

2008 AARP Voters' Guide

Colorado State House District 17

How to use the AARP Voters' Guide:
Here's how this Voters' Guide works. AARP asked key questions about issues important to our members and their families of each major candidate for this race. Each candidate was allowed up to 125 words to answer each question. AARP did not edit or modify those answers. The candidates were asked to check the support or oppose circles. The candidates may have chosen not to check a circle.

AARP has provided a summary of our position for each of the issues.

- Pass this guide on to friends and family.
- Share your views with the candidates.
- Ask for clarification from any candidate whose answer seems unclear.

Be sure to vote on November 4.

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Affordable Healthcare

Q: *What would you do to reduce the number of uninsured in Colorado?*

AARP's Position:

Providing health coverage to the uninsured

Support Oppose

Kit Roupe (R):

Providing health coverage to the uninsured

Support Oppose

Dennis Apuan (D):

Providing health coverage to the uninsured

Support Oppose

Approximately 792,000 Colorado residents - 17 percent of the state population are without health insurance. Both the uninsured rate in the state and the overall cost of health insurance have steadily increased over the past five years.

AARP supports incremental reforms specifically targeted to particular populations that significantly improve coverage options for those without public or private insurance or those at risk of losing coverage. We support opening existing public programs (e.g., Medicaid) to new categories of people who are uninsured and subsidizing the cost of private coverage for those who are uninsured, underinsured, or at risk of losing coverage.

Government doesn't do much right, so I don't see things better for the uninsured in the government's control. I've worked with the government for more than 30 years and I'm familiar with its many shortcomings. Think of the current problems within the welfare system today – the Colorado database still doesn't work. I seriously hesitate to put the most vulnerable into the government's care only to suffer.

I'm interested in a competitive, market-based system in the Health Care industry to reduce costs. I suggested a non-profit status for providers of the uninsured and Medicaid. Essentially, they could afford to provide services to the uninsured like Peak Vista does in Colorado Springs. Peak Vista is a model uninsured/underinsured health care provider that has a non-profit component.

I fully support the health care initiatives started by Gov. Ritter and the Legislative leadership during the 2007-2008 legislative session, such as the Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Reform. I look forward to participating in the "Health Care Building Blocks" program as it seeks solutions to increase access to affordable coverage for all CO residents. Community Health Centers play a vital role in serving low income and uninsured persons, and those resources must be supported by the State government. We must recognize, though, that this is a nationwide problem and must be addressed at the federal level under our next President.

Q ■ *What would you do to increase the availability of services that keep older persons at home and independent?*

AARP's Position:

Increased funding for home and community based services under Medicaid and senior services

Support Oppose

Kit Roupe (R):

Increased funding for home and community based services under Medicaid and senior services

Support Oppose

Dennis Apuan (D):

Increased funding for home and community based services under Medicaid and senior services

Support Oppose

Coloradans needing long term care services should have the choice to stay at home rather than be forced into a nursing home. Surveys have found that most people would prefer to remain in their own homes as long as possible. Access to affordable home- and community-based services (HCBS) is needed by persons of all ages who have physical and/or mental impairments that will allow them to continue to live in their homes and communities. AARP supports increased funding for services that include personal care, nursing and home health care, adult day care, case management and other social services.

Medicaid is barely covering the needs of the qualifying community as it is and increasing it will short-change another program that someone will vigorously fight to protect. These political fights result in a no-win situation usually, undermine our success with other needed legislation or result in a lack of progress at best.

With a non-profit status established for HCBS, the tax-exemption will increase income without increasing costs to either the government, the older person at home or the HCBS. As I said before, government isn't the best money manager, so I'd rather keep it in the individual's pocket to use much more effectively for their at home needs as well as enabling HCBS capabilities.

I support the inclusion of increased emphasis on in-home and community-based services in the Health Care Building Blocks Program that Gov. Ritter has proposed. I would be interested in hearing AARP's proposals on this topic.

However, we must recognize that CO's TABOR law significantly limits the ability of government to increase funding for health care, even though there are many needs. Reforming TABOR and eliminating these fiscal constraints is necessary before committing to increased funding in any area.

