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Accountability begins with open government

By the Colorado Press Association

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The following editorial was provided by the Colorado Press Association as part of its Open Government 2008 series. To read more of the series, click on the links at the end of the editorial.

Accountability.

That one word describes the importance of open government.

Elected and appointed public officials are accountable to the people they serve. And you are the people they serve. You selected them, whether in municipal, school board, county, legislative congressional or presidential elections, to serve you.

Their decision-making process should be conducted in open meetings. Their actions should be conducted so you know why and how they make their decisions.

It doesn't matter whether they are discussing potholes, public education or public safety, these issues affect you and your community.

You have the right to know how your public officials spend your tax dollars. You have the right to know how they make decisions regarding the health and well being of you, your family, your neighborhood, and your business.

During this year's election campaign, you have the right to ask candidates their views on open government. They want your vote; you want their opinion.

Ignore the rhetoric, bumper stickers, yard signs, mailed fliers, robocalls, and TV commercials.

They're simply slogans and sound bites. They're designed to contain little information because the intent is only to increase candidates' name recognition.

When you meet candidates — any candidates — at a town meeting, a campaign rally, at the mall, at a diner or on the street, tell them you want openness in government. Tell them you want transparency

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over secrecy. Tell them you want to know how they conduct your business.

Ask them if they believe in open government. Ask them if they understand that they must be held accountable for their actions.

And then ask them how they would practice the principles of openness if they were elected.

Dan Haley: Government is the people's business

Ken Amundson: The more we know, the better off we are

Wayne Laugesen: An Olympic effort in Colorado Springs

Bob Moore: The consent of the governed requires transparency

Dale Shrull: The Beijing Olympics and Sunshine Week

Steve Henson: Once elected, public officials develop amnesia

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