade



COLORADO
Governor Jared Polis

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

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Governor Polis Announces Colorado Author as New Poet Laureate

Gibson has Strong Desire for Unity and to Bring People Together Through Poetry

BOULDER - Today, Governor Polis and the Colorado Creative Industries (CCI) division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) announced that Andrea Gibson has been selected as the new Colorado Poet Laureate, succeeding Bobby LeFebre. Gibson, a Boulder-based queer activist, author, and slam poet will serve in the role for two years.

"Andrea Gibson is an inspiring Colorado artist. Colorado's Poet Laureate is an ambassador of the arts and someone who can truly share their talents while inspiring the artistic abilities within ourselves. Andrea's voice holds a fierce conviction in inspiring others to pursue art and take action toward solving social issues and they personify our Colorado for All spirit. I know Andrea will be a strong advocate for the arts and art education as a way to bring us together, has a strong desire for unity and to bring people together through poetry," said Governor Polis. **"I want to thank Bobby for four years of service. When Bobby was appointed to this position, he embraced it fully. And over the last four years, he has represented our state and the arts better than we could've ever imagined."**

Bobby LeFebre's tenure as Poet Laureate was a burst of creative energy. He was the youngest Poet Laureate and first Poet Laureate of color. From panel discussions and keynote addresses to performances and readings, LeFebre has appeared in more than 130 events since 2019 as Colorado Poet Laureate.

"I had the honor of participating in hundreds of events, readings, cultural gatherings, and conversations across this diverse and vibrant state and beyond. From the sweeping landscapes of the Western Slope to the familiar streets of Denver and the quiet beauty of the San Luis Valley, I have had the opportunity to connect with people from all walks of life. So many communities, homes, spaces of worship, libraries, cultural spaces, social actions, and more have invited me in and welcomed me with open arms, and I am profoundly grateful for the warm embrace of that collective spirit," said LeFebre.

LeFebre's ability to connect with younger audiences and audiences of color created a significant impact that reverberated across Colorado. As the city of Denver was designing its cultural plan, LeFebre was a lead consultant. In addition, he wrote poems for the nonprofit community health center in Denver, Tepeyac, among many other achievements during his time in the role.

“Throughout my tenure, I have strived to raise the consciousness of our collective psyche and to heal where there is hurt, celebrate where there is joy, share where there is space, disrupt where there is stagnation, build where there is opportunity, and challenge where there is complacency. The poet, in this sense, has a unique opportunity to humanize poetry and provide everyone with entry points to its power and applicability in everyday life,” said LeFebre.

The Poet Laureate serves as an active advocate for poetry, literacy, and literature by participating in readings and other events at schools, libraries, literary festivals, and the State Capitol. Gibson will also provide the Governor with an annual account of the impact and success of the Colorado Poet Laureate program and prepare a poem for the opening of the legislative session upon request.

“We are very excited with the Governor’s selection of Andrea Gibson as the new Poet Laureate. Their work in slam poetry and as an author, Andrea has an incredible ability to unite people through artistic expression. We look forward to working with Andrea during the next two years who will play a powerful role in contributing to our efforts in making Colorado work for all,” said OEDIT’s Executive Director, Eve Lieberman.

Gibson, a four-time Denver Grand Slam Champion, centers their work around a range of topics including LGBTQIA+ issues, spirituality, feminism, mental health, gun reform, and the dismantling of oppressive systems.

“An artist’s job is to redirect awe, astonishment, and wonder back into people, something we were born with but culture takes out of us as we grow older,” said Gibson. A lot of their work today also includes their treatment journey after being diagnosed with Ovarian cancer two years ago. **“I spent so much time writing about what was wrong with the world, now I write about what I dream the world can be.”**

Gibson is the author of six full-length collections of poetry. They are a two-time winner of the Independent Publishers Award, a three-time Goodreads Choice Awards Finalist, and the winner of the first Women’s World Poetry Slam. In 2017, Penguin Books published *Take Me With You*, an illustrated collection of Gibson’s most beloved quotes, and in 2019, Chronicle Books published their first nonfiction endeavor, *How Poetry Can Change Your Heart*.

As the new Colorado Poet Laureate, Gibson plans to help other people fall in love with poetry.

“I want to come up with new and inventive ways to help a larger population fall in love and appreciate poetry. I want everyone to have a poem that they can go to like you would with a song. Poetry can be the vehicle that allows us to know each other and expand humanity. That’s what I hope to help do with this role,” said Gibson.

Gov. Polis, joined by OEDIT and Colorado Humanities, announced Gibson’s appointment as Poet Laureate at the Colorado Chautauqua in Gibson’s hometown of Boulder. The Colorado Chautauqua, which celebrates its 125th anniversary this year, fosters lifelong learning, love of nature and cultural enrichment. In celebration of this milestone year, they are offering a series of events showcasing Chautauqua’s role as a treasured regional asset, bringing together the community for entertainment and educational experiences. More information surrounding these events can be found at [Chautauqua.com](https://www.chautauqua.com).

“We are excited for Andrea’s appointment to this incredible role and couldn’t think of a better place to make this announcement than at the foot of the famous Flatiron mountains,” said Josh Blanchard, Director of Colorado Creative Industries. **“Their presence as the new Poet Laureate will contribute to our state’s efforts in ensuring equality is a priority in all of our efforts, particularly when it comes to the arts and acts of expression.”**

The Poet Laureate position was created to promote an appreciation of poetry in Colorado and to honor outstanding Colorado poets. Colorado Humanities and Center for the Book and Colorado Creative Industries jointly support the honorary position, providing \$10,000 annually to cover honoraria and travel expenses related to public presentations for each term.

Colorado is among the first states to have a Poet Laureate when Governor Oliver Shoup appointed Alice Polk Hill in 1919. Since then eight other people have served: Nellie Burget Miller (1923-1952), Margaret Clyde Robertson (1952-1954), Milford E. Shields (1954), Thomas Hornsby Ferril (1979-1988), Mary Crow (1996-2010), David Mason (2010-2014), Joseph Hutchison (2014-2018), and Bobby LeFebre (2019-2023).

“We congratulate and look forward to working with Andrea Gibson as they create opportunities to expand Coloradans’ engagement with the written and spoken word,” said Margaret Coval, Executive Director of Colorado Humanities.

A Colorado Poet Laureate finalist selection committee assembled by CCI and Colorado Humanities reviewed all nominations and met in the spring to determine the finalists. The committee agreed on four finalists and sent their recommendations to Governor Polis who then made the final decision by choosing Andrea as Colorado’s next Poet Laureate.

To invite Andrea to your community, email poetlaureate@coloradohumanities.org.