



When the House approved a bill naming the western tiger salamander the state amphibian, the question arose: Why doesn't Colorado have a state dog?

In way, it does.

Meet Buckley, who's been a fixture in the state Treasurer's Office since Republican Mike Coffman held the post.

Lots of folks showed up at Buckley's 10th birthday party last November, in part because of fears it might be his last. Buckley, a golden retriever, has cancer. "We really don't know how much time he has left," Coffman said.

The congressman said his wife Cynthia called him about Buckley one morning when he was in Washington.

"She thought he looked bloated, was tired and was drinking a lot of water. She decided to take him into the vet instead of dropping him off at Treasury that morning," the Aurora congressman said. "They performed emergency surgery and removed his spleen where they located a tumor that had already ruptured."

The tumor turned out to be malignant, and Buckley is undergoing chemotherapy. He went his last round last week.

Coffman bought Buckley to the treasurer's office when he was a puppy, and the dog has remained a fixture there no matter where Coffman has been (a tour of duty in Iraq, a job in Washington). So besides Coffman, Buckley has endured three other treasurers: Republican Mark Hillman, Democrat Cary Kennedy and Republican Walker Stapleton.

When Coffman was elected to Congress in 2008, the Denver Post ran a front-page story wondering what was going to happen to Buckley.

"The dog is far more popular than I ever have been," Coffman said, at the time.

Buckley continues to come to the treasury's office daily.

When Coffman first began bringing Buckley to the office, everyone marveled at how well behaved he was. No wonder. Coffman's administrative assistant, Natli VanDerWerken, was also a dog trainer.

Among Buckley's tricks: Carrying a tray of coffee and offering a cup to each guest. The plastic cups, by the way, are empty. "We tried it with the cups full," VanDerWerken said in 2003. "It wasn't pretty."

By Lynn Bartels

[*The Denver Post's The Spot Blog*](#)

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