

Superdelegate discusses DNC with Carbon Valley Chamber of Commerce



Photo by Jen Reeder

Erie resident Pat Waak, chair of the Colorado Democratic Party, addresses members of the Carbon Valley Chamber of Commerce at Saddleback Golf Course on Aug. 21.

By Jen Reeder
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FIRESTONE – Just days before the kickoff of the Democratic National Convention in Denver, one of the state's busiest people took the time to talk to her neighbors. Erie resident Pat Waak, chair of the Colorado Democratic Party and superdelegate, spoke to the Carbon Valley Chamber of Commerce at a luncheon at Saddleback Golf Course on Aug. 21.

Waak said that with such a close primary, she dealt with a lot of lobbying for her support.

"This is my first time as a superdelegate. It's been a very interesting process. In some ways, I've never been so popular in my life," Waak said.

She's also been busy dealing with the press, saying that though 6,000 delegates will be attending the convention, 20,000 members of the media are coming to Denver.

"And they all call me on my cell

phone," she said.

Convention organizers anticipate that with all of the out-of-towners flooding into the area, Denver and outlying communities will see an economic boon.

"The economic gains of having 28,000 people could bring \$180 million," Waak said, encouraging members to distribute promotional materials in local hotels.

The influx of people will also bring traffic congestion, though planners have tried to alleviate the problem by scheduling road closures at times other than rush hour. Still, she warned, "Thursday I'd stay out of town – I'm just warning you."

People with tickets to see Barack Obama accept the party's nomination for president at Invesco Field at Mile High on Aug. 28 should "park and ride and take the bus," she said.

Waak said that the Democratic Party will be reevaluating the superdelegate system because of the controversy this year. Superdelegates are not selected by primaries and caucuses, but are party leaders who may vote any way they like. Until Barack Obama secured the majority of pledged delegates in June, there was widespread speculation that superdelegates would decide whether he or Hillary Clinton would become the party's nominee.

She said the system was put in place as far back as the 1960s as a way for the party to reward states with a high number of elected Democrats.

"The reason for it was to reward states who perform well," Waak said.

"I actually don't like the term superdelegate – some press guy made that up. What they're called in the party plan is automatic delegate," she said.

A member of the audience asked Waak why the Democrats were spending millions of dollars on a convention when the candidate was already chosen.

"Let me be honest: the convention is a media event," Waak said. "It's the way both parties announce our candidates to the world."

While the convention costs money, she also pointed out that some would argue that it will be great for the local economy.

"If you're a restaurant in LoDo this week, you're making a lot of money," she said.

Beyond the economic factor is a less tangible factor: what it means to the delegates.

"It's very special for first-time delegates. Some of them who are older have watched the convention on TV for years," Waak said, adding that the oldest delegate is 80. There are also multi-generational delegates this year, such as a mother and daughter who were both selected as delegates.

"It's a very exciting time for them," she said.

A complete schedule of events for the 2008 Democratic National Convention is online at www.demconvention.com.

Grocery stores experience the 3.2 blues

(Sunday liquor, from page 1)

Despite the limited Sunday hours, "It's extremely busy."

Matt Holcomb, owner of Cimarron Liquors of Firestone, hadn't anticipated an increase in sales. He felt the Colorado legislature was looking at the bill as a way to get additional tax revenue, but thought it wouldn't change consumption patterns. Instead, it would just spread the liquor sales across seven days instead of six.

"I actively contacted the legislature and asked them to keep the law they way it was," he said.

But since implementation of the law, his store has seen additional business, which he thinks is pulling from other establishments like grocery stores and bars.

Though Holcomb and his employees had come to depend on a regular day off, he said it's worthwhile to keep customers happy.

"We're in the job of helping customers, and if they want help on Sundays, that's what we'll do," he said, adding that it is nice to chat more because people are less rushed when shopping on weekends.

While liquor stores are experiencing an increase in business, the new law has had a negative impact on convenience and grocery stores. Because of existing liquor laws, they can only sell 3.2 percent beer. Because this was permitted on Sundays when liquor stores were closed, they used to have an advantage.

Vicenta Valazco, an employee at Everyday, a gas station convenience store in Platteville, works on Sundays and said the drop in businesses has been dramatic.

"It affected us a lot. Sundays alone we used to make \$800 to \$1,000," she said. "Now if it's a good Sunday, we'll make \$400," though she said it can be as low as \$100.

Sean Duffy, a spokesperson for the Rocky Mountain Food Industry Association, a trade association that represents convenience and grocery stores like Safeway and King Soopers, said the group will be lobbying this fall for full-strength beer to be legally sold seven days a week because of the impact on sales.

"We have seen a very substantial drop in beer sales since the



Photo by Jen Reeder

Customers can now purchase beer, wine and spirits on Sundays at retail stores like 52 Liquor in Dacono.

enactment of a very unfair law," Duffy said.

In the meantime, liquor stores are reaping the benefits of the new law. Rich Hilovsky, a supervisor at High Plains Liquor in Firestone, said it has not only increased the store's income, but provided more hours of work for employees.

He said that some of the managers were less than thrilled about the prospect of working on Sundays, but that they have been pleasantly

surprised by the income growth.

"Sunday is a really good sales day for us," he said.

Hilovsky had been working at liquor stores in California, one of 34 other states that permit alcohol sales on Sundays. So he wasn't surprised by the increased business.

"Sundays are awesome, to be honest," he said. "A lot of people are really glad that we're open on Sunday."