

August 15, 2022

Vote Charles Pink  
663 CloverGlen  
Grand Junction, CO 81504

Candidate Pink,

Restore the Balance is a 501(c)4 organization that educates the public about the danger political extremism poses to a healthy democracy. We urge citizens to learn about candidates running for public office and to support those who best put public interest first and work to bring citizens together.

To help citizens learn about candidates, we have created a questionnaire for you and your opponent running for Mesa County Commissioner.

We will share your responses, question by question, along with those of your opponent with our 2,300 members and supporters. We will also share them with various media outlets which we believe will help Mesa County citizens make the best decision about whom to support.

You will notice that we have also provided you with a set of seven political principles we believe should guide political conduct in Western Colorado. Please review them carefully. Some of our questions will be about these seven principles.

Please have your **answers** completed and sent to [Restorethebalance@outlook.com](mailto:Restorethebalance@outlook.com) by Tuesday, September 13 at 6PM. Please meet the deadline. We want voters to learn about your views. It would be a disservice for the public to see only your opponent's answers and not yours.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please send them to my attention at [restorethebalance@outlook.com](mailto:restorethebalance@outlook.com)

Steven Mandell  
Restore the Balance

Restore the Balance  
Seven political principles to guide political conduct

We must do more than simply be against extremism. We must embrace an alternative set of political principles. We believe these seven principles should guide us.

- We believe that political parties should vigorously compete over values, principles, and ideas, but also find common ground to solve problems and pass needed legislation. Gridlock is not an option.
- We believe facts, supported by irrefutable evidence, are the basis for what to believe and how to act. No civilization can endure when its citizens believe there is no such thing as objective facts or truths.
- We believe that no one has a monopoly on the best public policy proposals. That means the ability to listen to and understand both sides of a debate are a prerequisite to finding practical solutions.
- We believe public interest must come before party interest. This means putting what is right ahead of loyalty to a party or an individual party leader.
- We believe that problem-solving is more important than fund-raising. Extremists line their pockets then use the funds to amplify division instead of producing solutions.
- We believe citizens should be free to run for office or volunteer to support the candidate of their choice without being threatened or harassed. Extremism uses intimidation because it cannot stand up to independent, open-minded thinking. Instead, it relies on the mentality of the mob.
- We believe it is time to expect citizens to embrace individual responsibility. Extremists always talk about “freedom,” but never mention the responsibility to the community that comes with it.

Mesa County Commissioner  
Charles Pink (D)

By now, you have read and considered the seven political principles we feel should guide political conduct in Western Colorado.

1. Do you endorse each of the seven principles Restore the Balance feels should guide political conduct in Western Colorado? If you endorse them all, please explain how you will work to execute these principles. If there are one or more principles you do not endorse, please identify them and explain why.

**I believe that all principles of the Restore the Balance endorse have significant value in their most innocent understanding. I wholeheartedly support the underlying message of the group, but I do question the language included in some of the principals.**

**The first principle that I question is the wording of the fifth. This tenant states “We believe that problem-solving is more important than fund-raising. Extremists line their pockets then use the funds to amplify division instead of producing solutions”.**

- **While I agree that increased funding CAN correlate to the amplification of divisions, I do not consent that ALL candidates with optimal fundraising necessarily mean increased division from an opposing view without promoting solutions. Historically this has been the case but is not an absolute truth.**
- **Currently I am out fundraised by my opponent by more than \$25,000 and I identify as a moderate candidate. I’ve been registered as both a Republican and Democrat for almost equal parts of my life. I have seen and experienced what this principle is attempting to pinpoint.**
- **However, there could be instances in which a problem-solving candidate of either party could out fundraise a third-party candidate and both would believe in producing solutions as opposed to amplifying division. While this does not often occur in modern day politics, I would hesitate to endorse this policy without considering the potential for alternative outcomes.**
- **My opponent has been publicly seen with other candidates such as Tina Peters that many would identify as an “extremist”. I personally hesitate to label a candidate or his/her associates with this word. Spreading hateful and exclusionary titles only perpetuates an “us versus them” narrative that I do not support. I am frustrated by this and do believe that every registered voter is “my base” as a fellow resident and native of the Western Slope. We are all constituents of this valley. We all are here to serve the residents of Mesa County.**

- Furthermore, I'd like to understand the definition of "extremists" as defined by Restore the Balance movement. To state that "Extremists line their pockets then use the funds to amplify division instead of producing solutions" sounds accusatory and exclusionary, rather than a middle of the road message. A more inclusionary approach and language were what I had hoped was the purpose of this organization.
- While I certainly don't identify as any element of an "extremist", I would like to entertain a more inclusive dialogue and description of candidates and parties. This will further the intention of promoting a balance for the best interests of Mesa County.

