
Barbara O'Brien

Lieutenant Governor for
the State of Colorado

Nominated by:

Zenaido Camacho

University of Colorado Denver

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

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August 28, 2009

Trent E. Gabert
Chair, Executive Committee
Brock International Prize in Education
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Studies
University of Oklahoma
1610 Asp Avenue, Suite 108
Norman, OK 73072-6405

Dear Trent,

When asked to serve as a juror, my immediate impulse was to think of people I have worked with and known as possible candidates, including a former Secretary of Education and a former head of the National Science Foundation, among others. Upon further research and lengthy reflection of my list of possible nominees, Lt. Governor O'Brien stood out as a luminary in education initiatives. Therefore, it is with great enthusiasm that I recommend Lieutenant Governor Barbara O'Brien for the 2010 Brock International Prize in Education.

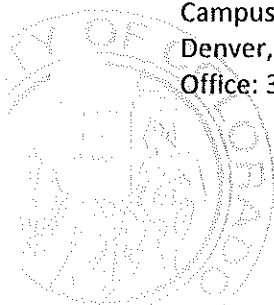
As Lieutenant Governor for the State of Colorado, Barbara O'Brien has made the educational experience of students in Colorado her primary focus. The attached Curriculum Vitae and supporting documents confirm Barbara O'Brien's profound impact on P-20 initiatives in the State of Colorado which have trickled into impacting education on the national level. She has served on several boards and commissions including chairing Colorado's Race to the Top bid. Lt. Governor O'Brien has especially elevated the educational experiences of Coloradan students by focusing on child healthcare and safety issues. In addition, she has initiated educational policies which have increased funding for schools, created charter schools, and expanded early childhood education.

Through her role in the Governor's office and prior work in nonprofit child advocacy, Barbara O'Brien has affected the lives of thousands of Coloradan children and young adults, and for this reason I am honored to nominate her for the Brock Prize.

Best Regards,



Zenaïdo Camacho, PhD
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Barbara O'Brien

Resume and Biography

BARBARA O'BRIEN, Ph.D.
Lieutenant Governor of Colorado
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303-319-0036 (c) · 303-866-2087 (o)
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CURRENT

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF COLORADO

2007—Present

Portfolio includes:

- Education Reform: preschool – college
- Birth to 5 initiatives
- Health and Wellness: Child Health; Connecting Kids to Nature; Reform of School Nutrition
- Commission on Indian Affairs
- Commission on Community Service (Vista, AmeriCorps)
- Arts and Education and the Creative Economy
- Aerospace Industry

RECENT EXPERIENCE

COLORADO CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGN

1990 – 2006

President

Responsible for the overall direction and management of a statewide, nonprofit child advocacy organization:

- Shaped public policy to improve the health, education and safety of all Colorado kids
- Analyzed data, documented emerging trends, and tracked statewide progress toward measurable goals.
- Unified diverse coalitions around priorities for children's health and well being
- Communicated policy priorities and innovative solutions to state and national foundations, policy makers, the business community, and the media
- Served on a boards and commissions
- Managed a staff of 20 and an annual budget of \$1.3 million
- Created and managed a statewide network of more than 5,000 issues experts and advocates

Major accomplishments:

- Passage of Amendment 35 – *a statewide ballot initiative to increase in taxes on tobacco with revenue earmarked for health care*
- Colorado Small Schools Initiative- *high school reform involving 14 schools*
- Passage of Amendment 23 – *a statewide ballot initiative to increase funding for public schools*
- Tony Grampsas Youth Services Fund – *created a state revenue stream to fund community programs working with youth at risk for crime and violence*
- Child Health Plan – *created a health insurance plan for uninsured children*
- Infant Immunization Act – *expanded the childhood vaccination program*
- Child Care Pilot Projects – *passed legislation to stimulate innovation and quality improvement in subsidized child care*

- Child Care Tax Credits – *created a tax credit for working parents*
- Child Care Contribution Tax Credit – *created a tax credit to stimulate donations to low income child care centers and before-and-after school programs*
- Charter School Act – *led two year effort to pass legislation creating charter schools in Colorado*
- Colorado Preschool Program – *created state funded preschool for high risk children.*

