

The Denver Post Endorses Karen Middleton for HD42

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"HD 42 (Arapahoe) — Incumbent Democrat Karen Middleton is a strong voice on education and transportation. She faces Republican George Carouthers and Libertarian James Frye."

Post's picks in Colorado's House of Representatives

By The Denver Post

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The battle for control of the Colorado House of Representatives, now dominated 40-25 by Democrats, is mostly fought "below the radar" of the high-priced political campaigns now bombarding the eyes and eardrums of weary Coloradans.

For the most part, television is too expensive to use in the 65 House races, since the vast majority of the appeals would be seen by voters in other districts. With an average population of about 75,000 people in each district, hard-working candidates can meet many of the voters by ringing their doorbells.

Such face-to-face discussions, brief as they may be, represent democracy at its best and help the House earn its accolade as "the people's chamber."

The best source for information about the candidates and races is the voter guide that appeared in the Oct. 12 Sunday

Denver Post. It's available online at voterguide.politicswest.com.

To reach our endorsements, we reviewed questionnaires sent to all legislative candidates, visited candidate websites and evaluated the records of incumbents and challengers. In some races, candidates were interviewed by telephone. The Post does not endorse in unopposed races, but they are listed for informational purposes.

Here are The Post's choices in the 65 House districts. Counties included in the district are in parentheses.

HD 1 (Arapahoe, Denver, Jefferson) — Our choice is incumbent Democrat Jeanne Labuda, who focused primarily on health care in her first term. The call is close because we also like Republican Tom Thomason, who also emphasizes health care and promises to "force big health care companies to put patients first — not profits." Taken at face value, Thomason sounds like the more liberal of the two candidates. We'll stick with Labuda but wouldn't mind if the GOP broke the Democratic monopoly in the Denver delegation.

HD 2 (Denver) — Democrat Mark Ferrandino served well after being appointed to replace outgoing veteran Mike Cerbo. He faces Republican Thomas "Doc" Miller.

HD 3 (Denver, Arapahoe) — Veteran Democrat Anne McGihon chairs the House Health and Human Services committee and is one of the legislature's strongest voices on health care. She faces Republican Paul Linton.

HD 4 (Denver) — Incumbent Democrat Jerry Frangas has been a strong advocate for higher education, transportation and fiscal reforms. He faces Republican Rick Nevin.

HD 5 (Denver) — As chairman of the House Finance committee, incumbent Democrat Joel Judd has been a thoughtful voice for fiscal reform. He faces Republican J J Swiontek.

HD 6 (Arapahoe, Denver) — Democrat Lois Court, a former legislative staffer, is our choice to replace term-limited Andrew Romanoff. She faces Republican Joshua Sharf, a star of the conservative blogosphere.

HD 7 (Denver) — Incumbent Democrat Terrance Carroll has served well as chairman of the Judiciary Committee. He faces Republican Josh Raines.

HD 8 (Denver) — Democrat Beth McCannis unopposed.

HD 9 (Denver, Arapahoe) — Democrat Joe Miklosi, an aide to House Speaker Andrew Romanoff, is our choice to replace outgoing Alice Borodkin. He faces Republican James Landauer.

HD 10 (Boulder)— We like Republican businesswoman Dorothy Marshall for the seat vacated by term-limited Democrat Alice Madden. Marshall is a moderate Republican whose strong support for rapid transit and higher education would be a welcome addition to the House GOP caucus. The call is close because Democrats have a knowledgeable candidate in Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, retired intergovernmental relations director for Boulder County.

HD 11 (Boulder) — Incumbent Democrat Jack Pommer has been a strong voice on the Joint Budget Committee. He's our pick over Republican Catherine Jarrett.

HD 12 (Boulder) — Incumbent Democrat Paul Weissman, a veteran legislator who is also a bartender and manager at Louisville's historic Blue Parrot restaurant, brings a healthy dose of common sense to the legislature. He faces Republican Daniel Lucas.

HD 13 (Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin) — Incumbent Democrat Claire Levy has been a strong voice on ethics issues and advocated reforms for Colorado's overcrowded prison system. She's our pick over Republican Robert Houdeshell.

HD 14 (El Paso) — Incumbent Republican Kent Lambert seems well suited to this conservative district. Democrat Chyrese Exline is a strong advocate of environmental issues.

HD 15 (El Paso) — Republican Mark Waller defeated controversial Rep. Douglas Bruce in the August Republican primary. Waller should bring a conservative but constructive viewpoint to the House, a welcome change from Bruce's disruptive antics. The Democratic candidate is Michelle Maksimowicz.

HD 16 (El Paso) — Incumbent Republican Larry Liston has occasional attacks of foot-in-mouth disease but also shows an independent streak. We'll stick with him over Democrat Richard Flores.

HD 17 (El Paso) — Republican Catherine "Kit" Roupe has broad experience in community issues such as schools and transportation. She's our choice over Democrat Dennis Apuan.

