



Achoo! It's almost flu time

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Winter fashion goes inside

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FANS RETURN TO ROOT ON RAMS

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MONDAY
January 22, 2007

FORT COLLINS COLORADOAN

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Today's weather



Mostly sunny skies
and cold temperatures
High today: 27
Low tonight: 8
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A Gannett Newspaper

60¢

by the United States Constitution:
"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Our View

Community invited to set public agenda

CSU Center for Public Deliberation to have community issues forum

Imagine discussing issues important to the community without the taint or pressure of partisan politics, name calling and extremism.

It can happen, if the Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation is successful. The project, launched by CSU Speech professor Martin

Carcasson, seeks to engage residents in a dialogue that enhances "local democracy through improved public communication and community problem solving."

In its effort to focus on issues, the center is asking residents to participate in setting its agenda based on what issues are important to the community. The Community Issues Forum is Wednesday at the Lincoln Center.

Such a center urgently is needed in our community.

Participate

The CSU Center for Public Deliberation's Kickoff Event and First Annual Community Issues Forum will be from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Columbine Room at the Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins. RSVP preferred to Martin Carcasson, 491-5628 or cpd@colostate.edu.

Increasingly, our elections are beset by personal attacks rather than formulative solutions. For example, Northern Colorado residents were "treated" last fall to one of the nastiest elections in the 4th Congressional District. The campaign — which was, unfortunately, not unique in its tone — was punctuated with ads containing personal attacks, half truths and distortions rather than meaningful discussions about Colorado's future.

Those who believe that speaking loudest or with the most voices always is right will not benefit from this program. But for those who want to have a role in improving the community and shaping public policy, this is a significant opportunity. And residents who prefer solving problems over "winning" a debate or even an election likely will find comfort in the Center for Public Deliberation's approach, which offers a safe and respectful environment for discourse.

One of the center's most laudable goals is to identify community, rather than government, issues. And there is a difference between the two. A public that does not participate in addressing or even identifying its own issues leaves that responsibility to the government, which may not be the most efficient or targeted approach. Meanwhile, low public participation and little public oversight leaves governments vulnerable to manipulation from a few.

Carcasson and his team are commended for recognizing and fulfilling this need in our community.