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Race to the Top, chair of statewide bid committee for \$400 million grant for education reform (2009)
P-20 Coordinating Council, co-chair (2007-present)
Colorado Space Coalition, co-chair (2007-present)
LiveWell Colorado (2007-present)
Metro Denver Health and Wellness Commission, chair (2007-present)
Mile High Montessori Board of Advisors (2006-present)
Mayor's Leadership Team on Early Education (2004-05)
Governor's Commission on Children and Families (2000)
National *Kids Count* Steering Committee (1998-2000)
Kids Caucus, Founder and Co-Chair (1996-2001)
Tony Grampsas Youth Services Fund, appointed by Governor (1994-2001)
Mayor's Education Advisory Committee (1996 - 2003)
Peak Foundation, Founding Board of Directors (1996-99)
Clayton Charter School, Governance Committee (1994-96)
Commission on Families and Children, appointed by Governor (1991-93)
Denver Initiative for Families and Children (1990-92)
Commission on AIDS, Chair, appointed by Governor (1988-90)

AWARDS (Selected)

Advocate of the Year – Rocky Mountain Youth Clinics (2008)
"25 Champions of Education" - PEBC (2008)
Award for Service to Children with Disabilities – ARC of Denver (2007)
Women and Power – JFK School of Government, Harvard University (selected for inaugural class 2005)
Women of Distinction – Girl Scouts Mile High Chapter (2005)
Advocacy Award – American Heart Association (2005)
Outstanding Healthcare Professional – Colorado Cancer Coalition (2005)
Ethics Award – Daniels College of Business, University of Denver (2000)
People to Watch in the 21st Century – *Denver Post* (1999)
Health Advocacy Award – National Assoc. of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Colorado Chapter (1998)
Children's Legal Clinic Annual Award (1997)
Colorado Trust Award for Merit (1993)

PAST EXPERIENCE

Institute for International Business, Univ. of Colorado at Denver Executive Director	1988 - 90
University of Colorado at Denver Director of Campus Affairs	1985 - 88
Office of Colorado Governor Richard D. Lamm Head Speechwriter and Deputy Director for Policy	1982 - 85
Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College-Columbia University Project Assistant	1977 - 79

EDUCATION

Columbia University	Ph.D.	1981
Teachers College, Columbia University	M.A.	1978
University of California at Los Angeles	B.A.	1972

MEDIA AND PUBLICATIONS

Numerous interviews, live TV and radio debates, and op-eds as Lt. Governor (2006-present) and as president of the Colorado Children's Campaign (1990-2006)

Spokesperson for Amendment 35 (tobacco tax increase): Numerous TV and radio debates, radio call-in programs, and internet chats (2004)

Numerous op-eds on early education, education reform, child health, and youth development (1990-2006)

Report on the Decade of the Child and the Goals for Children and Youth in the Year 2000 (1991, 1992)

Healthy Families, Healthy Business: An Employer's Guide to Family Friendly Policies (1992)

Expert commentator on education reform and children's issues for *Denver Post*, *Rocky Mountain News*, *Colorado Springs Telegraph Gazette*, *Pueblo Chieftain*, *Ft. Collins Coloradan* KYGO radio, KCNC-TV Channel 4, KWGN-TV Channel 2, and KUSA-TV Channel 9

Advisory Committee for *Smart Start* documentary, KWGN-TV Channel 2 (1997-99)

Kids Count in Colorado – Annual report on the status of Colorado children and youth (1993 – 2005)

Biography

Barbara O'Brien is a long-time advocate for young children and teens and has a history of innovative policy initiatives.

Prior to becoming Lt. Governor, O'Brien spent 16 years as president of the Colorado Children's Campaign, a statewide public policy and advocacy nonprofit organization. Her leadership has produced major statewide policy initiatives that increased funding for schools, created charter schools, expanded early childhood education, increased access to health care for uninsured children, reduced teen smoking and expanded after-school programs.

As lieutenant governor, O'Brien has an ambitious agenda for education, health and wellness, and aerospace issues.

Education

Colorado has one of the most educated populations in the nation but faces some education challenges. Gov. Ritter appointed Lt. Governor O'Brien to serve as the co-chair of the P-20 Education Council, which oversees education reform and innovation from pre-school to post-secondary education. In its first year, the P-20 Council successfully advocated for expansion of full-day kindergarten and pre-school statewide.

Health & Wellness

Colorado is one of the nation's healthiest states, but its residents are on the same obesity trend upward as the rest of the country. To help change the trend, Lt. Gov. O'Brien is working with the Metro Denver Health & Wellness Commission and LiveWell Colorado, a public-private partnership to encourage small steps toward healthier habits in schools, communities and at work.

