

Published: Sunday October 29, 2006

Ritter for governor

EDITORIAL THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

BILL RITTER has conducted an impressive statewide campaign for governor of Colorado and has earned our endorsement over Bob Beauprez in the Nov. 7 election.

Mr. Ritter, the Democratic candidate, is the former district attorney of Denver. Mr. Beauprez, an Arvada Republican, currently represents Colorado's 7th Congressional District in the northern suburbs bordering the capital city.

Our nod goes to Mr. Ritter as a man committed to tackling all the wide-ranging issues facing our state, regardless of political faction or geographic region. The people look to the governor, more than any other elected leader, to represent all the varied interests of this great state.

Both major parties have put forth knowledgeable, passionate candidates for governor. The deciding factor for us in Pueblo and Southern Colorado is their sharply differing positions on water.

At a Chieftain-sponsored debate last week, Mr. Ritter unreservedly committed as governor to signing and encouraging legislation to allow the Water Court to consider damage to water quality in applications for a water rights change, such as from agricultural to municipal or industrial use.

We were extremely disappointed when Rep. Beauprez said, no, he specifically would not sign the water quality bill that Rep. Buffie McFadyen of Pueblo West so ably sponsored this year and intends to introduce again in January.

The McFadyen bill, which she carefully drafted and amended through the 2006 session, unquestionably should become the law. Water - good quality water - is the lifeblood of the economy and quality of life in the Arkansas Valley, the San Luis Valley and other agricultural regions across the state.

Rural communities should not - cannot - be allowed to suffer from water rights transfers that degrade water quality and threaten the very way of life in rural Colorado.

The governor provides far more than just leadership on water and other environmental issues, of course.

We are impressed by Mr. Ritter's support for four-laning U.S. 50 from the Kansas state line through Pueblo. We believe he is sincerely committed to extending economic development and opportunity to Southeastern Colorado and throughout the state.

The governor deals in issues that can seem minor by comparison with the big picture. But they can add up. For instance, outgoing Gov. Bill Owens vetoed a bill that would ensure this region has at least two members of the Colorado State University-Pueblo governing board. We currently have only one of the nine voting seats on the board. Mr. Ritter supports increasing Pueblo-area representation on the CSU Board of Governors.

The governor must work with the Legislature to establish prudent and balanced policies for education, health care, transportation, corrections and a host of other issues that affect the daily lives of Coloradans.

There's much to commend Rep. Beauprez for his business-like approach as a solid fiscal conservative who has owned and operated successful businesses in Colorado, in addition to his public service.

We like what Rep. Beauprez says about looking out for the taxpayers against the special interests' constant drumbeat to grow government. He makes much sense on state budgeting and taxation, illegal immigration and self-reliance over increased dependency on the state.

In some ways, we wish the best in both candidates could be melded into one governor. Alas, that cannot be done.

Whichever of these two qualified men is elected, we want to be able to work closely with the next governor on issues affecting our region and our state.

We encourage him to have a healthy respect for the power of - and the tempering effect of - the governor's veto to block over-reaching or just plain bad bills from the Legislature. We believe in the American system of checks and balances in governing on behalf of all the people.

At this crucial juncture in history for Southern Colorado's water and future vitality, we recommend the candidate who has staked out a path for the entire state - urban and rural. That's Bill Ritter. He deserves your vote for governor.

©1996-2006The Pueblo Chieftain Online