

August 15, 2022

Davis for District 55  
2536 Rimrock Dr. Ste. 400-349  
Grand Junction, CO 81505

Candidate Davis,

Restore the Balance is a 501(c)4 organization that educates the public about the danger political extremism poses to a healthy democracy. We urge citizens to learn about candidates running for public office and to support those who best put public interest first and work to bring citizens together.

To help citizens learn about candidates, we have created a questionnaire for you and your opponent running for Colorado State House, District 55.

We will share your responses, question by question, along with those of your opponent with our 2,300 members and supporters. We will also share them with various media outlets which we believe will help Mesa County citizens make the best decision about whom to support.

You will notice that we have also provided you with a set of seven political principles we believe should guide political conduct in Western Colorado. Please review them carefully. Some of our questions will be about these seven principles.

Please have your answers completed and sent to [Restorethebalance@outlook.com](mailto:Restorethebalance@outlook.com) by Tuesday, September 13 at 6PM. Please meet the deadline. We want voters to learn about your views. It would be a disservice for the public to see only your opponent's answers and not yours.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please send them to my attention at [restorethebalance@outlook.com](mailto:restorethebalance@outlook.com)

Steven Mandell  
Restore the Balance

## **Restore the Balance**

### **Seven political principles to guide political conduct**

We must do more than simply be against extremism. We must embrace an alternative set of political principles. We believe these seven principles should guide us.

- **We believe** that political parties should vigorously compete over values, principles, and ideas, but also find common ground to solve problems and pass needed legislation. Gridlock is not an option.
- **We believe** facts, supported by irrefutable evidence, are the basis for what to believe and how to act. No civilization can endure when its citizens believe there is no such thing as objective facts or truths.
- **We believe** that no one has a monopoly on the best public policy proposals. That means the ability to listen to and understand both sides of a debate are a prerequisite to finding practical solutions.
- **We believe** public interest must come before party interest. This means putting what is right ahead of loyalty to a party or an individual party leader.
- **We believe** that problem-solving is more important than fund-raising. Extremists line their pockets then use the funds to amplify division instead of producing solutions.
- **We believe** citizens should be free to run for office or volunteer to support the candidate of their choice without being threatened or harassed. Extremism uses intimidation because it cannot stand up to independent, open-minded thinking. Instead, it relies on the mentality of the mob.
- **We believe** it is time to expect citizens to embrace individual responsibility. Extremists always talk about “freedom,” but never mention the responsibility to the community that comes with it.

Colorado State House District 54  
Damon Davis (D)

By now, you have read and considered the seven political principles we feel should guide political conduct in Western Colorado.

1. Do you believe that political extremism poses a threat specifically in Western Colorado? If yes, please explain why. If no, please explain why not.

Yes, I do believe political extremism poses a threat nationally (even internationally) and in Western Colorado. We see extremism undermining elections and rule of law, and perhaps even seeking to subvert elections. We see rising threats of violence and harassment of politicians and public officials, even volunteer officials. Many people are leaving public service because of it. The thing about fair elections, peaceful transfer of power, and rule of law is that they are powered as much by norms and faith in the system as by any sort of compulsion. And once they are gone, they are hard to get back.

In Western Colorado, we see the effects of this. In particular Tina Peters and her supporters have promoted extremism, and have even attacked members of their own political party for not embracing her outlandish notions. If both Democrats and staunchly conservative Republicans say the election was fair, we can be sure it was fair. But Peters' actions could have compromised the election, have cost tax payers millions of dollars, and have caused some to doubt our elections. I applaud most of Mesa County's Republican officials for standing up to her, but even with that she has caused damage.

2. Do you endorse each of the seven principles Restore the Balance feels should guide political conduct in Western Colorado? If you endorse them all, please explain how you will work to execute these principles. If there are one or more principles you do not endorse, please identify them and explain why.

I do endorse the seven principles; though I am not sure how often there is truly irrefutable proof, so I'd extend the second principle to those facts which are not reasonably subject to dispute. I think executing the principles is somewhat of a holistic endeavor, embracing an attitude or approach as much as specific acts. But I will try to set forth how I'll address each.

To address the first principle, you need to start by looking for areas of agreement. For example, environmentalists may want to save a forest for its effect on fighting climate change; a hunter may want to save a forest because it's prime elk habitat; but you both want to save the forest. Also, if you agree something is a problem, you should use the rule for spousal fights: it's not y'all against each other, it's y'all against the problem.

On the second principle, I intend to be honest about the facts, even if I don't like them or the policy implications. And I intend to be intellectually honest, to myself and the public, about why I am doing things.

On the third principle, I have already said in speeches and conversations that I don't think anyone has a monopoly on good ideas. I thought the Republicans had some good proposals last year, and I was sorry to see they didn't go anywhere. One of the first things I would want to do if elected is talk to our Republican district attorney about criminal justice reform and alternate sentencing because he is a recognized leader in the field.

On the fourth principle, I cannot say much more than I agree. In a democracy such as ours, I don't think people owe any duty of loyalty to political parties or political leaders, I think the leaders owe a duty of loyalty to the people. That is how I intend to conduct myself. And as a moderate Democrat, I tend to side with the party, but I feel free to disagree with the party or leadership too.

On the fifth principle, when I entered the race, I agreed to voluntary campaign spending limits. While fundraising is a necessary evil, I agree that problem solving comes first. Unfortunately, there is a psychological component to anger driving campaign donations – it is something I'm familiar with because it is something attorneys learn in working with juries. However, whipping up public anger is a dangerous game and is detrimental in the long run, and despite my legal training it is something I've stayed away from. In fundraising I have attempted to convey a positive message of what I intend to do, rather than provoke fear or anger at my opponent. And when I do point out disagreements with my opponent, I point to disagreements with his ideas rather than attack him personally.