Aerospace

Colorado is home to the second largest aerospace industry (after California). There are 26,650 private aerospace jobs in Colorado and 171,200 people in space-related jobs. So it is no surprise that aerospace is one of four economic development sectors targeted by the Ritter administration as critical to the state's future. Lt. Gov. O'Brien serves as co-chair of the Colorado Space Coalition, a group of business, government and military representatives that support and promote Colorado's aerospace industry. Lt. Gov. O'Brien actively promotes science, technology, engineering and math education to ensure Colorado's next generation of aerospace workforce.

Commission on Indian Affairs

The lieutenant governor's office is also home to the Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs and Lt. Gov. O'Brien serves as its chair. The Commission was created in 1976 to foster productive relationships between state government, Colorado's two Ute tribes and other American Indian residents. In January 2008, the tribal chairs for both the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Tribes were invited to attend Governor Ritter's State of the State speech for the first time in modern history.

Personal Background

Lt. Gov. O'Brien and Dr. Richard O'Brien have been married for 36 years. They have lived in Colorado since 1982. They are parents to two grown sons, Jared and Connor, and live in Denver with their two dogs Tas and Tika.

PAST PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Colorado's 47th Lieutenant Governor	2007 - present
President, Colorado Children's Campaign	1990 - 2006
Executive Director, Institute for International Business, CU-Denver	1988 - 1990

Director of Campus Affairs, University of Colorado at Denver	1985 - 1988
Head Speechwriter and Deputy Director for Policy for the Office of the Governor, Gov. Richard Lamm	1983 - 1985
Project Assistant, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Columbia University	1977 - 1979

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

University of California at Los Angeles, Bachelor of Arts	1972
Columbia University, New York PhD	1981

Barbara O'Brien

**Writing
Samples**

University of Colorado Denver

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August 28, 2009

Brock International Prize in Education
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Studies
University of Oklahoma
1610 Asp Avenue, Suite 108
Norman, OK 73072-6405

Dear Jurors for the Brock International Prize in Education,

In the packet describing the many accomplishments of Lieutenant Governor Barbara O'Brien, I am also including two of the publications embodying much of her work. Unfortunately, it has come to my attention that additional publications for the other jurors are not available. Consequently, I am including the website addresses below for the jurors to view online. It is my understanding that the publications submitted will be available when we meet to discuss each of the nominees. I apologize for this oversight on my part and trust that it will not impact her candidacy.

Colorado Children's Budget: <http://www.coloradokids.org/includes/downloads/sbudget.pdf>

Kids Count in Colorado: <http://www.coloradokids.org/includes/downloads/kc2005book.pdf>

Best Regards,



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Vice Provost and Associate Vice Chancellor of Diversity and Inclusion
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STATE OF COLORADO

OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
130 State Capitol
Denver, Colorado 80203-1792
Phone: (303) 866-2087



Barbara O'Brien
Lt. Governor

Testimony to the House Committee on Education and Labor

June 4, 2009

Submitted by

Barbara O'Brien, Lt. Governor of Colorado

Thank you Chairman Miller, Committee members and Congressman Polis for this opportunity to talk about charter schools.

I was the president of the Colorado Children's Campaign, a statewide child advocacy organization from 1990 to 2006 when I ran for Lt. Governor. Our mission was to advocate for better health, safety and education for all Colorado kids, but particularly for children most at risk. In the early 1990s there was little hard data on vulnerable children in the public school system, but all you had to do was walk into a fourth grade class in a poor neighborhood and see the faces of the kids who had already mentally checked out to know that those eager young faces had stopped learning in school and that a lot of teens would be dropping out.

In 1991, I began searching for ways to change the trajectory to success for vulnerable students. Charter schools offered a way to stimulate innovation *within* public education by giving educators greater autonomy in exchange for greater accountability. After two years of research and coalition building, the Children's Campaign successfully advocated for the passage of the Colorado Charter School Act of 1993, which the Colorado Legislature passed and Governor Roy Romer signed into law, making us the third state in the nation to enact such a law. This was still unchartered territory, but inaction was no longer an option in the face of educational failure.

This failure became even clearer when the No Child Left Behind Act produced additional data confirming that low income, minority and rural students were indeed being left far behind. Reformers began to use the autonomy of charter schools to schedule more time in school, form different educational missions from college prep to vocational education, use different instructional methods, and encourage increased engagement with parents. In Colorado, for example, 97 percent of charters use models that are different from traditional schools, including Montessori, experiential learning, and technology-based curricula, among others.

