



Ritter is our choice to lead Colorado

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Colorado's leadership dilemma is clearly before the people: Pick a new governor to fill the shoes being left by term-limited Bill Owens. Do that, and still deal effectively with the nagging issues of managing Referendum C money, continued concerns of illegal immigration, growth, health care, water and transportation.

It's a tough choice between two quality candidates: Bob Beauprez and Bill Ritter, but Ritter gets our vote.

Beauprez has experience in the state legislature and on Capitol Hill. He's a fiscal conservative and a moderate Republican, reaching out to the farmers with strong talk on conserving Colorado's water. He's got some of the right endorsements, such as Colorado Realtors and the small business lobby. He even has former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani stumping for him.

But running an election with a varying menu of clichés and famous faces at the ready strikes us as old-school at a time when people want more substance.

Ritter is a moderate Democrat who has carefully thought through problems facing Colorado. He follows up in speeches and debates with detail about how to manage the state's budget stress or how to provide affordable health care to all Colorado residents, or how to capitalize on a new energy economy.

We worry somewhat about Ritter's vague stance on water storage, knowing that Greeley's efforts to enlarge the Milton Seaman Reservoir are being hampered by one mouse, which many environmental groups seek to protect. Still, solid advisers can help steer Ritter what's best for protecting and storing the state's water sources.

We admit the Tribune editorial board wrangled with the endorsement in this race. There are two good, viable candidates who both would serve Colorado well with their varying experiences.

In fact, we must note here, there are actually three good candidates.

Weld County's own Chuck Sylvester has made a determined and impressive grassroots run as a write-in candidate for governor.

Sylvester's intentions are good. He cares deeply about Colorado and worries about the politicking he sees running rampant in the state. His platform is basic. "I don't know everything," he told the Tribune's Editorial Board. So, you find folks who know what to do to work for you. "You get good people, good things happen."

Sylvester's background is in farming and he's been the manager of the Denver Stock Show. As such, he's well-versed on the water issues facing Colorado. He believes Referendum C was critical to the well-being of Colorado's fiscal viability and finds TABOR and Amendment 23 confusing.

But, despite all Sylvester's strong suits -- including his approachability -- we still must focus on the viable candidacies of Beauprez and Ritter.

Which brings us back to endorsing Ritter. It comes down to this.

We can't dismiss the recent flap about the "illegal" information leak attributed to the Beauprez campaign. The information, apparently something anyone can get online for less than \$10, is not really the issue. It's that Beauprez relied on and defended this tactic to hurt Ritter's campaign. We don't want a governor who endorses such tactics for the sake of winning at any cost. Or who won't step forward and admit a mistake (or a staff member's mistake) and do something about it. Campaigning must reflect a higher morality in this day and age.

Ritter's principles draw us to him, along with his abilities to reach out to the common people. He's a good communicator who we believe can make bipartisanship work in the governor's office. This state needs a dynamic leader, which we think Ritter will be. Send him to the governor's seat and watch Colorado grow.

And put Sylvester on your Cabinet. This is one Coloradan who has a lot of knowledge and wisdom to help any governor make Colorado an even greater state than it already is.

[BACK](#) 