On the sixth principle, one of the reasons I am running is because I believe we need more moderate voices. I saw people, especially Democrats, who were afraid to speak up or put-up yard signs. And I felt that was not right and that those of us who are moderates and are able to run need to step up and do it, rather than give into fear, because the antidote to extremism is not counter-extremism, but moderation.

On the seventh principle, citizenship comes with both rights and duties – again it is part of the reason I am running. As an attorney, I am well versed in holding people responsible, and with their desire to get out of it. As a legislator, I intend to own my actions and my votes, and believe I have an obligation to explain them if asked. And I intend to do that. And if I'm elected and do a poor job, I fully expect to get voted out in the next election, and I accept that.

3. We believe that public interest must come before party loyalty. It is important our elected officials have the courage to stand up for what is right even when their party puts pressure on them to “go along.”

- a. Is there any current policy of your party you disagree with? If yes, what are you doing to bring about change?

I disagree with the local Democratic party platform item of renaming McInnis Canyon because I don't think it would accomplish anything other than antagonizing the Republican party and a Republican official. I proposed removing it from the platform when it was up for review.

I disagree with the Democratic party's push to ban assault rifles, or to ban them for those between 18 and 21. I have declined to endorse the position, advocate for it, or join in other candidates campaigning for it.

- b. In the past, have you disagreed with a policy or piece of legislation your party has endorsed or supported? How did you stand up to get your point of view across? What actions did you take?

If you go back a ways, I was a Republican. When I began disagreeing with the Republican party and came to believe it was headed in the wrong direction, I switched parties and wrote a letter to the Daily Sentinel explaining why.

4. Can you provide some examples of how you worked with members of the opposing party to craft legislation as an office holder or in developing your policies as a candidate? Please be specific.

I am not an office holder. As for my policy proposals, I haven't really worked with others on them, other than my fiancée, who is an independent. But my ideas come from a variety of sources. My thoughts on using prison education to reduce recidivism were fostered by ideas from the Rand Corporation and from the Koch Brothers, who are famously conservative. My policy idea of prohibiting municipalities from capping the number of housing units built in a year came from a Republican proposal I read about in the Denver Post. My ideas on zoning reform to encourage affordable housing come from a variety of sources, including pro-business publications and liberal publications. My opposition to further gun control is a decidedly more conservative position.

5. There is much concern about mass shootings taking place across the country. Congress has passed by bi-partisan legislation on the subject.
  - a. Do you support the legislation that was passed this year? Why or why not?

I do support the legislation that was passed this year. The legislation promoted at a national level some of the positive reforms we have had in Colorado. Those reforms properly work to keep guns out of the hands of the irresponsible while not unduly interfering with our Second Amendment Rights. If we, as gun owners, believe the solution is not to restrict our rights to own guns, but to keep guns out of the hands of the irresponsible, then we must give law enforcement the tools to do it. No right is absolute, and the legislation properly balanced the rights and responsibilities of firearms ownership.

b. What other changes would you like to see in gun legislation?

Rather than further restrictions on gun owners, I would like to see legislation that fosters a safe gun culture and a culture in which gun owners look out for the safety of each other.

In that vein, I would like to remove the sales tax on gun safes and trigger locks in order to encourage more gun owners to buy and use them. Safe storage is important to keeping firearms out of the wrong hands, so let's make it easier to store guns safely.

I also support a capped tax credit for those who take a firearms safety course, in order to promote safe gun handling. I propose that the tax credit be higher if the course covers some of the psychological aspects of gun ownership, including the warnings signs of suicidal thoughts or that one may be contemplating a mass shooting (which is often an elaborate suicide attempt). There are often warning signs of these events, and we should teach gun owners these signs so that we can look out for each other as a community of shooting enthusiasts.

6. The legitimacy of 2020 election has become a point of contention between 2022 election candidates. Do you agree that the 2020 election results were legitimate? If you do not feel that President Joe Biden was fairly elected, why do you feel that way and what factual evidence supports your belief?

I fully agree that the 2020 election results were legitimate.

7. What are the three biggest issues facing citizens in Western Colorado? Briefly describe your proposed solutions to two of these three issues.

The three biggest issues are: water, affordable housing, and improving our infrastructure.

On water, I propose mandating a minimum percentage of landscaping on new commercial and residential developments be xeriscaping. I also propose mandating new developments use low-flow or water efficiency water fixtures, like faucets and toilets. While I personally do not like these type of mandates, the drought is bad enough it is warranted. I think we also need to explore ways to fund improved irrigation techniques on farms, but that would require some additional study and conferral on my part as to what that looks like.

On affordable housing, I have two proposals. First, at the state level I want to override overly restrictive municipal zoning regulations that prevent the building of high-density housing, especially inside urban areas. Higher density housing is less expensive and allows for the building of smaller starter homes, townhomes, condos, and apartments, all of which can contribute to affordable housing. Too often zoning regulations and NIMBY existing homeowners prevent the building of affordable options through zoning.

Second, I propose looking to the past, including Levittowns, as inspiration for use of state funding to build smaller starter homes, with the state recapturing some or all expense when the homes are sold to middleclass buyers. The homes would be mandated owner-occupied, so investors could not scoop them up. And they would be built by private companies, sold with local real estate professionals, and purchases financed by local mortgage companies, so that the state is not supplanting free enterprise, but only supplementing it.