The definition or use of the word "extremists" is also critical in my ability to endorse Principal #7. It states "We believe it is time to expect citizens to embrace individual responsibility. Extremists always talk about "freedom," but never mention the responsibility to the community that comes with it."

- Many middle-of-the-road individuals also "talk about freedom". Not only have they discussed freedom, but many have fought and served to protect it as Veterans and civilian servants as policemen, firefighters, EMTs, etc. Their responsibility comes with action, rather than words. As such, further specificities of the word or group "extremists" is needed to fully agree with Principal #7. This blanket statement feels somewhat alienating and makes me hesitate to endorse this statement.

2. What administrative experience do you have that can give voters confidence that you are qualified to be a County Commissioner? Please be specific

As a Journeyman Electrician, I collaborate with plumbers, tinnners, other electricians, framers, roofers, drywallers, HVAC technicians, concrete workers, and administrators for one jobsite. As such, I've gained a multitude of organizational and problem-solving skills, as well as the ability to engage in interprofessional communications. I single handedly coordinate an entire collaboration of multiple trades to create a finished and polished product. Without communication and coordination of all these trades, there is cascade effect of failure. I anticipate being an advocate for Mesa County and being a much more physical presence on residential and commercial sites that my position will be voting for and against.

3. It is important to let people know that you put public interest first. In looking back over the past year, are there any decisions the County Commissioners have made that you do not agree with? If yes, how would you have changed them?

I would have endorsed taxing and allowing marijuana use in Mesa County. This is a viable income that has helped build schools, recreation centers, and saved municipalities within our county.

4. Republicans have placed a lot of importance on reducing violent crime. They have criticized Democrats for a growing violent crime rate in large cities. Yet, according to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, violent crime in Mesa County has grown by 59 percent between 2018 through 2021.
  - a. What do you believe has caused the increase?

**In Mesa County, we have had an epidemic of mental health issues and homelessness due to our climate and location. This has continued to grow with the rise in housing issues, Covid related unemployment, and limited support for the underserved populations. I truly believe a more supportive psychiatric and mental health community could diminish this percentage. Promoting responsible development of housing and ensuring our cost of living is within the scope of our average income can all reduce violent crime.**

**While I don't have an absolute answer to this dilemma, I do recognize the issue. I hope to work tirelessly with additional entities to address the problem within the scope of County Commissioner.**

- b. What steps should the Mesa County Sherriff be taking to reduce crime?

**That is a wonderful question for the existing and upcoming Mesa County Sheriff. I personally promote programs that reduce recidivism. While reducing repetition of crime is important, it would be more ideal to promote education in earlier in life as to what crime and its consequences entail. I anticipate endorsing programs that inform children what it is to be a responsible citizen and what consequences crime outcomes can entail. I want our youth to know to what extent crime impacts the rest of their professional and personal lives. I promote young adults volunteering without the enforcement of the law, so that they can experience a potential outcome of poor decisions. Mesa County is better served by a responsible, well-informed youth.**

**The funding of Mesa County Law Enforcement will be a priority to optimize the optimal safety of Mesa County. Without educating, funding, and supporting our officers and their counterparts, biased and violent outcomes could occur that otherwise could have been deescalated. Our officers should undergo a rigorous interview and background check to ensure the department is qualified. This will require appropriate funds as well.**

- c. Which of the following training priorities for Sherriff's officers should Mesa County focus on?
      - i. Active shooter training
      - ii. Conflict de-escalation
      - iii. Cultural sensitivity
      - iv. Mental illness recognition
      - v. Stress reduction
      - vi. Other (please identify)
      - vii. No additional training is needed.

