Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

**Water Policy:** GreenCO would like to see legislation for severance tax revenues to be used to increase water storage capacity and incentives given to water users utilizing new water conservation technologies. What is your position?

**Bob Beauprez**

I believe there is a lot more the state can do to keep Colorado water in Colorado. To do that, we need more water storage. Our forefathers had the vision to create water storage for future growth. We need to continue that vision and create more water storage for our future. I believe all options must be on the table in regards to funding these water storage projects. I support utilizing severance taxes for water storage. I agree we must utilize new water conservation technologies. I would be open to the idea of using tax incentives to promote water conservation.

**Bill Ritter**

First and foremost, severance tax revenues should be devoted to local communities to offset environmental and socio-economic impacts resulting from oil and gas drilling and mining development. After those needs are addressed, funds should be allocated to other worthy state programs. I support the current use of these funds to support water discussions.

My water plan for the 21st century calls for maximizing supplies through a responsible mix of conservation, reuse, efficiency, cooperation and voluntary crop-to-city water agreements. It will not be possible to meet our growing demand for water without innovative conservation and efficiency strategies. Once those efforts are maximized, we may then need to turn to additional storage projects. But in so doing, we must be strategic and selective as we consider future storage projects. We cannot sacrifice one part of the state without sacrificing the entire state. Our interests are all tied together, and the only way we will prosper as a state is to recognize, respect and protect the diversity and uniqueness each region represents. Expanding and improving existing facilities must be considered before building new ones, and smaller projects that serve multiple purposes – for fisheries, recreation, agriculture and power generation – will be important pieces of our water puzzle. No one disputes that the Front Range population will grow in the decades to come. But we must be smart in how we plan for that growth, and we must require new development projects to have sustainable water sources for the future.
Bob Beauprez

**Budget:** Do you support the development of a long-term budget strategy addressing the issue of fixing state financing by amending Tabor and Amendment 23 during this four-year budget timeout provided by Referendum C?

I believe in fixing problems before they get bigger. Unlike my opponent who wants to wait until the end of the 5-year time out to convene a commission to determine how to fix systemic problems. I believe we need to fix it now, not wait until the end of the 5-year time out.

We need to be willing to address all of our systemic conflicts – from the ratchet effect of TABOR, to the unbending increases of Amendment 23, to the Gallagher Amendment. It is time we take a long-term approach to how we do the state’s business.

Bill Ritter

I don't believe Referendum C addressed the structural budget challenges that we face in Colorado. I do, however, strongly believe that Referendum C provided a needed time-out from TABOR to allow us to begin to invest in our future. Our first priority should be to ensure that we use these funds, and for that matter all state funding, as wisely as possible. To this end, I issued my budget plan entitled, *A Smarter State Budget for the 21st Century*. Once we have done the hard work outlined in this plan and are comfortable that taxpayers are getting the greatest value for their dollar, we should have a thoughtful dialogue about structural budget issues. I have reviewed in detail the *Colorado Economic Futures Panel report* and talked with many of its members. I recognize the challenges we must overcome for Colorado’s economy and families to grow and prosper. I believe the first step to addressing this issue is to make certain we are managing state government as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Education is an important part of my agenda. I support restoring funding to our institutions of higher education. Referendum C passed in 2005, and I will support the will of the people and restore funding through Referendum C. I will also work with our Congressional Delegation to obtain federal funding for innovative programs that our colleges and universities are pursuing. I will also strengthen the College Opportunity Fund to ensure that Colorado students will be able to afford an education.

A first-rate higher education system along with an array of other post-secondary education opportunities is essential for building a vibrant economy. For years, Colorado enjoyed the benefits of a strong higher education system. However, over the past decade, we have witnessed a de-funding of higher education that is taking a toll. The necessary consequence has been soaring tuition and fees.

We must reverse the dramatic decline in state funding. I was the only Gubernatorial candidate to support Referendum C. Using Ref C revenues, I am committed to increasing Colorado’s investment in higher education, currently among the lowest in the country. While increasing state support, I will ask...
institutions to limit tuition increases to resident students, expand financial assistance to low-income students, and improve performance in retention and graduation rates. In recent years, no other sector of the state’s higher education system was hit harder by budget cutbacks than the community colleges. As governor, a cornerstone of my higher education agenda will be to restore community college system funding to a level comparable to that prior to the 2001 state economic recession.

I maintain an unwavering commitment to improving opportunity and attracting more jobs to the state. Key to achieving this objective is revitalizing post-secondary education so it can be an engine for Colorado’s economy.

