



Colorado Secretary of State

## *The Secretary's Report*

Secretary of State  
Mike Coffman

Newsletter  
June 2007

In the June Issue...

### **Coffman Applauds Veto of Driver's License Bill**

### **New Policy Limits Outside Political Activity of Employees**

*A message from Sec.  
Coffman...*

Dear Friend,

The legislative session ended earlier this month, and my office weighed in on a number of issues relating to how Colorado conducts elections:

I vigorously opposed allowing felons on parole the right to vote; I opposed adding a presidential primary to our caucus system, which would have been nothing more than a \$2 million straw poll; I opposed moving Colorado to an all mail ballot election system; and I opposed a misguided attempt to undermine the Electoral College and elected the President by national popular

**Coffman applauds veto of HB07-1313, but warns that weakening Colorado's driver's license through rulemaking is still bad policy that threatens public safety.**

Under mounting pressure, Governor Bill Ritter vetoed HB07-1313 today. The legislation would have expanded the documentation that can be used to obtain a Colorado driver's license or photo identification card, therefore severely weakening these state-issued documents for identification purposes.

Opposition to the legislation grew to a fever pitch in recent weeks with the *Aurora Sentinel*, *Durango Herald*, *Fort Collins Coloradan*, *Pueblo Chieftain*, *Rocky Mountain News*, and just today, the *Denver Post* and the *Grand Junction Sentinel* using their editorial pages to urge a veto.

During a press conference at the State Capitol last month, Secretary of State Mike Coffman stood with former Governor Dick Lamm and members of the law enforcement community to call on Ritter to veto the legislation. "This bill presents a clear security threat to our nation," Governor Lamm said at the time.

"I applaud Governor Ritter's veto of House Bill 1313," Coffman said today. "This bill would have threatened public safety by weakening the integrity of Colorado's driver's license as an identification document."

Coffman acknowledges that there have been legitimate cases in

vote.

My office supported legislation creating a permanent mail ballot (absentee) list, but only after important safeguards were added to the bill; I supported legislation that would require voters to show proof of citizenship in order to register to vote; and I fought for legislation that would make it easier for our military men and women to vote absentee when serving in a combat zone.

We are in the process of developing legislative strategy for the 2008 session. I am committed to protecting the integrity of our electoral system, so Colorado voters can have confidence in our elections.

*Mike Coffman*

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which citizens were denied a driver's license when they ought not to have been; HB07-1313 was a misguided attempt to address those concerns. Governor Ritter already has the authority to make any changes he feels are necessary to the current system of issuing Colorado driver's licenses or photo ID cards through the rulemaking process within the Department of Revenue, Coffman said.

"However, I caution the Governor that any changes he makes to the system not compromise public safety or lead to an increase in identity fraud," Coffman said. "This legislation went too far, essentially watering down the driver's license to a meaningless document. I strongly urge Governor Ritter to strike a more balanced position on this issue."

#### **Coffman Issues New Policy Limiting Outside Political Activities of Staff Directly or Indirectly Involved in Elections**

The Secretary of State's office, as the office that oversees statewide and federal elections in Colorado, must be held to the highest ethical standards.

The men and women who work in the Secretary of State's office understand that - they know their work is important, and they take great pride in the public service they provide.

They understand that we must make every effort to be non-partisan, both in appearance and in action; they understand that even the appearance of a conflict of interest is unacceptable; and they know that any hint of partisanship in our policy decisions or daily operations would rightfully cast doubt on the integrity of this office and of the elections we oversee.

Therefore, I have adopted the following policy for those employees directly or indirectly involved in elections:

#### **PROHIBITED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES:**

Publicly endorse or oppose, or actively work for or against a candidate for a partisan office, a political party, a statewide ballot initiative or a referendum.

Contribute to a partisan organization or political party, candidate for a partisan office, or an organization that is working for or against a statewide ballot initiative or a

referendum.

Hold an official position in a partisan organization or political party. Participate in the partisan nominating process by attending precinct caucuses, assemblies or conventions.

Be a candidate for, or hold, a partisan public office.

#### PERMITTED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES:

Register to vote under a partisan affiliation.

Fully participate in nonpartisan political activities, to include being a candidate for, or holding, a nonpartisan public office.

In developing this policy, my office contacted secretaries of state from across the nation to determine what, if any, guidelines other state elections officials have in place regarding outside, partisan political activity.

With adoption of this policy, Colorado has some of the toughest standards in the country. Every employee directly or indirectly involved in elections was required to sign a form stating that they have read and agree to these restrictions.

My office also researched case law and sought the advice of the Colorado Attorney General's office to ensure that the new policy did not unduly infringe on the constitutional rights of my staff.

I also believe it is important that the Secretary of State, as the state's chief elections official, be held to the same high standards. I will therefore be subject to the same restrictions regarding endorsing or contributing to partisan candidates, statewide referendums and ballot initiatives.

The most sacred of all of the freedoms bestowed upon Americans is the right to vote. It is my responsibility - and the responsibility of every employee in this office - to make sure that this right is exercised under a process that is always fair and honest to the voters of our state.

This policy will help ensure that we never fall short of this standard.

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Colorado Department of State | 1700 Broadway | Suite 250 | Denver | CO | 80290

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