- i. **Absolutely. Insufficient training results in unnecessary deaths, injustice, and limited belief in our justice system. Please make this an absolute priority and provide written proof of said education and trainings.**
  - ii. **See above.**
  - iii. **See above.**
  - iv. **See above.**
  - v. **See above. In addition, there should be trainings not just for the staff on how to interact with potential culprits in reducing the stress of the moment, but also work-life balance and stress reduction of the officers. Every day they are surrounded by trauma and expected to return to a civilian life. Please encourage training and education to the officers and their families on compensatory strategies, provide counseling, etc. so that they are fully charged for their next shift. Without this element, we underserve the officers, their families, and those with whom they interact daily.**
5. **Like many other counties, political divisions between friends, family and neighbors are a problem in Mesa County. What steps would you take to bring people together?**

**I believe in surrounding myself with educated and diverse groups of individuals and perspectives for the most optimal outcome of Mesa County. I anticipate reaching across the aisle to all parties for their input in how we can ensure a viable Western Slope economy. I want to hear from small and large business owners, residents, agricultural agencies, educators, and politicians in how we can accomplish this goal.**

**I anticipate reducing the triggering words, name calling, and assumptions of all parties and people in my personal, professional, and political life. I intend to lead by example in my messages to friends, family, and neighbors.**

6. **Can you provide some examples of how you worked with members of the opposing party in developing your ideas or policies as a candidate?**

**I have spoken to economic groups that support the Mises economic model publicly. While formally welcoming, their basis is largely oppositional to the Democratic Party. I have attended their meetings during months I was not asked to engage in a forum with my opponent. I welcome their interactions to question my personal and political beliefs; without opposition I cannot learn and grow as an optimal candidate for Mesa County.**

**I have reached out to Rick Taggert, who also attended the same group's forum. He was eloquent and fair in his responses to his opponent. His response to my questions were respectful and approachable despite being**

members of the opposing party. He mentioned that he was a supporter of this organization. As such, I requested additional dialogue with Taggart to meet on how we can best support Mesa County. He has graciously agreed despite our very busy schedules, and we are seeking to align them for further discussion.

7. What do you feel are the three most important issues facing Mesa County? Briefly describe your proposed solutions to two of these three issues.

- I seek to promote efficient and productive agriculture. Water will be the epitome of our future here in Western Colorado. I promote the incentivization of xeriscaping and water conservation efforts so that we all support the greater good of the agricultural community. Education of timing and duration of watering schedules, in hand with incentivizing less water-dependent designs, can help avoid restrictions.
- I will support responsible development. With no development we become stagnant, and employment and housing become concerns. With overdevelopment, Mesa County could lose agricultural lots and recreation of our rivers and lands. We could become overpopulated, and our public arenas could become less appealing, clean, or accessible. I also recognize that development will increase the burden of our power and wastewater plants. I will support renewable energy sources and work together with oil and gas. I recognize it too is a critical industry that supports jobs and transportation for our residents.
- To preserve opportunities for both land and water recreation here in Mesa County. Without this additional income and leisure for our residents and tourists, we can expect a decrease in revenue, quality of life, and a sustainable work force as living conditions decline.

8. What changes, if any, would you make in the County budget, or budget process?

- a. Are the areas you believe have been neglected?
- I'm glad to see that the county has supported \$25.1M to construct a multiuse campus in Clifton. It will include a community hall, early childhood education center, and an early childhood workforce training hub.
  - I believe that in comparison, providing only \$.5M to expand and enhance access to mental health supports for County residents is insufficient and egregious. This is a continual struggle that promotes homelessness and crime.
  - Similarly, the county chose to spend \$3.8M for projects that will enhance water, sewer, and infrastructure, as well as access to healthcare in rural communities. To me, the provision of these absolutely essential services is not proportionally supported fiscally.

- b. Are there areas you believe can be cut without sacrificing quality of service?
- **I think that \$500,000 to complete a Master Plan, Strategic Plan, and County website is unnecessary. We already pay the existing players sufficiently for their time. While website design is important and does take an outside source, this amount seems extreme.**
  - **The county has added 27.5 full time equivalent positions that equate to \$1,849,877. While three of these positions will be grant funded and four will be supported by the Solid Waste enterprise fund, I wonder if additional grants could have been used or what additional federal support we could have enlisted to support these positions.**