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Policy Roundtable

2012 Candidate Survey
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Colorado State Senate District 14

Growing Colorado's economy and job creation continues to be a top priority for voters throughout the state. As a legislator, what is the one thing you believe that you could do have the greatest impact on improving Colorado's business climate?

My specialty is energy. Creating a balance environmental energy policy is critical to promote access to plentiful affordable energy. Access to energy is one of the foundation pillars of a growing economy. I believe that I will be an excellent representative in proposing balance compromises that encourage growth while protecting our shared natural resources. Escalating energy prices are making it more difficult in Colorado for businesses to be profitable. Some companies are on the edge of collapse. We must have plentiful clean energy to spur innovation, manufacturing and healthy growth.

In 2009, Colorado enacted rules and regulations for the oil and gas industry that are widely considered the most comprehensive and restrictive in the nation. Recently, local government have sought to implement their own set of regulations, many of which are preempted by existing state rules. Given the uncertainty that a patchwork of local regulations would create for the energy industry, would you support legislation banning local governments from creating new regulations?

I would support banning local governments from creating new regulation. Local government does not generally have the full resources and experience to create meaningful regulation without putting unique impediments to mineral development at every jurisdiction transition. This will add unreasonable costs to energy and mineral development. Conflicting regulation will add legal costs to projects affected by these conflicting jurisdictions.

Greater access to oil and gas reserves throughout the United States and here in Colorado has dramatically increased our potential domestic energy supply. The use of a time tested technology known as hydraulic fracturing has been a significant contributor to the energy industry's ability to capture resources that would otherwise be out of reach. Despite a long history of safely utilizing hydraulic fracturing technology, some interest groups are advocating for an outright ban on its use. As a legislator, would you support a ban on hydraulic fracturing – and if so, why?

I do not support a ban on hydraulic fracturing. The emissions of natural gas combustion are very low compared to traditional fossil fuels. Natural gas is an ideal

bridge fuel, as we hope the market can identify clean energy generation alternatives that are inexpensive as well as clean. The amount of water used in the fracking process is less per unit of energy than many of the bioenergy alternatives. When natural gas is burned it also returns water to the atmosphere, invalidating the claims that water is lost from the hydrologic cycle.

Colorado's Medicaid program is going at an unsustainable rate, threatening to consume a greater portion of the state's General Fund. As Medicaid costs continue to grow, funds for K-12, Higher Ed, and other important funding priorities are reduced. As a legislator, would you support reforms to Colorado's Medicaid program and if so what possible solutions would you offer?

I think we must consider returning to 2007 qualification criterion. Means and asset testing are also likely to help reduce the population of citizens who qualify for these benefits and thereby reduce costs. We need to complete evaluations to determine efficacy of directly funding safety net clinics instead of using private clinics with an inefficient billing and payment cycle to reduce total costs for those patients that the Medicaid program does cover.

The Supreme Court's decision on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act affirmed that states cannot be coerced by the federal government into expanding Medicaid beyond current levels. State lawmakers will have to decide whether or not they want to expand Medicaid as part of the implementation of new health care law or opt out of the expansion altogether. As a legislator, would you support the State of Colorado opting out of the Medicaid expansion – why or why not?

I support opting out because our current system is already too stressed to handle an additional 200,000 Medicaid patients. Medicaid currently takes 22% of our budget and with other judicial and federal mandates, the state is going to be hard pressed to pay for a significant expansion.

Currently, when a bill is introduced the Office of Legislative Council issues a fiscal note indicating the potential fiscal impact the proposed legislation would have on state revenue. There have been efforts recently to create a similar impact statement for businesses. The creating of a business impact statement would allow businesses to weigh in on the impact that a bill would have on their industry. Would you support the creating of a business impact statement – why or why not?

Yes, I do support the creation of a business impact statement. Frequently businesses are treated as piggy banks by legislators, without considering the long-term implications of increased costs for businesses within the state. A business impact statement would be a critical tool for legislators in evaluation of legislation.

Colorado currently assesses an income tax to both distributed and undistributed income from irrevocable trusts managed in the state. Some states only apply an income tax to distributed income and have experienced dramatic growth in individual irrevocable trust assets managed in their respective states. In order to eliminate the double taxation in Colorado, ensure our state is positioned to create good paying financial sector jobs and

capture additional tax revenue without raising taxes, would you support the elimination of the income tax on undistributed income?

I would support the elimination of the income tax on undistributed income.