Charter schools create opportunities and open doors for kids who would otherwise be left behind. They do it by using the best of the American spirit -- entrepreneurship, innovation, and hard work. They are an asset, not a threat, to our public education system.

Some districts initially viewed their own public charter schools as competition, but most districts now celebrate the educational diversity they bring. For example, Denver Public Schools

is actively seeking out more high-performance charter schools to help it meet the learning needs of their students. We have also created a state chartering authority in Colorado, The Colorado Charter School Institute, so districts that do not have the capacity to serve as quality authorizers can delegate that function to the institute.

Charter schools are incubators of innovation that is replicated and diffused throughout our public school system. I view charter schools as education laboratories – taking risks, trying new things, developing alternatives, and pushing the reform envelope. Districts are learning every day from successful models and can deploy their knowledge in other schools.

Since 1993, our state's charter schools have experienced both success and failure, just like any new venture, but their entrepreneurial risk-taking has clearly led to great rewards system-wide. In Colorado, 78 percent of charters made Adequate Yearly Progress last year, compared to 58 percent of traditional public schools, and 55 percent of charters were rated excellent or higher compared to 43 percent of traditional public schools. Charter schools have come a long way since 1993 and now serve seven percent of the student population – more than double the national average. I would like to briefly highlight a few examples:

- West Denver Preparatory Charter School: With nearly 90 percent of its students eligible for the federal Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) Program, the school boasts higher proficiency rates than the district and the state, and stands out among nearby middle schools, according to a June 2009 Colorado Department of Education (CDE) report. On the new Colorado Growth Model, its students scored the highest average growth percentile of any school in Denver Public Schools in both the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. Entering students are often several grades behind. To help them catch up and prepare for college students attend longer school days, receive extended class time, complete homework assignments daily, have access to tutoring, and are held to high standards. As Founder and Head of School Chris Gibbons points out, West Denver Prep is “all about college all of the time.”
- The Pinnacle Charter School in Federal Heights is another example of public charter school success beating the odds. The school uses the core-knowledge model in grades K-8 and the high school curriculum has a college preparatory focus. Advanced placement and dual credit classes are also available. More than half of its students are minorities. A recent CDE report commended the school for both its overall academic achievement and its significant yearly growth, calling it a “high growth school.”
- And, there is the Denver School of Science and Technology, one of the highest-performing public schools in the state with 60 percent minority students that has exceeded the state median growth rate substantially for every subject for every subgroup of students for the past three years.
- Finally, the Roosevelt Edison Public Charter School with 85 percent of its students eligible for FRL and 75 percent minority students, was labeled a “beating the odds” school by CDE – meaning that at least half of the school's students are eligible for FRL and the school received a performance rating of “excellent” or demonstrated “high growth” in achievement scores.

So what makes these schools effective in educating at-risk students when others have failed? After more than 15 years since we passed the law, I believe that we now have enough

evidence to know what works and why. Here are a few characteristics that I have identified in successful charter schools:

- They welcome accountability.
- They have found ways to have more hours per school day and more days per school year so that their students can catch up – with the support of their teachers and parents.
- They welcome data.
- They foster a culture of achievement.
- They have demonstrated the importance of the leadership of a good principal.
- They welcome high performance standards.
- They attract principals and teachers who want the challenge of overcoming great odds to boost their students' achievement.
- They innovate with every component of a school from curriculum to assessment to schedule.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that not all charter schools work out, and districts have had to intervene and even close unsuccessful charter schools in Colorado. This is an important part of our charter school law that provides districts with the tools and the authority they need to intervene if a charter school is not working out. That is why it is imperative for authorizers to have policies and processes in place to swiftly close failing charters.

Accountability is a cornerstone of the charter school approach and quality control is of the utmost importance to and welcomed by the charter school community.

But the successes far outweigh the failures, as evidenced by the growing charter school enrollment and waiting lists in Colorado. In the 2007-2008 school year, 56,000 students were enrolled in more than 140 schools, while another 38,000 students were on waiting lists.

While I've been addressing the issue of charters and at-risk students, large concentrations of which are found in major urban centers, federal policy makers should also consider and support the role of charters in boosting the achievement of suburban students with a lower risk profile, yet similar needs for improved educational outcomes. We as a country should not be complacent about our best schools as other developed countries accelerate the academic achievements of their students.

