

Post Independent

Ritter is the best pick to serve Colorado

Post Independent Opinion

November 5, 2006

For Bill Ritter, a life of public service has come to this: On Tuesday, he hopes to be elected as Colorado's next governor.

He strikes us as one who would strive to serve and fairly represent all Coloradans, which makes him the best choice for the job.

A moderate Democrat, Ritter is running against Bob Beauprez, a Republican who has a record of generally toeing his party's line. With Colorado fairly evenly split between Republicans, Democrats and independents, Ritter is best poised to seek out common ground among his constituents as governor and govern for the greatest good of all.

Ritter is district attorney in Denver; Beauprez is a congressman. While Ritter's political experience has been limited to the narrow focus of criminal prosecution, he has tried to find other ways to make a difference in the world, including by volunteering with his wife at a nutrition center in Africa for three years.

He has brought certain core values to his campaign, and to his credit has never tried to distance himself from them. Most notably, he is a Democrat who is anti-abortion. That got him off on the wrong foot with some members of his own party when he first started running for governor. His response was simply to say that he recognizes that others hold strong pro-choice viewpoints and he wouldn't try to change current laws allowing abortion. Whether Democrats would accept him as he is and take him at his word was up to them, and in the end, he ran uncontested in the primary.

At the same time, Beauprez was being challenged for the Republican candidacy by part-time Carbondale-area resident Marc Holtzman. Holtzman tagged Beauprez as "Both Ways Bob" for his ambivalence on issues such as last year's state tax measures, which Beauprez opposed in a lukewarm fashion. The moniker has haunted him ever since. The implication: Beauprez would say whatever it takes to get elected, whatever his real views.

Beauprez has a voting record that speaks with more clarity on where he stands on the issues. It reveals a man who is loyal to his party, which is fine for Colorado Republicans, but less promising for Colorado as a whole if he becomes governor.

Both Ritter and Beauprez have talked of pursuing responsible energy development in Colorado, in a way that also respects the environment and locally impacted communities. But state residents, and especially those in Garfield County, should be concerned about Beauprez's past actions related to the environment. Conservationists accuse Beauprez of voting to exempt some oil and gas activities from water-protection laws, reducing royalty revenues going to Colorado communities to manage energy development impacts, subsidizing oil companies at a time of record-breaking profits, and opposing energy conservation measures such as increasing miles-per-gallon standards of new cars.

Beauprez also has taken a fairly hard-line approach to immigration that would entail forcing residents here illegally to return to their home countries and follow the proper process to enter the United States. While that might be best in the ideal, it would aggravate labor shortage problems in places such as western Colorado. Ritter has been pushing a

reasonable guest worker policy as a way to enable immigrants to get jobs and employers to find workers in an above-board fashion.

Ritter also appears to recognize the importance of Western Slope water, and supports conservation and other measures aimed at helping the Front Range to do without more diversions across the Continental Divide.

He also has shown an appropriate level of concern about other key state issues such as health care and growth.

Ritter could face a challenge involving restraint if he becomes governor. The state House and Senate could remain in Democratic hands after Tuesday's election. While that would provide the opportunity for the party to aggressively pursue its agenda, it would be important for Ritter to remember that he represents all Coloradans, not just those of a certain political bent.

As middle-ground and sensible as Ritter comes across to us, we believe this prosecutor would be up to the task of doing this state justice as its next governor.

[BACK](#) 