

# DNC organizers, Pelosi cheer on “green” delegates

By JOHN SCHROYER  
THE COLORADO STATESMAN

Organizers of this summer’s Democratic National Convention want to make the four-day event the “greenest convention in history,” and to help them along that path, Speaker of the U.S. House Nancy Pelosi stopped off at the Pepsi Center earlier this month to applaud their latest effort.

Surrounded by a who’s who of Colorado Democrats (not to mention the first female Speaker of the U.S. House), Democratic National Convention Committee CEO Leah Daughtry announced the “Green Delegate Challenge,” which organizers dreamed up as a fun way to promote environmental protection among delegates.

The idea is to see which delegation buys up the most carbon offsets for its size by Aug. 1, Daughtry said. The winners will be given special recognition at the convention and on the convention Web site, and also will win a special prize, though Daughtry declined to reveal the nature of the “limited edition green prize.”

“The collective efforts of convention organizers and delegates can demonstrate to the country how the choices we make can have a positive impact, both for large-scale events and in the everyday lives of individuals,” said Daughtry.

“We believe this planet is God’s creation,” Pelosi said. “We have a moral responsibility to protect it... This will be a message everyone, regardless of party, can be proud of.”

Carbon offsets can be purchased through such environmental organizations as Native Energy, which has contacts with several carbon offset programs, including the Wray School District Wind Turbine.

Other Democrats on hand for the announcement were Gov. Bill Ritter, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette and U.S. Rep. Ed Perlmutter.

One common thread running in their remarks was the assertion that going green is a long-term commitment, not a fad.

“It’s not about PR. What we’re doing is creating a legacy for the city of Denver that



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, in Denver recently, announces initiatives to make the Democratic National Convention “green.”

will benefit our businesses and our citizens,” said Hickenlooper, whose “Greenprint Denver” plan was praised by Pelosi as “a source of great pride.”

Hickenlooper added that the DNC had chosen a “city with a green heart” when it selected Denver last year as the convention site.

Ritter built on that sentiment, and said, “People may look at this, about this being a green convention, and think it’s just a political statement. It’s not. It’s a state-

ment of great substance that’s about the future of this country.”

DeGette began by lamenting that during her first 10 years in Congress, from 1996 to 2006, she watched one “backward-looking energy bill” after another emerge from the House Energy and Commerce. When the Democrats retook Congress and the Senate in 2006 and Pelosi took over as speaker, energy priorities changed, DeGette said.

She said one of Pelosi’s first acts was an effort to reduce carbon emissions throughout the U.S. Capitol Building. She lauded Pelosi as a leader in the fight against climate change. Such a history, she said, is evidence that the convention efforts will be meaningful.

“We’re really serious about that. This is not going to be a window-dressing kind of an effort,” DeGette said of the “greenest convention in history” pledge.

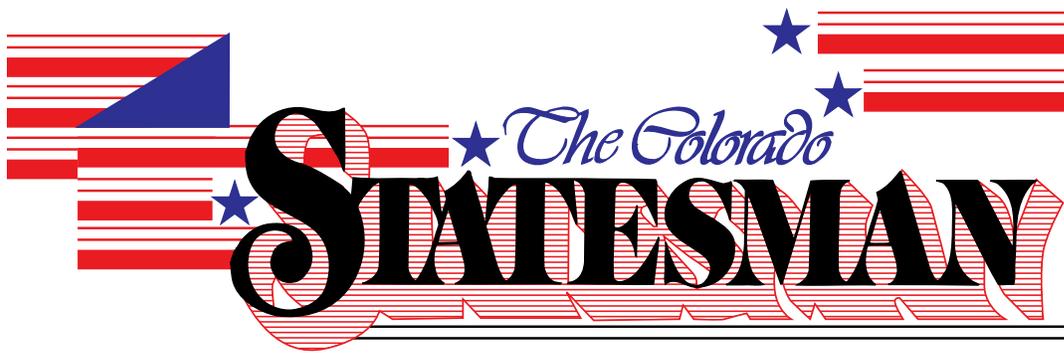
The “Green Delegate Challenge” is the latest in a number of steps taken by convention planners, said Daughtry. She noted that the DNCC deliberately set up its headquarters in a building that qualifies for an EPA Energy Star designation, uses double-sided printing to conserve paper, organized an entirely online signup process for delegates, is requiring its vehicle provider to deliver only flex-fuel vehicles and is employing a construction management firm that has committed to using “green building practices.”

“We’ve incorporated greening principles into every part of the convention planning,” Daughtry said.

And that’s not all. The committee has hired a “greening director” for the first time in convention history. Andrea Robinson, who managed greening efforts on three continents for former vice president Al Gore’s Live Earth concerts, has been tapped for the job.