Congress and the Obama Administration need to lead the country in putting a laser focus on student achievement. Today there are many models of successful charters – from the national KIPP network to the unique West Denver Prep – and it is time for federal education policy to include incentives for replicating successful charters and disincentives for allowing unsuccessful charters to continue. We must invest in the expansion and replication of what works and close down what has failed. Without access to resources, schools with a proven track record of raising achievement and closing the achievement gap are unable to serve more students.

However, there is one caveat...

Charter schools are the research and development arm of education. While our focus should be on replicating successful models, we should always leave room for further innovation.

We owe it to students to give them the best we have.

Thank you.

http://www.denverpost.com/ci_12116114?IADID=Search-www.denverpost.com-www.denverpost.com
opinion

We can't sacrifice early childhood education

By Colorado Lt. Gov. Barbara O'Brien (D) and Connecticut Lt. Gov. Michael Fedele (R)
Posted: 04/12/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

Faced with the deepening economic crisis, state leaders are being forced to make difficult choices about where to invest dwindling revenue.

Lieutenant governors are on the front lines of this debate. As leaders in state legislatures and in promoting economic development, we have a vested interest in policies that simultaneously save resources and create prosperity in the long run.

Despite these challenging and politically contentious times, lieutenant governors from both parties and from every region of the country are in agreement about at least one investment that states cannot afford to sacrifice -- early education.

Few investments these days offer a guaranteed return, but quality pre-kindergarten is one of them.

That is why we authored, and our colleagues in the National Lieutenant Governors Association just passed, a resolution supporting high-quality, voluntary pre-k for all children.

Pre-k is one of the most important and well-researched public education strategies of 21st century. Thanks to advances in neuroscience, we now know that the great majority of the brain's architecture is set by age five.

Moreover, Harvard University researchers have found that 50 percent of the achievement gap that is present in twelfth grade is already present by first grade. If our nation ever hopes to turn around high dropout and low graduation rates, we must base education policy on research and invest in proven programs. If we

hope to strengthen our global economic competitiveness we must develop our human capital starting with the youngest learners.

The preponderance of evidence shows quality pre-k helps children succeed in school and in life.

Study after study demonstrates that pre-k results in savings for every dollar invested. For example, experimental trials involving low-income families found that students who attended pre-k were less likely to need special education services to catch up to their peers, were less likely to be held back in school, were more likely to complete high school and were more likely to enroll in college.

Pre-k graduates also see greater lifetime earnings and pay more tax dollars back to state and local governments, are less likely to be arrested by age 19 and are more likely to lead healthy lifestyles. These findings have been corroborated over the years, making pre-k one of the most rigorously researched policy solutions at our disposal.

During these critical economic times, state leaders should prioritize spending on policies that yield the greatest returns on investment. As Federal Reserve economist Art Rolnick has said, "The return far exceeds the return on most projects that are currently funded as economic development." In short, state leaders cannot afford to ignore this proven educational and economic development solution.

Because the educational system is in such need and the research is so clear, leaders from both the public and private sector are rallying around the cause of pre-k. Business leaders, law enforcement and military officials, doctors, pastors and policy makers of both parties have organized to promote a commitment to pre-k. The National Association of Lieutenant Governors is proud to have joined this important movement.

Without question, the first and most important teachers are a child's parents. We also recognize that quality early education programs help parents make the most of this critical window of development. As the newly ratified pre-k resolution

makes clear, the nation's lieutenant governors believe it's time to invest in what works.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is an online-only column and has not been edited.

Protecting our future

By Barbara O'Brien
Posted: 06/17/2007 01:00:00 AM MDT

A boy with asthma can't get the inhalers and regular checkups he needs.

A girl with attention deficit disorder struggles in school because she can't get the counseling and prescriptions that help control her condition.

A boy injured in a car crash gets emergency care, but his mother can't afford the ongoing rehabilitation he needs to heal completely.

These aren't hypothetical cases. They are real stories of real children who have gone without the care they need because their families can't afford health insurance.

Fortunately, in two of these cases, the children did succeed in getting coverage through the Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), a state-sponsored insurance program for children whose families make too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance. Because of CHP+, they were able to get the treatment they need.

Now, though, this vitally important program is in jeopardy. Without additional federal funds, Colorado's ability to serve tens of thousands of uninsured children will shrink. If the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is not expanded, more children may find themselves in the type of situation described above.

