



The Docket

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Blue Book Humor by Frank Schuchat



Frank, a partner with Schuchat, Herzog & Brenman, will be performing stand-up comedy in the Not Your Children's Comedy Tour at Jazz@Jacks in the Denver Pavilions Nov. 13. Show starts at 8 p.m. For information and reservations call (303) 433-1000 or www.jazzatjacks.com.

Notwithstanding that limitation, I love to make political predictions. So I'll go out on a limb here. Diana DeGette will be re-elected to another term in the U.S. Congress.

Beyond that, I want to keep it sufficiently vague so I am covered whatever happens on Nov. 7. And, as we all learned in the 2000 election and its aftermath, anything can happen in this country when the ballots are counted ... or not.

The ballot in Colorado is just chock-full this year. In addition to the contests for numerous elected officials, Coloradans have a chance to weigh in directly on the great issues of our time. I speak, of course, of the seven proposed amendments to the Colorado Constitution and the seven referendum items on the 2006 ballot.

These various items are described in very fine detail in Research Publication No. 554-1 of the Legislative Council of the Colorado General Assembly, otherwise known as the "Blue Book." The Blue Book is mailed to every registered voter in the state about six weeks before the election — so that we all have plenty of time to study before the big day.

One book with everything you should know to carefully decide how to cast your vote — what a quaint idea. Imagine: experts within state government prepare a comprehensive, informative and non-partisan explanation of all ballot questions, which is then mailed to all registered voters before the election, allowing sufficient time to study the text and carefully weigh the issues. No need for expensive consultants to craft television and radio ads distorting the choices and distracting the voters. Like I said, a really quaint idea.

Certainly all members of the Denver Bar Association will have read it cover-to-cover before voting. Like me, you probably were captivated by the graceful prose and elegant reasoning. But we are lawyers, after all, and this publication is intended for a lay audience who may not get around to reading the Blue Book (or, for that matter, any other printed material that is not a menu or an advertisement). With that in mind, I have a few comments about how the Blue Book could be improved.

First, let's do something about the cover. A pale blue background with stark text and a picture of the seal of Colorado is just not good enough in these busy times. This book has

to compete for attention with a lot of thick and glossy publications that arrive in the mail almost daily — catalogs like those from Crate and Barrel, Pottery Barn, Best Buy and, last but not least, Victoria's Secret. All I am saying is that if the latter employed the same cover design as the Colorado Blue Book, their lingerie collection really would be a secret.

The inside front cover of the Blue Book is a handy table, which lists all the amendments and referenda, followed by a column where the reader can check boxes marked yes or no. This is a good concept, but the page is titled the "cheat sheet." Is it just me or does anyone else have a problem with using the term "cheat sheet" in an election guide? Seriously people, this is not Florida.

The Blue Book includes both English and Spanish text. Interestingly, there is no "cheat sheet" in the Spanish section. Is this a denial of equal protection? I don't know. We could ask the members of the Colorado Supreme Court, but we might have to hurry. The ballot in 2006 includes a proposed amendment to the Colorado Constitution to mandate term limits on appellate judges.

Whatever the fate of this proposed amendment in the election, I think term limits for our appellate judges is a truly bad idea. On the other hand, if you want to talk about word limits for judges, I'll collect signatures for the petition. Which reminds me, I'm out of space.

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