

Colorado State House District 55
Rick Taggart (R)

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.

Political extremism exists throughout our nation, as well in many areas of the world. It is not a problem unique to Western Colorado. Accordingly, it is a threat not just in Western Colorado, but all over the globe. As a society we seem, at times, to have lost our ability to listen and have empathy for one another, to respect and honor differing points of view and be willing to find common ground to push forward ideas and solutions that benefit all of us.

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 of Restore the Balance and I pledged, early on, to support these principles. I work extremely hard to execute these principles on a daily basis. As an example, when an issue or problem is brought to my attention, as a Council Member, I start by listening intently to the concerns of the individual. I try to walk in their shoes, gaining their perspective on the problem or issue. When I feel I have an understanding of the issue and if it is a subject matter that I have some expertise in, I will then engage in dialogue. If I have inadequate information to form an opinion or position, then I let the individual know that I need to gather information on the subject and come back to them. Subsequent to fact finding and research, I will then re-engage with the individual seeking a solution to the problem that is a win/win for all involved.

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 strongly endorse the principles of the Republican Party, most notably smaller government, limited taxation and government spending, and protecting

individual freedoms. Are there times where I might disagree with the approach that a party member is taking to support these principles, the answer is yes. This, however, is healthy and it brings about spirited discussion and debate and most often a mutual understanding.

- 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?

To date the legislation that I have been actively involved in pertains to the City of Grand Junction as a Council Member and former Mayor. If the legislation or elements of the legislation have me concerned (irrespective of party), I will start by asking questions. Sometimes my concerns come from a misunderstanding, or a misinterpretation of the legislation and these concerns are rectified quickly by clarification. If on the other hand my concerns persist, I will first take in all the comments of my fellow Council members to gain their perspective and then weigh in with my concerns. I try to get my points across with fellow Council members and staff through a logical and rational approach. I try to let the facts speak as compared to emotions.

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.

Having now been a City Council member for over 7 years, legislation and funding priorities come before us on a continual basis. Specifically, additional taxation is always a subject of concern. As a strong defender of the Tabor amendment in Colorado I oftentimes challenge fellow Council members (both Republican and Democrat) on whether there is the need for additional tax revenues for a specific program. My questions normally center around exploring a reallocation of funds as opposed to new funds. If a reallocation is not possible, I continually stress that our voters need to decide if this is a priority to their lives. I believe my fellow Council members respect that I want to limit further taxation and are open to discussing other approaches. Again, this is consistent to the principles of Tabor.

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?

First, I am not running for Congress so I will not have the opportunity to weigh in on this issue at the federal level. That said, I believe Congress needs to tread very lightly when it comes to restricting the Constitutional rights of Americans. In Colorado, we have some of the strictest gun laws in the United States. I am equally horrified by the violence we see each and every day in American cities and towns – and the mass shootings we see regularly on the news. As a society, we must bring people together to develop community-based solutions to combating crime, solving mental health challenges, and funding public safety. If we get these things right, we will succeed in combating violence.

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

I believe the response above addresses both questions.

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?

The results of the 2020 election were legitimate and it is well past time to move on.

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

Three of the biggest issues facing citizens in Western Colorado:

On the education front the Public-School Funding Act of 1994 put in place a formula for per pupil funding for all school districts across the State. This formula is overly complicated and has left our District 51 underfunded on a continual basis. As an example, last year the funding for rural districts was \$9,614 per student; the average for all districts was \$8,991 per student and our district was

\$8,501. The formula at present, when you consider we have 22,000 students in the district, results in a \$11.0m shortfall. At a time when teachers are grossly underpaid these dollars could have a significant impact in recruiting and retaining quality teachers. The formula needs to be revised to be fair to all school districts in the State.

The solution in this area is to work with a group at the General Assembly to develop a per pupil funding formula that is fair to all districts across the state. A group is already forming on this subject and if I am successful in the general election, I would like to join this group.

On the public safety front, the voters of Grand Junction (District 55) approved a ballot item, that I pushed for as Mayor, to enable the city to build 4 new fire stations that have been needed for over a decade. As well, to keep our citizens safe, this initiative has enabled the city to recruit and hire new police officers, firefighters, and EMS staff to meet the needs of our growing community. We, however, need the support of the state legislature by supporting law enforcement and assisting with innovative ideas to recruit and retain police officers. We do not need laws that shorten sentencing for criminals, nor do we need further unfunded mandates like SB20-217.

The solution in this area is to work with other legislators to roll back legislation that protects criminals at the expense of law-abiding citizens and roll back legislation with unfunded mandates.

Transportation infrastructure is critical to the citizens of Western Colorado. The state's major highways are in terrible condition. We have needed a 29 Road interchange on I-70 for decades. Continual closures of Glenwood Canyon (over 30 days last year) and the mountain passes place a strain on the economy of Western Colorado due to the interruption of supply chains. There have been numerous press conferences, press releases, and studies on Glenwood Canyon, but we need definitive action on this issue with urgency.

The solution here is to be a member of both the Budget and Transportation committees (provided that I am fortunate to win the election) to be certain that Western Colorado has a strong voice in setting the transportation strategies in the near future.