Robinson, an ambitious expert in envi-

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ronmentalism who has 25 years of experience in the field, thinks long-term and large-scale. She basically sees the 2008 Democratic National Convention as an opportunity to show that sustainability is realistic and attainable.

"I don't know how many more Katrinas we need. This is really big stuff, and by the time you've got these cataclysmic events, it's too late," Robinson told *The Statesman* this week. "That's why it's important that when you have a megaphone like the DNC, you use it. It's a good motivating force."

She intends to use the convention as a model for other large events in order to show how easy "green" can be.

"It's not brain surgery. It's just a little bit of effort and thinking a bit differently. These are all pretty rudimentary things," Robinson said.

For example, she's pushing the production team to purchase and use recyclable and reusable materials, including carpeting and wood harvested from sustainable forests. The DNCC also is to use low-energy lighting alternatives, and even the contractors and subcontractors have been chosen on the basis of their commitment to greening principles.

Robinson also is planning to tap the National Renewable Energy Laboratory for additional ideas, and she said she's delighted that the convention is in the same metro area as NREL.

The DNCC is even going as far as to calculate the entire carbon footprint of the convention. Within the week, Camco International Group, Inc. is scheduled to deliver its first report, an estimate of how many tons of carbon dioxide the convention will emit. Then, Robinson and company will set specific goals to reduce that total. She declined to offer any ballpark figures this week.

The "Green Delegate Challenge" also is her idea. She said the DNCC has organized for a flat rate of \$7.50 for delegates, and that's enough to offset an entire ton of carbon dioxide emissions. Robinson said they're working with an estimate that

without intervention, each of the roughly 7,000 delegates to the convention will create a one-ton carbon footprint, and the goal is to eliminate that completely, neutralizing the convention's carbon impact.

"I'm creating a watermark for how the DNC can do their conventions in the future, so in four years, hopefully it will be even better," Robinson said.

In celebration of Earth Day on April 22, the DNCC is organizing a tree planting on Saturday, April 26, in Denver's Sunnyside Neighborhood, at 38th Avenue and Pecos Street.

Robinson isn't the only one working on environmentally friendly practices, however. The Host Committee, in conjunction with the city, has hired its own greening director, Parry Burnap.

Burnap, a longtime environmental consultant, is charged with executing an ambitious slate of projects, including corralling restaurants and caterers into offering "lean and green" menu options during convention week, providing pedometers and walking maps to delegates and visitors, and providing 1,000 bicycles free of charge to visitors. To date, Burnap estimated, she and her team of about 100 volunteers have attained around 40 percent of their stated goals.

Burnap is even setting up workshops for event partners, and the next one, to be held this Thursday, will focus on greening practices for venue managers, caterers and event planners. The first was held for hotel and restaurant managers, and the 150-capacity room Burnap found was bursting to the seams with members of the Colorado Hotel and Lodging Association and the Colorado Restaurant Association.

"It seems like everyone in Denver wants this to happen. People want this to be green here," Burnap said.

Ironically, one of the few major bumps in the road for her has been funding and obtaining insurance for the bicycle distribution. Because the bikes will be loaned out free, the city and Host Committee will be responsible for insuring everyone who uses one. That means if a delegate crashes

into a car and breaks an arm, the city would be liable, even if the accident is completely the delegate's fault.

"Just the cost of that, just dealing with a frivolous lawsuit, is a cost that we need to be prepared to cover," Burnap said. She added that bicycle insurance is one of the most difficult obstacles facing more widespread bike use in metropolitan areas throughout the country.

The Camco report on the convention carbon footprint also is going to be delivered to Burnap, so the city can emulate the convention goal of slashing overall emissions, especially during convention week. But for Burnap, like Robinson, the August convention is just a means to an end. She's hoping the convention will be a catalyst, a "transformational" experience that will fundamentally shape the city's attitude toward the environment forever.

"The seeds were already here. People were already moving in this direction. It's not like there was a sales job needed," Burnap said, and added that she just wants to give the movement a push.

"We're using the convention to green the city," she said. "I just pray we're not too late."

Though some Democrats may think theirs is the party of environmentalism, the Republican National Convention also is on board. Convention spokesman Matt Burns said greening is a priority for the Republicans, as well, and he noted briefly that they, like the Democrats, are using the Internet for paperless reservations and travel arrangements.

And that's not all.

"The air conditioning goes off at 5 o'clock," he said.

The Republicans also have pledged to use flex-fuel vehicles, paperless systems, energy-efficient practices and eco-friendly office supplies. Potential office space is being carefully vetted.

"We're making efforts, certainly, to be green," said Burns. "We've made a concerted effort to hold the greenest convention in our party's history. That continues to be a priority."