Nearly 180,000 Colorado kids - one in six of our children - currently are uninsured. Children without health coverage are less likely to get immunizations to prevent childhood diseases, regular checkups to prevent small problems from turning into big ones, and prompt care for urgent needs. They are more than seven times as likely as insured children to go without needed medical care,

more than three times as likely to forgo dental care, and more than twice as likely to go without necessary eyeglasses.

SCHIP, a landmark program created by Congress in 1997, was designed to address that problem. Since its inception, SCHIP has reduced the percentage of uninsured children nationwide by more than one-third.

SCHIP is a block grant from the federal government to the states - not an entitlement - providing \$2 in federal money for every \$1 invested by the state. States have the flexibility to create their own programs, and I am proud to have helped craft Colorado's CHP+ plan.

CHP+ covers kids whose parents make up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. That's about \$40,000 for a family of four - not much money in this time of high housing, energy and gas costs. Families pay an annual enrollment fee; in return, their children get basic medical and dental care.

Currently, more than 50,000 kids and 1,300 pregnant women are covered by CHP+ in Colorado. But that's fewer than half the kids who qualify for the program. We estimate that more than 55,000 additional Colorado children are eligible for CHP+ but not enrolled.

In order to cover those children, we need funds for outreach and enrollment, and to pay providers fairly. We can't cover more kids if we don't have enough doctors or the means to reach out to those children's families.

That's why additional funds are so critical - and that's where Congress comes in. SCHIP is up for reauthorization and funding in Congress this year. Fortunately, the program enjoys broad bipartisan support.

Funding, though, is complicated. In order to cover all the children who are eligible under current guidelines but not enrolled, Congress must authorize \$50 billion in total SCHIP funding for the next five years. That may sound like a lot, but it's less than one-tenth of the \$1 trillion Medicare prescription drug benefit.

On the other hand, if SCHIP funding is not expanded, Colorado's CHP+ program will be in the red in less than five years.

We are fortunate to have strong advocates for SCHIP in our delegation who can keep that from happening.

When we give our children a solid foundation - safe communities, a good education and good health - our society benefits culturally, socially and economically. I hope all members of our delegation will cast their votes to protect the future of Colorado's children - and our state - by expanding funding for SCHIP.

Barbara O'Brien was elected Colorado lieutenant governor in November along with Gov. Bill Ritter. Prior to that, she spent 15 years as president of the Colorado Children's Campaign.

http://www.denverpost.com/ci_12557469?IADID=Search-www.denverpost.com-www.denverpost.com

opinion

Get your kids outdoors today

By Rick Cables and Barbara O'Brien
Posted: 06/10/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

Warmer, longer days are here and the outdoors are calling. Parents should encourage kids to unplug and go outside. But today's children are spending half the time outdoors they did 20 years ago, while the obesity rate has doubled since then.

There is mounting evidence that indicates being disconnected from nature has negative impacts on our children. Author Richard Louv talks about "nature-deficit disorder" in his book "Last Child in the Woods" that links some of the most worrisome childhood trends, including obesity, attention disorders and depression.

Colorado, the U.S. Forest Service and 100 other partners are creating opportunities for kids to get connected with nature. This summer, the lieutenant governor's office is conducting Colorado Kids Outdoors forums throughout the state to hear about successful activities in communities and what barriers we face in reconnecting our kids to the outdoors. We will produce a roadmap to the many ways we can encourage our kids to connect with nature.

The office also is working on a Colorado Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, based on suggestions sent to us from kids all over the state. It will be an affirmative statement of what we treasure in Colorado and activities every child should have the opportunity to experience before they are 18 years old.

Our state and national parks and forests will be a key resource in this effort. Naturalist John Muir once said, "The sun shines not on us but in us; the rivers flow not past, but through us." By reacquainting our children with the natural

world, we can help empower a new generation of healthy, active outdoor advocates who share our passion for preserving and maintaining our untrammeled natural heritage.

Nationally, children spend 6 1/2 hours a day connected to some type of electronic device. The Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service is determined to help reverse this trend and introduce Colorado kids to the joys of the outdoors. Many of us who grew up in Colorado have fond memories of fishing along a creek, hunting with our dads, camping with family and friends, skiing or hiking trails. It is a part of our culture. These experiences shaped our lives and created the next generation of naturalists, conservationists and sportsmen.

In Colorado, the national forests provide some of the most spectacular landscapes in the world on which our kids can play. The memories created on these lands will last a lifetime and the images shared with friends and family will leave a lasting impression.

