



The Reporter

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MICHELI CANCELS APPEARANCE AT ^{WyGO} 48TH DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

Received by Director
A. Bouchard
Time _____ Date _____

Gubernatorial candidates were invited to speak at the Wyoming Public Employees Association Delegate Assembly held in Lander on May 21, 2010. Only Republican candidates had announced by the date of the Delegate Assembly. Matt Mead, Colin Simpson, and Ron Micheli all accepted the invitation. Rita Meyer responded indicating she was unable to attend due to conflicts in her duties as State Auditor.

One week prior to the Delegate Assembly, Mr. Micheli's daughter called to declare a conflict with a fund raising event for him which was stated to be in Casper on that same day. It was discovered later that Micheli's fund raiser was not in Casper but was actually in Lander. The fund raiser was scheduled three hours later. So it appears Micheli could have made himself available to our delegates if he had chosen to attend.

Mr. Micheli and Mrs. Meyer were offered alternatives to allow them to have their issues heard, such as a representative to attend in their place or have a letter read to the attendees. Mrs. Meyer provided a letter to be read to the public employee delegates in attendance but Mr. Micheli simply declined all offers and options. The Democratic candidates were so late to announce their candidacy that we did not have a chance to invite them to the Delegate Assembly.

Mr. Mead and Mr. Simpson attended the Assembly and responded to the following questions:

1. Why do you want to be the governor, the most thankless job in state government?
2. What do you see as the most important issue facing Wyoming over the next four years?
3. As Governor would you continue to support and offer the health insurance contribution of 85% premium cost for public (state and school) employees for family coverage?
4. As Governor what will be your stand on funding raises for state employees when funding is available such as: External Cost Adjustments (COLA); Market; Pay for Performance?
5. As Governor what changes will you make in the structure or organization of government?

Since the May Delegate Assembly, three more Republicans and five Democratic candidates have also announced their intent to run for Governor. The WPEA cannot endorse a candidate for public office in the primary unless there is only one party with announced candidates in that race, per its By-Laws. Since there are candidates from both parties, we cannot endorse any candidate for Governor until the General Election. But we can tell you what each candidate has said to us or done with our organization up to this point.

Recent articles in the Casper Star-Tribune or the Wyoming

Tribune-Eagle have appeared regarding the gubernatorial debates throughout the state. There has been one major issue beginning to separate the candidates, and that is building, staffing and funding state government. Ron Micheli's stance is that state government, state funding, and state programs have increased at an alarming and inappropriately high rate. In his commentary in the Casper Star-Tribune Tuesday June 22, 2010, "State spending spree cannot continue." he stated, "*A 2008 CATO Institute study showed that Wyoming grew its state government at a faster rate than any other state in the country.*" What he neglects to say is that prior to the growth, Wyoming had been slowly coming out of the recession and had been unable to keep pace with the needs of its citizens. Much of this alleged unprecedented growth was simply Wyoming attempting to catch up with the neglected services that had been in a holding pattern for years.

Micheli indicated that Governor Jim Geringer had proposed a budget of \$1.315 billion for the 2003-04 biennium which by the 2009-10 biennium had grown to \$4.965 billion under Governor Dave Freudenthal. During that same time, inflation in Wyoming had substantially increased costs. Plus there is no acknowledgement that the \$1.315 billion was a "bare bones" budget that required the closure of the Children's Home in Casper, suspended the maintenance of state buildings, provided zero salary increases for state workers for three consecutive years, and much, much more. With a state law requiring the Governor to "project a balanced budget," Gov. Geringer had no choice but to propose this budget even though he recognized that it did not come even close to meeting the needs of the state. Micheli would want you to believe that these were good times for Wyoming and we should want to return to those happy times through an austere budgeting practice.

When Wyoming finally enjoyed a surplus budget again, Gov. Freudenthal helped the state, cities, and counties catch up on all of their delayed projects. The budget had to increase to get things caught back to their normal level of processing. We do not disagree that Wyoming may have to again limit some of its spending just as Gov. Freudenthal did in FY2010. But, it seems dishonest to portray the past eight years as a spending spree.

We have enjoyed a good working relationship with Rita Meyer in her current role as the State Auditor. She has been willing to visit with the WPEA and was a guest speaker at our 2009 Delegate Assembly.

Matt Mead called the WPEA, before he had officially announced his candidacy, to visit with us about

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Micheli Continued from Page 1

our concerns and our recommendations. He has individuals within his election committee that have been friendly and supportive of the WPEA issues and he made himself available for questions at our 2010 Delegate Assembly.

Colin Simpson has developed a legislative voting record over many years which is reasonable and generally appropriate for the needs of state workers. He attended our May Delegate Assembly, even when he wanted to be home to see his son's baseball game.

We should be concerned about any candidate who has been saying that State Government is too big and too expensive without explaining where the problem lies. Most of the candidates are now declaring that these issues are being overstated and are simply an election ploy. The question is, "Should we cut governmental programs further than is necessary at the pain and expense of many of our most vulnerable citizens?" This "cut government and lower taxes" message resonates well with the "man-on-the-street" because almost everyone wants their taxes cut.

Wyoming has one of the lowest tax structures in the nation. At what cost would we be willing to cut taxes? Just how deeply are we willing to cut into essential services (i.e., the roads don't get fixed or plowed, insufficient number of guards at the prisons to maintain order, serious state health issues may not be addressed in a timely manner, children are not adequately protected from abuse, the DEQ cannot check on the revenues owed by the mineral companies, etc.)?

When you hear individuals say that they will simply not

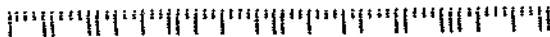
replace state workers when they resign or retire, remember that means the workload for the remaining state workers will steadily increase and they may be too high today. "Do more with less!" has been the battle cry of certain individual for a long time. But remember, "Nothing is impossible to the guy who does not have to do it."

We have had state workers attend many of these debates and ask candidates just where is this surplus of unnecessary workers. No one yet has pointed to the agency that is so flush they can lose 40 - 50% of their workforce. People may just want to get elected and then plan on dealing with the aftermath and their campaign promises once they are in office. The rest of us must also live with the results of their lack of foresight.

With regard to the election process itself, it is really important to know that the Republican and the Democratic nominees could be selected with a marginal percentage of the votes cast. It may behoove us to determine who are the top two candidates and vote as a block for the one that best represents public employee issues rather than split our votes to where we have the worst of the worst in the General Election.

Public employees will need to stand together again or we all could pay a huge price. The climate is such that people may vote emotionally and not think about the consequences until it is too late.

We hope this article is of some help when we cannot endorse a candidate until the General Election. We'll be willing to discuss our individual views and our concerns with anyone as long as it is not seen as a WPEA endorsement.



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