HD 18 (El Paso) — Incumbent Democrat Michael Merrifield's expertise on education and transportation has earned his re-election. He faces Republican Katherine Szot.

HD 19 (El Paso) — Incumbent Republican Marsha Looper helped pass bills aiding Colorado farmers in her first term. She rates re-election over Democrat Jimmy Phillips.

HD 20 (El Paso) — Incumbent Republican Amy Stephens is a strong conservative but reached across party lines on nonpartisan issues. She's our choice over Democrat Jan Hejtmanek.

HD 21 (El Paso, Fremont) — Incumbent Republican Bob Gardner has moderate views on transportation and social issues. He's our choice over Democrat Anna Lord.

HD 22 (Jefferson) — Incumbent Republican Ken Summers fought for educational reform and the homeless in his first term. We'll stick with him despite a strong challenge from Democrat Camille Ryckman.

HD 23 (Jefferson) — Incumbent Democrat Gwyn Green is a hard worker who keeps in touch with her district. She wins our nod over Republican Mary Lynn Wagner.

HD 24 (Jefferson) — Democrat Sue Schafer brings a strong background in community issues to this race to replace term-limited Cheri Jahn. Republican Cheryl Palm didn't answer our questionnaire and has no campaign website.

HD 25 (Jefferson) — Republican Cheri Gerou, an Evergreen architect, brings a strong professional and community background to this race. Voters in this district like moderate Republicans, and Gerou's balanced views on environmental and economic issues fit the bill. She faces Democrat Andrew Scripter and Libertarian Jack Woehr.

HD 26 (Jefferson) — Democratic incumbent Andy Kerr has served well on the Education and Judiciary committees as well as the important Legislative Audit Committee. He faces Republican Ray Warren.

HD 27 (Jefferson) — First-term incumbent Democrat Sara Gagliardi, a nurse, has focused primarily on health care. But we're more impressed with Republican challenger John Bodnar because of his balanced views on energy and environmental issues. Bodner also has realistic and affordable ideas about expanding health care options. American Constitution Party candidate Amanda Campbell is also running.

HD 28 (Jefferson) — Two-term Republican incumbent Jim Kerr is an ardent champion of school choice who says, "I support vouchers, charter schools, home schools, online schools, and public schools." You don't have to agree with all his views to respect the role he plays in education reform and he's our choice over Democrat Tom Dittmore.

HD 29 (Jefferson) — Two-term Democratic incumbent Debbie Benefield has been willing to team up with Republican legislators on educational reform and other issues. She faces Republican Mary Arnold.

HD 30 (Adams) — Two highly able candidates are vying to replace outgoing Rep. Mary Hodge, who is running for the Senate. We lean slightly to Republican Kevin Priola because of his stronger emphasis on water issues, a Hodge specialty. But Democrat Dave Rose, former mayor of Brighton, has the better grasp of transportation needs.

HD 31 (Adams) — Two-term Democratic incumbent Judy Solano has a solid understanding of transportation and alternative energy. She's our pick over Republican Holly Hansen.

HD 32 (Adams) — Incumbent Democrat Edward Casso is unopposed.

HD 33 (Adams, Boulder, Broomfield, Weld) — First-term incumbent Democrat Dianne Primavera has focused primarily on health care. But she also has more practical ideas about solving Colorado's transportation problems than Republican challenger Nick Kliebenstein.

HD 34 (Adams) — Our choice is incumbent Democrat John Soper, a strong advocate of early childhood education and public schools. He faces Republican Tom Bopp and Green candidate Tony D'Lallo.

HD 35 (Adams) — Incumbent Cherylin Peniston, a retired teacher, focused on educational issues in her first term. She faces Republican Tracy Gimer.

HD 36 (Arapahoe) — Aurora businesswoman Su Ryden, a Democrat, has a fine civic record in historic preservation and other civic issues. She's our choice over an able Republican, Kathy Green, a former Aurora councilwoman.

HD 37 (Arapahoe) — First-term Republican Spencer Swalm has useful insights on health care and special-needs children. He faces Democrat Diana Holland and American Constitution Party candidate Brian Olds.

HD 38 (Arapahoe, Jefferson) — Citizen-soldier Joe Rice, a Democrat, has served three tours of duty in Iraq while establishing himself as one of the best new legislators. Rice has an especially strong command of transportation needs. He's our choice over Republican Dave Kerber.

HD 39 (Arapahoe) — Our choice is incumbent Republican David Balmer, who has helped increase higher-education funding and works well across party lines. He faces an able challenger in Democrat Mollie Cullom.

HD 40 (Arapahoe, Elbert) — Republican attorney and businesswoman Cindy Acree, a strong advocate for the disabled, is our choice to replace term-limited Debbie Stafford. She faces Democrat Karen Wilde.

