

# WESTERN SLOPE NO-FEE COALITION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 4, 2004

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## **Candidates Line Up Against Public Land User Fees** *Third District Republicans Call for End to Fee Demo*

DURANGO, CO — Three more Republican candidates for Colorado's Third District seat in Congress have declared their support for ending Fee Demo.

Delina DiSanto and Doug Sitter, both of Durango, and Ken Chlouber of Leadville have joined Grand Junction's Greg Walcher in declaring that if elected, they will work for the passage of legislation to permanently end Fee Demo on land managed by the Forest Service, BLM, and Fish & Wildlife Service.

The Western Slope No-Fee Coalition has asked all candidates running for Colorado's 3<sup>rd</sup> District seat, currently held by Rep. Scott McInnis, to state their position regarding the hotly debated Fee Demo program. The group will be publishing a "Taxpayers Fee Demo Report Card" on the candidates before the primary election August 10. Four of seven declared Republican candidates have responded so far. No Democratic responses have been received to date.

The Recreational Fee Demonstration Program, better known as Fee Demo, was originally a two-year "demonstration project" to find out if Americans are willing to "pay to play" on lands that they own and pay taxes to manage. Fee Demo has now entered its eighth year, and was recently re-authorized as an appropriations rider through December 31, 2005. Legislation is currently pending (S.1107) that would allow the program to expire in three of the four agencies authorized to charge fees. The WSNFC has testified in support of this bill, insofar as it terminates the program in those three agencies.

In response to questions posed to each candidate by the coalition, DiSanto said, "We all know that the monies collected now at these Fee Demo areas are hurting local tourism and causing emotional conflicts between users and rangers, while the costs of collecting the fees are primarily administrative."

Sitter agreed with the Coalition's position that fees authorized under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, such as for developed campgrounds, should continue. "I will not support, however, charging fees for the selective use of roads, access to public lands, picnic areas, parking areas, bathroom facilities, picnic tables, etc."

“Colorado’s 3<sup>rd</sup> District has been a center of citizen opposition to Fee Demo, and it’s essential that our next Representative reflect that position in congress,” said WSNFC President Robert Funkhouser. We are delighted with the responses so far, and hope to hear from the remaining candidates in the coming weeks.”

Much of Colorado’s congressional delegation has taken a position for the public taxpayer’s right to access their land. This includes both Senator Campbell and Senator Allard. So far nine counties in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District have passed strong resolutions asking Congress to end the program and one county has taken steps to remove Fee Demo from an area within the county. The Colorado State Legislature has joined with the State Legislatures of Oregon, California and New Hampshire in calling for Fee Demo’s end.

Candidates will be evaluated in the “Taxpayers Fee Demo Report Card” on their willingness, if elected to Congress, to:

- Work for the passage of legislation to permanently end Recreational Fee Demo, or any similar program, on lands managed by the Forest Service, BLM, and Fish & Wildlife Service.
- Oppose any further extension of the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program beyond its current expiration date of December 31, 2005.
- Work to find adequate funding for our federal land management agencies and to identify avenues whereby appropriated funds can better find their way “onto the ground” to accomplish the agencies’ goals and objectives.
- Work to hold the federal land management agencies more accountable for the appropriated funds they receive.

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