

## ***Governor AWOL in Understanding Army Needs***

**(WASHINGTON, D.C.)** - U.S. Representative Mike Coffman (R-Aurora) issued a statement today in response to Governor Bill Ritter's announcement, last Saturday, to the Pueblo Chieftain that he intends to sign House Bill 1317 into law. House Bill 1317 would bar the U.S. Army from either buying or leasing any property owned by the Colorado Land Board. The purpose of the legislation is designed to stop the U.S. Army from acquiring 100,000 acres of land in southeastern Colorado that is adjacent to the Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site (PCMS). The Colorado Land Board has sections of land throughout the area that the Army wants to lease or purchase.

"I'm a combat veteran with five overseas deployments, four of which have taken me to the Middle East, and I fully understand the Army's need for this scaled down request. Today, the Governor sent a clear message to the U.S. Army that he doesn't want them in Colorado and I think that the Department of Defense will respond accordingly," Coffman said.

Coffman has served in both the U.S. Army and in the Marine Corps and now sits on the House Armed Services Committee. He met with the U.S. Army at Fort Carson to review their request for the expansion last week. According to Coffman, the Army's interest in expanding training at PCMS in southeastern Colorado derives from a need for larger land areas in which to train the newly formed Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) and associated units for contemporary warfare and the threats they anticipate encountering in the future. The BCTs, by the Army's new tactical doctrine, are required to control more territory with fewer Soldiers. In order to accurately simulate anticipated, actual, combat conditions with the equipment required, the BCTs must train over larger areas of land, thus the need for the expansion of training at PCMS. The Army has a total of 45 BCTs.

"The Army essentially does two things: it trains to go to war and goes to war. The Army must train to meet current and anticipated threats to the nation, and it must train as it expects to fight. Unit proficiency and individual readiness save the lives of American soldiers in combat. We cannot send units and individual soldiers into battle who will be performing tasks for the first time," said Coffman.

Coffman believes that the proponents of the legislation are made up of some who simply share anti-military views but that the supporters of House Bill 1317 also include many of the local

ranchers on the land adjacent to PCMS who simply don't want the Army to expand and take up any more range land for their cattle to graze on. Even though the Army has reduced their request from over 400,000 acres to 100,000 acres, taken eminent domain off of the table, and is willing to enter into long term lease agreements instead of buying the land, there are still many of the local ranchers who remain opposed because they would no longer be able to make arrangements for their cattle to graze on land held by the current owners.

"I don't believe that the Governor has the same anti-military sentiments that many of this bill's supporters share but I do know that he doesn't care about the training needs of the U.S. Army and you can bet that the Defense Department will think twice before putting anything new in Colorado and it will be a struggle to keep projects in our state when competitive alternatives surface that are outside of Colorado."

Coffman is particularly bothered by why the Governor would want to put a stick in the eye of a \$1.8 billion dollar a year employer in the State of Colorado. Coffman thinks the Governor should view the Army as a major employer that is still hiring and gives full health care and retirement benefits. He feels it is an employer that is not asking for a bailout but to lease or purchase land from willing sellers at full market value.

"The Governor's view of a 'Green Economy' includes everything from solar panels to windmills. However, it does not include anyone who actually wears a green uniform," said Coffman.