For more on higher education and other issues important to Colorado, please see my Colorado Promise Plan for the 21st Century.

Health Care: GreenCO would like companies to be able to offer health insurance to all their employees. Would you support an effort to incentivise health care costs for small employers that do not place mandates on employers?

Small businesses are an important part of our economy. As a former small business owner, I understand the difficulties that small businesses face. As a Member of Congress, I have supported legislation that would help small businesses grow. The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) recently endorsed my candidacy for governor because of my strong record of support for small businesses.

As a Member of Congress, I supported legislation giving small businesses the ability to pool together, through business or professional associations, to achieve greater purchasing power to provide affordable health care coverage to their employees. Association Health Plans (AHPs) will be free from costly state-mandated benefits, thereby lowering costs. AHPs have the support of more than 180 groups including the U.S. Chamber of

Health care costs are spiraling out of control, straining the budgets of Colorado businesses, families and individuals. Many Colorado businesses, particularly small businesses, are struggling to provide health insurance to their employees while still maintaining their competitive edge. Quite simply, our health care system is broken, and this crisis will not be fixed by tinkering around the edges.

Solving this crisis will be one of my top priorities. With 788,000 Coloradans lacking health insurance, ending this crisis will dominate much of the first year of my administration. I am committed to convening all stakeholders and establishing a “Colorado Health Plan,” with legislation to be introduced in the 2008 session of the General Assembly. The goal: to improve health-care access, affordability and quality.

We need to take a comprehensive look at mandates assessing which mandates improve care in a cost
Bob Beauprez

Commerce, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the Associated Builders and Contractors. I will oppose new health care mandates on employers.

Bill Ritter

effective manner. As part of the processes of developing a Colorado Health Plan we will take an evidence based approach to assessing mandates.

Workforce Recruitment: What is role of the state of Colorado as it relates to immigration?

I believe the state must do more to stem the tide of illegal immigration. Massachusetts wants to deputize state patrol officers to enforce immigration laws. Arizona is aggressively pursuing illegal alien smugglers. With the budget shortfalls that Colorado is facing, we cannot afford to provide services to illegal aliens when we should be taking care of our own citizens. However, I strongly support entering into a MOU with the federal government to ensure Colorado is apprehending, detaining and deporting illegals. Growing up on a farm, I understand the need for migrant labor. However, laborers must be here legally. We need to pressure Washington to reform legal immigration and utilize 21st century technology and procedures to allow access to the size and nature of workforce our economy needs. As a state, we must make it harder for illegal aliens to stay here in

I believe that both Colorado and the nation have an immigration problem. The problem starts with borders that are not secured. This ultimately results in social, economic and political problems for Colorado. As a practical matter, we need labor to support our growing economy. Therefore, we have an economic problem of providing needed labor while at the same time enforcing our laws. This immediately leads to the political problem that Congress has been unwilling to de-politicize, resulting in a failure to pass meaningful reform.

Immigration is fundamentally a national issue that calls out for a national solution. The federal government has been negligent in politicizing the issue rather then addressing the problem with practical legislation. As a nation we must enforce our borders and enforce our laws. We also need to have practical solutions to complex problems, not simply political rhetoric. Turning 12 million people into felons and then expecting them to voluntarily travel outside the U.S. before returning is not practical or realistic. We need a national policy that acknowledges that the 12 million people in the country illegally play an important role in our economy. We need to bring these people out of the shadows, not push them deeper into hiding, and provide them with an orderly means of earning citizenship. Everyone must play by the same set of rules in a program that is not amnesty, but rather a path to citizenship that will be earned – and will include payment of back taxes and fines – as they continue to contribute to our economy. In this regard, I support the President and the Senate’s vision for a practical solution.
**Bob Beauprez**

**Workforce Recruitment:** What is your position on the validity and outcome of the special session?

While the issue of immigration has largely been a Federal issue, we, as a state, need to get tougher on illegal immigration policies. While not perfect, I believe the Special Session has created some of the toughest immigration laws in the country. We need to ensure that employers will not hire illegal aliens. Businesses have a responsibility to follow the rule of law and not hire illegal aliens.

**Licensure:** Would you support an effort to license landscape architects in Colorado?

I believe we need to allow this decision to be one driven by the industry, not government bureaucrats.

**GreenCO Industry Issues:** A significant percentage of GreenCO member companies perform subcontracting services as part of the larger construction industry. Do you support a policy for contract indemnification where each party pays for their own negligence as determined by a court of law?

