

## **OUR VIEW: Let's not impede progress of SDS**

**Cut anything other than this pipeline**

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The Gazette's Freedom Philosophy is 100 percent pro-business, pro-prosperity, and pro-economic development. It's our belief that government's role is to help defend individual freedom so that all have equal opportunity to create, achieve and maintain control over the fruits of success.

Lots of government-initiated projects and proposals come along, each cloaked in the name of "jobs" or "economic development." Too many are speculative redistribution schemes, aiding prosperity for a chosen few at the risk and expense of others. Yet city councils, economic development boards and other central planners would never have chosen for favoritism some of the greatest purveyors economic development the world has ever known. What city council would have written an incentive check to help John Mackey start Whole Foods in a garage 30 years ago? What central planner would have incentivized a college dropout to launch Microsoft, a science fiction pipe dream.

Most jobs, and economic development, result from individuals using their brains, their free time, and small amounts of cash to pursue big dreams. They need subsidies in the form of adequate roads, public safety, sewage infrastructure and running water.

Governments are best at supporting economic development when they initiate projects that merely create an equal playing field upon which all are free to create, produce, and pursue the fruits of success. The Southern Delivery System (SDS) exemplifies a government infrastructure project that will facilitate economic development in Colorado Springs, beyond doubt. Governments are best able to afford great infrastructure when they don't fritter away the private sector's money on speculative economic development trophies — such as companies that move to the cities that write them the biggest checks.

SDS will transport water the taxpayers of Colorado Springs already own and store in the Pueblo Reservoir. The billion dollar-plus project in no way equates to speculative forms of economic development, involving risky payments to companies that promise jobs and may not succeed.

SDS is an investment of money into fresh water — a limited commodity that always has value and is essential to any significant and sustainable economic growth in our community's future. High tech industry will come and go, and names on the Fortune 500 will change from year to year. Investment strategies will come and go. Today we'll chase software firms and green jobs; tomorrow we may want space travel firms, or nano-robot factories. Whatever the future holds, water will be more scarce and more valuable. Cities that have it will thrive; cities that don't will struggle to compete for new residents and economic growth.

As city servants toil with difficult budget constraints, we hear that captains of industry will shun us if we don't have good parks, or above average fire and police protection. We have heard that "quality of life" features, such as fountains in parks and green soccer fields, are key to our city's future success. This may hold true, but it pales in comparison to water, which is the real key to our future. We own it, and we must access it if we are to prosper and grow.

At least two members of City Council have suggested this isn't the time to move forward with SDS, because of the budget. But water projects can't simply be started and stopped at leisure. Forging through the regulatory quagmire that stood between the idea and the fruition of SDS has taken more than 10 years. The permits come with deadlines, and delays could kill the project. Water is more important than anything else City Hall provides.

When the system is complete, Colorado Springs will have a bounty of water — a sustainable advantage some other cities will not be able to match. We will have what companies must have, and what developers will need to produce houses for new employees. We will have the life-blood of economic development — an abundance of fresh water available to all who are willing to buy it.

Do what you must to balance the budget, but don't impede the long-term progress of SDS in order to resolve short-term budgetary concerns. Nothing is more important to our success than access to water we already own.