Q: *What would you do to improve fiscal flexibility in Colorado?*

AARP's Position:

Continued efforts to reduce the negative impacts caused by TABOR

Support Oppose

AARP supported Referendum C that was passed by the voters in 2005 and expires in 2010. Referendum C was designed to redress some of the damage caused by TABOR which does not allow the fiscal flexibility necessary to maintain needed services during emergencies or times of sudden economic change.

AARP opposes rigid fiscal policy such as arbitrary caps on revenue and spending; in particular, we oppose having rigid policy included in the state constitution, such as TABOR.

Kit Roupe (R):

Continued efforts to reduce the negative impacts caused by TABOR

Support Oppose

Voters in Colorado are now well aware of the pros and cons of TABOR and the unintended consequences. I have already stated my commitment to CACI and the Greater Colorado Springs Chamber to working on TABOR refinements that should introduce the fiscal flexibility that was omitted in the original TABOR amendment. I have both organizations' endorsements. Additionally, my future legislative colleagues are already discussing possible solutions and I am prepared to engage in that discussion.

I believe Coloradoans are paying double-taxes as a means to get around TABOR restrictions, so we need these refinements. I'm not certain another Referendum is necessary, although I would entertain it among other optional choices.

Dennis Apuan (D):

Continued efforts to reduce the negative impacts caused by TABOR

Support Oppose

I would work with the Legislative Leadership to develop proposals that preserve the public's desire to vote on tax increases, but eliminate the rigid growth caps and the ratchet effect under TABOR. The SAFE initiative (Saving Account for Education) is one current proposal that takes moderate steps to address the conflicting demands of TABOR and Amendment 23. If this initiative qualifies for the ballot, it is an example of the type of reform that I would support.

Q: *If legislation is introduced on advanced meters, will you support or oppose protections from excessive utility costs for vulnerable persons? What measures do you support or oppose to keep utilities affordable for vulnerable persons?*

AARP's Position:

Protections from excessive utility cost for vulnerable people

Support Oppose

Kit Roupe (R):

Protections from excessive utility cost for vulnerable people

Support Oppose

The candidate chose not to mark a circle.

Dennis Apuan (D):

Protections from excessive utility cost for vulnerable people

Support Oppose

“Advanced Meters” (also called “smart meters” and “smart grid”) refers to new technology that allows kilowatt hours to be tracked based on time of usage. Such meters are connected to communications systems that enable remote meter reading, programming and disconnection. Advanced metering allows alternative pricing which typically charges more for electricity at times of peak demand (summer, daytime, evenings) and less at low-demand periods (nights, Sundays, holidays).

AARP believes advanced meters and “peak use” pricing plans pose a significant risk for older, disabled, lower-income and other vulnerable people who, for health and safety reasons, cannot easily shift usage to off-peak, lower cost periods. Protections must be adopted to protect these vulnerable people from excessive costs and potential loss of heating or cooling services.

I’m not certain if this is a protection as described, but I would consider introducing legislation that would exclude individuals that are disabled, older, and lower-income from paying peak-use prices, similarly as was done with limiting the amount of taxes Colorado seniors pay. I may use the Americans with Disabilities Act as one of the foundations. Or, it may be as easy as refining LEAP or other existing legislation. It is a complex issue that needs much work. I personally know many disabled, developmentally disabled, and elderly that do struggle with the cost of energy as well as other necessities. Their complaints are insight as to what they struggle with and often inspire ideas on how to resolve the problems.

I would need to know more about advanced meters and “peak use” pricing plans before I could take a position on legislation, and would be interested in hearing more from AARP members. I recognize that increasing utility costs are a burden for many elderly persons and others with low incomes, and I fully support the low income energy assistance programs that are currently in existence. I would like to research more about PUC rules regarding utility shut-offs to see if this protection could be strengthened during extremely hot or cold weather. There are many rental units in my HD 17, and I also have concerns about landlords allocating shared utilities in a fair manner and providing documentation to renters about how the charges were calculated.



If you are not registered to vote, go to www.aarp.org/makeadifference/politics/ and look under Tools for a form to fill out and send to your local voter registrar (the address will be there). Go to the same website if you need an application for an absentee ballot or to find out if your state allows early voting and what dates that will occur.

AARP Colorado

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Voter Information Inside



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