

=

GJSentinel.com **PRINT THIS** Click to Print[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Colorado, West Slope best served by Bill Ritter

Thursday, September 14, 2006

We noticed that both Bill Ritter and Bob Beauprez were wearing their cowboy boots when they trekked to Grand Junction last weekend to face off in the traditional, quadrennial gubernatorial debate sponsored by Club 20. Whew! Lucky for them. Had either one of the candidates been wearing anything so gauche as wingtips or penny loafers, they risked kissing the Western Slope vote good-bye.

Among the entertaining aspects of the political campaign season — at least with respect to stumping for votes on the Western Slope — is the degree to which candidates go in their efforts to convince voters that their cowboy boots really fit, that they really are the best person to represent all Coloradans and stand foursquare against all that is e-e-e-vil in the state's political culture. We're talking, of course, about big, bad Denver.

The Beauprez camp has sought to define Democrat Ritter as the big-city Denver guy while touting their ticket's geographical diversity and self-proclaimed nexus with all of us hoi polloi out in the state's hinterlands from Burlington and Grand Junction.

Well, we see little geographical distinction between a suburban Denver congressman like Beauprez and a former Denver district attorney like Ritter. In point of fact, on issue after issue of central importance to Western Slope voters and all Coloradans, Ritter is the substantially better candidate. And even though we have little doubt that GOP-friendly Mesa County will favor Beauprez come Nov. 7, we heartily endorse Ritter for governor.

We don't hold it greatly against Beauprez that he was a staunch supporter of Referendum A two years ago, the \$2-billion ballot question to build unspecified water projects throughout the state that failed to pass muster within any one of Colorado's 64 counties. To be sure, as Denver's district attorney, Ritter played no active opposition role against the misbegotten ballot question. What's far more important than the candidates' views regarding a two-year-old ballot question is the clarity of both men's view about water development today.

While both candidates clearly understand that an adequate water supply for all areas of the state is an issue of transcendent importance, Ritter makes it quite clear that he doesn't believe transmountain water diversions from the Western Slope should be the answer to the Front Range's water supply problems. Beauprez's position on transmountain water diversions is far more ambiguous than Ritter's, something that is not greatly surprising given the GOP candidate's natural inclination to support Referendum A.

Equally troubling is Beauprez's clear-cut willingness to put the interests of the Bush administration's domestic energy agenda, a legitimate enough concern as a public policy abstract, over the interests of the communities of Palisade and Grand Junction to keep their high-quality municipal watersheds free from natural gas drill rigs. Ritter, to his very great credit, has made it clear that, as governor, he would throw his support to Palisade and Grand Junction.

Really, now. On the issue of water alone, which candidate is the Front Range candidate and which guy is the statewide candidate? We think the answer is obvious.

Worrisome as Beauprez's water positions are from a provincial West Slope perspective, we find them a study in logic compared to his willingness to co-sponsor legislation in Congress that, among other ill-considered provisions, proposed sharp reductions in the royalty payments paid by oil shale companies. Those revenues are crucial to help areas like Western Colorado accommodate all the many demands a burgeoning energy industry places on the public infrastructure. The same legislation sought to put oil shale development on a fast track, at a time when responsible companies like Shell Oil frequently say that they intend to be very deliberate in developing the company's Mahogany Project in the Piceance Basin north of Rifle before making a commercial production decision late in this decade.

For his part, Ritter has taken a stance of clear opposition to the bill that Beauprez is so willing to co-sponsor with pedal-to-the-metal oil shale booster, Rep. Richard Pombo of California. (Is there political hay to reap by casting a Colorado congressman as the political soulmate of those ne'er-do-well, down-basin congressmen from California? Just wondering.)

We don't believe that Ritter is correct on every single public-policy issue. We find it troubling that he is not willing to oppose a ballot question raising the statewide minimum wage to \$6.85 an hour. We could support that. What's crazy is putting the minimum wage in Colorado on automatic pilot by tying it to annual increases in inflation for every year thereafter.

And we admit to a fondness for checks and balances in government and are persuaded by arguments that if Coloradans choose to elect Ritter while keeping both houses under majority control Ritter's fellow party members, we do so at our own risk. Well, Colorado survived the depredations of an entirely GOP-dominated legislature and executive branch of government before the 2004 election quite nicely, thank you. The state will survive quite nicely under a Gov. Bill Ritter as well.

>
>

Comments

Commenting is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. M-F

Post a comment

Name:

E-mail*:

Note: Your e-mail address will be displayed.

Remember me? Yes No

You may use the following formatting:

Bold: ****this text will be bolded**** = **this text will be bolded**

Italic: **this text will be italic** = *this text will be italic*

Link: [text to be linked](http://www.ajc.com) = [text to be linked](http://www.ajc.com)

Comments:

Post

***HTML not allowed in comments. Your e-mail address is required.**

Find this article at:

http://www.gjsentinel.com/opin/content/news/opinion/stories/2006/09/14/9_15_Ritter_endorsement_edit.html

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.