

THE ASPEN TIMES

Final endorsements: state races and initiatives

An Aspen Times Editorial

November 3, 2006

This is the final set of endorsements that The Aspen Times will make for the Nov. 7 election. It is an unusually crowded ballot this year, and we've strived to educate ourselves on as many of the candidates and issues as possible, but because of time constraints and space in the newspaper, we've overlooked the University of Colorado regents and judge-retention questions in order to focus on local races and big statewide initiatives.

The governor of Colorado is a hugely influential office, with the power to set statewide priorities, sign or veto legislation, and steer the ship of state as Colorado's chief executive. We choose Democrat Bill Ritter as the right man for this job because of his stated commitment to things like renewable energy, thoughtful growth management and reducing the negative impacts of the oil and gas economy. His Republican opponent, Bob Beauprez, has a poor environmental record and, among other things, supports a reckless initiative that prescribes a one-size-fits-all scheme for school spending.

Vote for **Bill Ritter** for governor.

The attorney general is the highest law enforcement official in the state. In this race, Republican John Suthers is facing Democrat Fern O'Brien. Gov. Bill Owens appointed Suthers to replace Ken Salazar, who left office to run for the U.S. Senate. Salazar has endorsed O'Brien, but we find Suthers, who has served as a district attorney and a U.S. attorney, to be the more qualified candidate. He has managed to rise above partisan politics in Denver and deserves a second term.

Vote for **John Suthers** for attorney general.

The race for Colorado secretary of state features two competent candidates, Democrat Ken Gordon and Republican Mike Coffman. Both have solid public service records, Gordon mainly as a state legislator and Coffman as a state legislator, state treasurer and a Marine Corps civil affairs officer in Iraq. We're impressed by Gordon's history of bipartisanship in the Legislature, but Coffman's vast experience makes us confident that he'll rise above the partisan fray and work to restore public confidence in the electoral process.

Vote for **Mike Coffman** for secretary of state.

Two strong candidates are also vying to become state treasurer, Colorado's chief financial steward. Democrat Cary Kennedy and Republican Mark Hillman both boast distinguished records of public service, and both agreed to abide by a \$500,000 campaign spending limit. We're disturbed by Hillman's opposition to Referendum C on the 2005 ballot, a key fiscal reform supported by both political parties. On the other hand, we're encouraged by Kennedy's role in crafting the school-financing Amendment 23 and Referendum C, which thankfully passed and helped restore fiscal stability to state government.

Vote for **Cary Kennedy** for state treasurer.

The race for State Senate District 5, we believe, is a slam-dunk. Republican incumbent Sen. Lew Entz supported a bad bill that would have dismantled local land-use codes across the state; he also helped place Referendum A on the 2003 ballot, a measure that would have authorized \$2 billion in water projects to export Western Slope water to the Front

Range. His Democratic opponent, Gail Schwartz, is a Snowmass Village resident and a CU regent who will bring an understanding of Pitkin County issues to the Statehouse. Schwartz has traveled the district diligently during this campaign, she is committed to Colorado's environment, and she offers a strong voice for Pitkin County.

Vote for **Gail Schwartz** in State Senate District 5.

Colorado's 3rd Congressional District is hotly contested this year, with one-term incumbent Rep. John Salazar, a Democrat, facing a strong challenge from Scott Tipton, a Republican businessman from Cortez. We prefer Salazar, who brings a thoughtful and less ideological approach to complex issues on the federal agenda, from immigration to our military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Vote for **John Salazar** in U.S. Congress District 3.

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