

Denver Post

URL: http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci_3073907

Briefs

September 30, 2005

Proposed '06 ballot measure limits eminent-domain use

Representatives of cities and counties across the state are bracing for an expected onslaught of legislation restricting their ability to use eminent domain to condemn property following a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that left regulation of the practice to state and local governments.

On Thursday, a coalition of citizen groups applied for a spot on the 2006 ballot for a proposed constitutional amendment that would ensure that private property cannot be taken for economic improvement, to increase sales taxes or to provide economic gain.

The coalition includes a group fighting a proposed "Super Slab" toll road on the Eastern Plains.

"We are fighting for the private-property rights of every Colorado citizen," said Marsha Looper, a member of the Eastern Plains Citizen Coalition fighting the toll road.

Steve Nadler, a member of Colorado Citizens for Property Rights, said he's fighting attempts by officials in Sheridan to seize his property for a strip mall.

"I'm really mad as hell about this and it's not right," he said, as the coalition prepared to deliver its initiative to legislative staffers to review before setting out with petitions.

Once the language of the initiative is approved, the coalition would have to gather 67,829 valid voter signatures to get it on next year's ballot.

Officer charged with weapons violation

A 10-year-veteran of the Loveland Police Department has been cited for a misdemeanor weapons violation and placed on administrative leave, it was announced Thursday.

Officer Mark McDaniel, a school resource officer at Mountain View High School and Conrad Ball Middle School, is accused of being in possession of a weapon while under the influence of alcohol, said Linda Jensen, spokeswoman for the Larimer County district attorney.

McDaniel was issued a summons for prohibited use of a weapon, she said. He will appear in court sometime in the middle of next month, she said.

Tancredo seeks to debate N.M. governor

U.S. Rep. Tom Tancredo, R-Colo., has challenged the Democratic governor of New Mexico to a debate over illegal immigration policy following an exchange of heated letters between the two challenging each other's record on the issue.

Tancredo on Tuesday had accused Richardson of using emergency funds intended for law enforcement along the border with Mexico to instead monitor a controversial volunteer border patrol group, the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps.

Richardson replied by accusing Tancredo of distorting the truth "in a desperate attempt to grab another headline" and divert attention from federal inaction on immigration.

Report: Billions lost over school dropouts

Colorado loses more than \$3.4 billion yearly in earning potential because students drop out of high school, a Colorado Children's Campaign report released Thursday shows.

The report - titled "The High Cost of Not Graduating" and commissioned by the Donnell-Kay Foundation, a private education-policy reform group - says the average annual salary for a high school dropout is \$7,200 less than the average yearly salary for someone who graduates from high school.

More than 477,000 people who are 18 or older in Colorado do not have a high school diploma.

Teachers union wants parental involvement

Denver teachers union leaders and community advocates announced a campaign Thursday to get more parents into schools for parent-teacher conferences.

Principals, especially those in middle and high schools, often struggle with low turnout for the meetings, which are usually held in October.

"Many times, it's about work," said Kim Ursetta of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association. "Both parents are working and their lives are full. ... But it's very important that they show up."

TV ad on budget fix a "lie," lawmaker says

A new television ad urging seniors to back a proposed budget fix on the November ballot so lawmakers can restore a property tax exemption that was cut because of budget shortfalls is misleading, opponents of the measure said Thursday.

"It's an out-and-out lie," said House Minority Leader Joe Stengel, a Republican from Littleton who opposes the measure.

The ad, which began airing on Wednesday, said lawmakers were forced to suspend the senior property tax exemption for three years, beginning in 2003, because the state did not have enough money.

The ad says seniors are backing the budget fix because "it allows restoration of the Senior Homestead Tax exemption."

Katy Atkinson, spokeswoman for "Vote Yes on C & D," the proponents for the measure, acknowledged that there are no guarantees the exemption will be restored.

"We can say there is an opportunity to bring it back, but without Referendum C, we can guarantee it won't come back," she said.

Signatures ruled valid for DA recall election

After nine tumultuous months in office, 9th Judicial District Attorney Colleen Truden has been targeted for a recall election.

The Colorado secretary of state's office announced Thursday that enough registered voters signed petitions to hold a recall election for Truden.

More than 9,000 residents of Pitkin, Garfield and Rio Blanco counties signed petitions calling for Truden's ouster, and 6,626 were found to be valid. That is 1,171 more signatures than required.

The petitions state that Truden should be recalled for a host of problems in her office, ranging from allegations of lying to other county officials to mismanaging her office.

DPS system, PERA continue merger talks

Leaders from the Denver Public Schools Retirement System and the Public Employees Retirement Association are continuing talks for a proposed merger, officials said Thursday.

Though both sides hoped to ink a deal before Saturday, talks to merge the DPS retirement system into PERA are ongoing.

DPS leaders believe a merger will help the district recruit teachers from the suburbs. All teachers, except those in Denver, have the PERA plan.

Copyright 2005, Denver Post. All Rights Reserved