



Tuesday, July 01, 2008

## Rep. Lamborn calls for more domestic oil

By Casey Mills - Mail Staff Writer

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U.S. Rep. Doug Lamborn, Colorado's 5th Congressional District representative, identified gasoline prices as the top issue concerning Chaffee County and the district.

Locked in a three-way Republican primary against Jeff Crank and Bentley Rayburn, Lamborn was interviewed by The Mail Friday.

Although Lamborn did cite differences between the district's counties - which include El Paso, Teller, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake and Park counties - he said one commonality between them is the tourism industry, which has been affected by increasing prices at the pump.

"The huge issue is the price of gas," Lamborn said. "That hits everyone in the pocket book directly and indirectly. Not only when you buy gas to go to work, but things like the cost of groceries are indirectly affected as well."

Lamborn said the remedy is to decrease the country's dependence on foreign oil through more domestic oil production.

Currently Fremont County is the only part of the district where oil-drilling permits are active. Six permits are currently active in the county and another two await approval.

The Energy Information Administration lists the price of domestic crude oil in Colorado at \$96.48/barrel in March. The average OPEC price for that month was \$100.45. Friday crude oil topped \$140/barrel on Wall Street.

Lamborn says he thinks more domestic oil will lower pump prices by providing more supply to the market.

"It's true that there have been high profits in the oil industry, but there is not a monopoly on it, if there's more supply then there will be a lower price," Lamborn said.

He believes using the country's proven reserves on the domestic front will buy the country more time to explore alternative forms of energy.

The Department of Energy National Renewable Energy Lab is located in Boulder. Within the past year Lamborn said he has helped secure funding to prevent layoffs at the lab.

Lamborn also touched on another issue concerning Chaffee County, the Browns Canyon wilderness designation.

The area is north of Salida and a bill designating it as wilderness was introduced in May by U.S. Sen. Ken Salazar.

Lamborn said he believes all sides have pretty much agreed on the issue but said the one major sticking point is the Turret Road.

"With local support I'm willing to back consensus," Lamborn said, "I'm in support of a 'cherry stem' where the road would not be included in the wilderness designation."

Salazar's bill will close the northernmost four miles of the road to motorized use. It will allow the first three miles to remain open.

Lamborn said excluding the road makes it available for all terrain vehicle use and thereby hunting but said that he does not believe it's best for Congress to impose a solution.

Along with gas prices, the environment and energy, Lamborn said that the military is a vital concern of the district.

He has come under recent scrutiny for his defense budget appropriations and holds that his requests do not count as earmarks for three reasons.

First, "I've fully disclosed the appropriation requests, there is full transparency," Lamborn said, "Second, I only request money for national purposes and only for defense related issues, nothing for private businesses."

His third argument for his requests not qualifying as earmarks is that they do not cost extra money. Lamborn said his requests just moved money from one account to another for specific projects.

Lamborn insisted there is "no connection" between his requests and campaign contributions he has received from defense companies. Lamborn said that his voting record and appropriation requests can be viewed through links on his Web site at <http://lamborn.house.gov>.

Despite requests, Lamborn was reluctant to answer questions concerning his campaign, offering up the saying, "Good policy is good politics." Both Lamborn and his campaign manager were not willing to speak about his re-election campaign.

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