I believe in the right to freely contract. Government should not interfere in that right. In construction contracts, it is standard practice to have one party assume responsibility and indemnify the other parties from liability for damages incurred on the job. The level of responsibility that each party assumes should be negotiated between the contracting parties. I support Governor Owens veto of HB-1077, because of the possible consequences to subcontractors. The American Subcontractors Association also opposed HB-1077. I agree with Governor Owens reasoning for his veto, while my opponent has stated he would sign the bill.

**Bill Ritter**

**Workforce Recruitment:** What is your position on the validity and outcome of the special session?

I applaud the Colorado Legislature and Governor Owens for setting politics aside to enact new immigration laws. Given the absence of leadership at the federal level, it was incumbent on the Legislature and the Governor to take meaningful action.

We should not turn employers into police officers or INS/ICE immigration officials. There are, however, a minority of employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers. We should support employers who responsibly work to comply with laws, while aggressively prosecuting employers who knowingly break the law by purposefully hiring undocumented employees.

**Licensure:** Would you support an effort to license landscape architects in Colorado?

Some regulation is necessary, as our goal should be to protect consumers and weed out businesses acting in bad faith, while imposing the lightest possible burden on responsible businesses. I believe the way to do that is to focus not on more or less regulation, but on the right regulation.

**GreenCO Industry Issues:** A significant percentage of GreenCO member companies perform subcontracting services as part of the larger construction industry. Do you support a policy for contract indemnification where each party pays for their own negligence as determined by a court of law?

I generally support the concept that each party should be liable for damages attributable to that party’s own negligence.
Bob Beauprez

GreenCO Industry Issues: In the area of property tax assessment, currently agricultural and “other agricultural” land used for production can be, and is, valued differently from county to county. What is your opinion on this issue?

I am open to this if we can build a consensus among the affected counties.

Bill Ritter

I support the fair enforcement in every county of our constitutional and statutory requirements for just valuations for assessment of agricultural land and all other categories of property not exempt from taxation. Among other enforcement mechanisms, the state constitution requires that there be an annual audit to determine whether or not the assessor of each county has complied with the property tax provisions of constitution and statute. In addition, a taxpayer concerned about valuations can bring the concern to the State Board of Equalization, which oversees the process and can address the concern. The stringent provisions of constitution and statutes reflect our state commitment to fair valuation.

Transportation: With an expected $60 billion shortfall in transportation funding over the next 20-30 years, would you support the use of SB-1 money to fund issues other than transportation?

I know that both our transportation network and funding mechanisms are outdated and modernized. I will begin addressing the issues by establishing a Transportation Finance and Implementation Panel within my first 90 days of office. The panel will consider and then propose new funding mechanisms and priorities for existing and future projects. All funding mechanisms will be on the table.

Until we have time to develop a modern funding mechanism for transportation funding in Colorado, we should look to SB-1 funds. The additional revenue from the passage of Referendum C helped to relieve pressure from those who would use SB-1 funds for non-transportation purposes. The additional Referendum C funds gave the green light to 36 projects. While there will always be debate on the proper use of SB-1 funds, the bigger threat to transportation funding are those people who would roll back the funding created by the passage of Referendum C. We all worked hard to pass...
create a reliable, sustainable, and dedicated funding source for our transportation needs that can grow with the economy. We need to find new ways to address the funding shortfall and this concept will help us with the funding shortfall.

**Bob Beauprez**

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I have first hand experience with Workers Comp in Colorado as a former small business man. Under my watch, Workers Comp reforms will not be rolled back, as has been attempted many times over the past 2 years.

**Bill Ritter**

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Referendum C. Instead of accepting the will of the voters, Congressman Beauprez has consistently worked to roll back Referendum C funding. His was the first signature on Initiative 88, and after it failed, he laid out a budget plan that would again roll back Referendum C funds and in the process significantly reduce funding for transportation.

**Governmental Regulations:** Do you have first hand experience in dealing with Workers’ Compensation claims? Nearly every year, Workers’ Compensation legislation is put forth to modify the program. Do you believe the system requires changes and if so, what changes would you recommend for improvements to current work comp programs in Colorado?

I support the current worker's comp system. I am also interested in aggressively pursuing and eliminating the fraud that runs rampant in the workers’ comp system. In addition, we need to look at the workers’ compensation fund. During the recession, several cash funds were tapped to help balance the state budget. The replenishment of the workers’ compensation fund needs to be handled within a review of all funds that were impacted by the recession.