HD 41 (Arapahoe) — Democratic incumbent Nancy Todd is unopposed.

HD 42 (Arapahoe) — Incumbent Democrat Karen Middleton is a strong voice on education and transportation. She faces Republican George Carouthers and Libertarian James Frye.

HD 43 (Douglas) — Incumbent Republican Frank McNulty had a mixed record in his first term but faces only a token challenge from Democrat John Stevens.

HD 44 (Douglas) — Republican Mike May has been a voice for civility and fair play as House minority leader. He's our pick over Democrat Shelly Tokerud.

HD 45 (Douglas, Teller) — Democrat Holly Gorman's strong views on transportation and education earn our nod in this Republican-leaning district. She faces lobbyist Carole Murray, a Republican.

HD 46 (Pueblo) — Democrat Sal Pace is unopposed.

HD 47 (Pueblo, Fremont) — Democratic incumbent Buffie McFadyen is a tireless advocate for transportation and other capital construction needs. She faces Republican Troy Sammons.

HD 48 (Weld) — Incumbent Glenn Vaad is a moderate Republican whose expertise on transportation and local government issues earns our endorsement. He faces Democrat Bill Williams.

HD 49 (Larimer, Weld) — Whether fervently denying the theory of climate change or being the only representative of either party to vote against censuring Rep. Douglas Bruce for kicking a photographer, incumbent Republican Kevin Lundberg stands alone. We'll stand with Democratic challenger James Ross, who is campaigning on a pledge to strengthen state privacy laws.

HD 50 (Weld) — Incumbent Democrat Jim Riesberg's strong advocacy for education and transportation earns our

endorsement over Republican Scott Helman.

HD 51 (Larimer) — Incumbent Republican Don Marostica has worked hard to master the intricacies of the state budget process. He's our pick over Democrat Ken Bennett.

HD 52 (Larimer) — This is the third time incumbent John Kefalas, a Democrat, and former Rep. Bob McCluskey, a moderate Republican, have squared off. McCluskey won in 2004 but lost to Kefalas in the 2006 Democratic sweep. We have no particular grievance with Kefalas, but McCluskey was an outstanding lawmaker. He bucked the right wing of his own party to fight for the 2005 Referendum C fiscal rescue plan and the legislature desperately needs that kind of independence and cool judgment.

HD 53 (Larimer) — Incumbent Democrat Randy Fischer is an engineer who helped craft a compromise law protecting groundwater deposits from contamination from uranium mines. He's our choice over Republican Donna Gallup.

HD 54 (Delta, Mesa) — Republican incumbent Steve King is unopposed.

HD 55 (Mesa) — Incumbent Democrat Bernie Buescher has been an outstanding voice for Western Colorado as chairman of the Joint Budget Committee. His conservatism on some social issues rankles some Front Range liberals but reflects his district. He's our choice over Republican Laura Bradford.

HD 56 (Eagle, Lake, Summit) — Incumbent Democrat Christine Scanlan has been a thoughtful advocate for her district in areas ranging from transportation to the environment. She faces a flamboyant but erratic challenger in Republican Ali Hasan.

HD 57 (Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt) — Our choice for this seat vacated by term-limited Al White is Republican Randy Baumgardner, a rancher and Colorado Department of Transportation employee. He faces Democrat Todd Hagenbuch.

HD 58 (Delta, Dolores, Montezuma, Montrose, Ouray, San Miguel) — Two-term Montrose Mayor Noelle Hagan, a Democrat, is our choice. She has a keen sense of the need to balance energy development with protection of her district's environmental values. She faces Republican Scott Tipton.

HD 59 (Archuleta, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan) — Republican incumbent Ellen Roberts is unopposed.

HD 60 (Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Park, Pueblo, Saguache) — Incumbent Republican Tom Massey is an independent and knowledgeable voice for Western Colorado. He faces Democrat Cal Michael Cali.

HD 61 (Eagle, Garfield, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Pitkin) — Democratic incumbent Kathleen Curry is unopposed.

HD 62 (Conejos, Alamosa, Costilla, Huerfano, Mineral, Pueblo, Rio Grande, Saguache) — Costilla County Commissioner Edward Vigil, a Democrat, is our choice over Republican Randy Jackson.

HD 63 (Adams, Cheyenne, Crowley, Kiowa, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Morgan, Washington, Yuma) — Incumbent Republican Cory Gardner is unopposed.

HD 64 (Baca, Bent, Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, Prowers) — Rancher, fish hatchery owner and Las Animas County Commissioner Ken Torres, a Republican, is our choice over incumbent Democrat Wes McKinley. A former state wildlife commissioner, Torres has a strong understanding of his district's environment, transportation and economic needs. In his two terms in the statehouse, McKinley has been a backbencher with little impact on legislation.

HD 65 (Logan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Weld) — Incumbent Republican Jerry Sonnenberg faces only write-in opposition from Dan Conn.