



## **Yes on 41**

***September 1, 2006***

Daily Press Editorial

Come November, voters will have a chance to vote on Amendment 41. It's a vote about strengthening the ethics in government. We urge a yes vote.

Amendment 41 prohibits public officials and government officials from accepting any amount of money or gift worth more than \$50. The amendment also bans lobbyists from giving gifts, or meals to public officials; and it makes former legislators wait two years before they twist arms of their former colleagues.

Lastly, Amendment 41 creates a five-person commission to oversee ethics complaints from state and local officials and if necessary, issue opinions and penalties.

Why the fuss?

The short answer: Duke Cunningham, Jack Abramoff, William Jefferson. All under indictment, in jail, or under investigation for selling their public trust.

A longer answer: In the first six months of 2006, Colorado state legislators and the governor took free tickets to sporting events, (Broncos, Avalanche, Rockies), they played free rounds of golf, and used more than \$1,700 in concert/theatre tickets. Couple this with almost \$82,000 in complimentary out of state travel. Last year, tab was \$200,537 in lobbyist gifts to officials, according to Coloradoans for Clean Government. Colorado is one of 23 states which has no prohibition or limitation on gifts.

Some examples, courtesy of the CCG, and the Secretary of State:

State Sen. Peter Groff, a Democrat from Denver, went to China, thanks to \$5,000 from the Kansas City Economic and Cultural Office.

State Rep. Ray Rose, a Republican from Montrose, went to Ottawa and Newfoundland for \$1,248, thanks to Huskey Energy and the Energy Council.

Jenny Flannigan, executive director of Colorado Common Cause, said Rose (and others) were required to disclose the travel, and did so.

Politicians will often say that these gifts of travel and the picking up of a dinner tab will not influence their vote. But giving a lobbyist a little more face time for a favor than the average Joe is reflexive. As Charles Keating, choirmaster of the infamous "Keating Five," the savings-and-loan meltdown from the 1980s, once put it: "I expect access for my money."

It's better government when legislators pay their own way.

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