Friends and family are critical to developing outdoor habits; 80 percent say family or friends introduced them to nature. It is vital for our future that kids create habits that are healthy for their bodies and healthy for nature. Engaging in creative outdoor play is the key to accomplish both of these goals. When kids are active outside they are healthier. When these activities lead to an active outdoor lifestyle, they are more inclined to be connected to nature. When they are connected to nature, they are more likely to take care of it — and the cycle continues.

On June 13, the U.S. Forest Service will bring nature to the city of Denver with a free "National Get Outdoors Day" event in Denver City Park. More than 100 partners will be on hand to teach children about hiking trails, camping equipment, skiing, fishing and canoeing, rock climbing and mountain biking. We are proud to participate with National Get Outdoors Day and encourage families and kids to join us. It could change your child's life.

Rick Cables is the Rocky Mountain regional forester of the U.S. Forest Service. He was born in Colorado and lives in Boulder. Barbara O'Brien is lieutenant

governor of Colorado. She is the former president and CEO of the Colorado Children's Campaign.

OPINION

A54 OCTOBER 8-14, 2004

DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Amendment 35 — new dollars for health care

Colorado faces a significant health care crisis. More than 700,000 people in our state are uninsured. Average health insurance premiums have risen by nearly 45 percent since 2000, while real earnings have increased by only about 13 percent. Emergency rooms are overflowing and community clinics across the state are bursting at the seams.

Colorado taxpayers, employer and individual with private health insurance coverage pays the price for this crisis, as premiums increase to cover the cost of unpaid care provided to the uninsured.

Luckily this fall, voters can do something about that. By voting yes on Amendment 35 we can generate new, much-needed funding for critical health care programs. Amendment 35 will expand public health coverage and provide more money to clinics that serve the uninsured — helping to moderate the fiscal pressures on our hospitals and contain health care costs.

Amendment 35 will raise the tax on cigarettes from 20 cents per pack — currently the lowest in the country — to 84 cents

(still below the national average) and raise the tax on other tobacco products by 20 percent. The state budget office estimates this will raise \$175 million in the first year alone. Those new revenues will be used to fund crucial health care programs that will help all of us:

- Public health coverage for Colorado's working families;
- Community clinics that serve those without insurance;
- Prevention and treatment of cancer, heart and lung disease;
- Prevention and cessation programs to help people quit smoking or never start.

Amendment 35 also directs new money to local governments.

No one involved with this initiative takes lightly the idea of amending our state's constitution. But the health care, business and community leaders who crafted Amendment 35 chose this strategy because that's the only way to keep legislators from diverting the funds for other purposes without sufficient cause.

Look at what happened with Colorado's tobacco settlement dollars. Only about one-quarter of the tobacco settlement funds that were originally allocated for tobacco prevention and cessation programs is in fact being used for that purpose. The remainder has been diverted to other programs that have nothing to do with tobacco.

The state Legislature also created a trust fund out of the settlement to ensure that education and cessation programs would still receive money even if the settlement payments declined in future years. But the Legislature emptied the trust fund in 2003 to fill budget holes.

We saw the same thing happen with the lottery. In the early 1980s, Colorado voters approved a state lottery, believing that all the revenues would be dedicated to parks and open space. But legislators were able to take advantage of a loophole in the law and use half the revenues for capital construction projects. Worthy purposes, doubtless — but not what the voters had in mind. It took another vote of the people to create the Great Outdoors Colorado trust fund and ensure that lottery revenues would be used as voters had originally intended.

Amendment 35 will raise the tax on cigarettes from 20 cents per pack to 84 cents.

It is crucial to understand that, like GOCO, Amendment 35 dedicates a new budget stream to its target programs. Unlike other constitutional amendments, Amendment 35 does not require the Legislature to take money away from other important priorities in order to fund health care programs.

You've heard lots of hand-wringing

Amendment 35 does not require the Legislature to take money away from other important priorities ...

about TABOR and Amendment 23, but when have you ever heard anyone point to GOCO as a cause of our state budget problems?

Indeed, we have gone to great lengths to ensure that Amendment 35 does not hamstring the Legislature. The measure includes an "out" clause that will allow legislators to use the revenues for general health care purposes in times of fiscal crisis. That flexibility has won us the support of leading business groups such as the Downtown Denver Partnership and the Colorado Forum.

Amendment 35 is the only source of new revenue to fund health care in Colorado. We urge everyone to vote "Yes" on Amendment 35.

BARBARA O'BRIEN is president of the Colorado Children's Campaign. ALBERT C. YATES is the former president of Colorado State University. O'Brien and Yates co-chair Citizens for a Healthier Colorado, which is campaigning for Amendment 35.

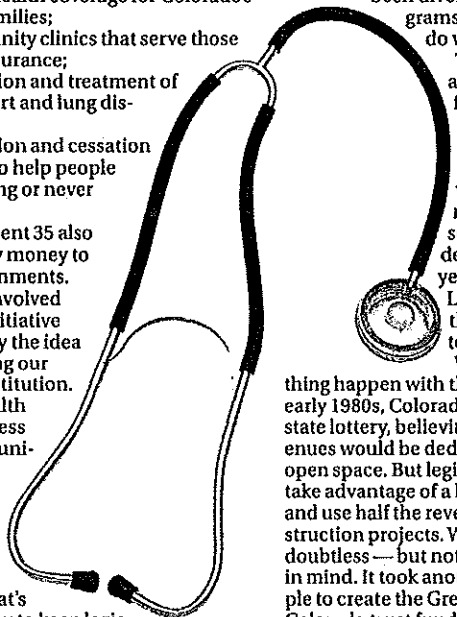
VIEWPOINT



BARBARA O'BRIEN



ALBERT C. YATES



Rocky Mountain News

ROCKYMOUNTAINNEWS.COM

October 1, 2004

SPEAKOUT

Amendment 35 saves Colorado lives

By Barbara O'Brien
and Albert C. Yates

Colorado faces a significant health-care crisis. More than 700,000 people in our state are uninsured. Emergency rooms are overflowing and community clinics across the state are at capacity. Colorado ranks dead last in child immunization rates. And more than 4,000 of our friends, family and neighbors are dying every year because of smoking.

In addition to the human toll, tobacco costs Colorado \$1 billion every year — \$500 for every single household in the state — in smoking-related health-care costs. Yet, Colorado has the lowest cigarette tax in the country.

This fall, luckily, voters can do something about that. By voting yes on Amendment 35 we can bring in new, much-needed funding for critical health-care programs and reduce smoking rates across the state — especially among kids. Amendment 35 saves lives.

Amendment 35 will raise the tax on cigarettes from 20 cents per pack — dead last nationwide — to 84 cents, and raise the tax on other tobacco products by 20 percent. The state budget office estimates this will raise \$175 million in the first year alone. Those new revenues will be used to fund crucial health-care programs that will help all of us:

- Prevention and treatment of cancer, heart and lung disease;
- Public health coverage for Colorado's working families;
- Community clinics that serve those without insurance;
- Prevention and cessation programs to help people quit smoking or never start.

Amendment 35 also directs new money to local governments.

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tive takes lightly the idea of amending our state's constitution. But the health-care, business and community leaders who crafted Amendment 35 chose this strategy because that's the only way to keep legislators from diverting the funds for other purposes.

Look at what happened with Colorado's tobacco-settlement dollars. Only about one-quarter of the tobacco-settlement funds that were originally allocated for tobacco prevention and cessation programs are in fact being used for that purpose. The remainder has been diverted to other programs that have nothing to do with tobacco.

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It is crucial to understand that, like GOCO, Amendment 35 dedicates a new budget stream to its target programs. Unlike other constitutional amendments, Amendment 35 does not require the legislature to take money away from other important priorities in order to fund health-care programs.

Indeed, we have gone to great lengths to ensure that Amendment 35 does not hamstring the legislature. The measure includes an "out" clause that will allow legislators to use the revenues for general health-care purposes in times of fiscal crisis. That flexibility has won us the support of leading business groups such as The Colorado Forum.

Amendment 35 is the only source of new revenue to fund health care in Colorado. Voters around the state have told us that they believe it's a good idea to use tobacco taxes to pay for health-care programs — and they believe it's important to put it in the constitution, so politicians can't take the money for other purposes. We urge everyone to vote yes on Amendment 35.

Barbara O'Brien is president of the Colorado Children's Campaign. Al Yates is the former president of Colorado State University. O'Brien and Yates co-chair Citizens for a Healthier Colorado, which is campaigning for Amendment 35.

Speakout policy

The Rocky Mountain News welcomes Speakout submissions. Those dealing with local issues are given preference. Manuscripts should be typed or e-mailed and be between 650-750 words. No manuscripts will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Only those writers whose columns have been selected for publication will be notified.

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