

## Past policy positions raise questions about Polis' true political philosophy

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DENVER — A 2001 issue paper written for the free market Independence Institute by Colorado Gubernatorial candidate and U.S. Congressman, Jared Polis, has raised questions about what his broader political philosophy really is, especially around health care and energy.

In the paper, Polis argues the United States Post Service (USPS) is a government monopoly that needs to privatize.

“Through inertia and intransigence, USPS remains owned by the United States government, which also grants it a monopoly in key categories, including home mailbox delivery,” Polis wrote. “There are two separate but related reforms that are necessary for the benefit of postal customers, postal employees, and businesses in the delivery sector: End all monopolistic protections and special treatment enjoyed by USPS Transfer the capital stock of USPS into private hands more capable of exercising meaningful diligence and improving operating efficiency, thus allowing the profits and stock appreciation to accrue to the benefit of the employees and other shareholders.”

Polis's desire to privatize the postal service has left free market policy advocates, as well as Walker Stapleton supporters, wondering why he doesn't have the same belief system where his healthcare and energy policies are concerned.

“I look forward to his writing a similar paper for us, 30 years from now, entitled, ‘Privatizing and Ending the Monopoly of Government Health Insurance,’ said Joshua Sharf, a fiscal policy analyst at the Independence Institute.\*

Polis's issue paper argued the government run USPS tries to act like a business but is locked into inefficient and bureaucratic decision-making processes.

Some argue the Affordable Care Act (ACA), put in place under President Barack Obama and voted for by Polis in Congress, has similar problems and could be solved the same way.

“The solution to increase access to care is not some top-down mandate to purchase health insurance funded through still more third-party activity,” wrote Barry Fagin, a senior fellow at the Independence Institute, in a 2015 editorial. “This will make things worse. Instead, we need more freedom and more responsibility. ... We need more bottom-up ideas that empower patients and less top-down control that empowers bureaucrats. That's because the best way to ultimately improve access to health care is to have it get better and cheaper every day. Markets are the only social institution that can accomplish that.”

Polis, who spoke to Complete Colorado by phone on Saturday, said the rhetoric in elections is silly sometimes, pointing out what he sees as differences between privatizing the USPS and doing the same for healthcare and energy.

“I don’t see healthcare at all as ideological,” he said, citing a book he recently read by the Cato Institute, that talks about how the healthcare system is broken. “It doesn’t matter if you’re liberal or conservative. It’s ridiculous when people are charged \$120 for a Band-Aid or an Epi Pen would cost \$450 in this country and \$30 in Canada.

“It’s just broken. Americans are getting ripped off. It’s not a function of ideology, it’s a function of the way the special interests have co-opted the government for their own advantage to the detriment of consumers in the market.”

The Cato Institute is a libertarian think tank headquartered in Washington, D.C.

Weld County Sheriff Steve Reams doesn’t agree. He said he supports Stapleton because he needs a Governor who recognizes Colorado economics and will work to strengthen them.

He said Polis has made a habit of flip-flopping on policy decisions, and policy decisions are what drive Colorado’s economy.

“What scares me the most about Jared Polis, is his picking winners and losers, especially when it comes to the energy industry” Reams said. “Artificial setbacks will essentially cripple the oil and gas industry, and the fact is that we’re going to pick a winner and a loser based on what feels right to Jared Polis is wrong.”

Polis said the market is driving his energy policy.

“Xcel will tell you right now that new wind energy costs about 20 percent less than existing coal,” he said, adding those are Xcel’s figures not his.

But he’s also not willing to shut down oil and gas all together.

Although he does not support Initiative 108, which would require communities and counties who reduce property values through regulations — including such things as moratoriums or bans on drilling — to compensate land owners for a loss of value to their property, he said he also does not support Proposition 112, he said, which would essentially ban oil and gas drilling in Colorado by raising mandatory set backs to 2,500 feet, making most of the state off limits

“Right now, where we are, is people can save money with increased capacity with renewable energy, there is no question. As we’re powering the grid and increasing state population, there needs to be a greater deployment of wind and solar, especially in places like Weld County and eastern Colorado which have the best conditions.”

He said it also helps with people in agricultural communities by stabilizing incomes that rely on commodity pricing.

“It’s mostly ag and oil and gas on their land,” he said. “Renewable can help round out some of those natural peaks and valleys of the commodities-based economy.

Reams doesn’t believe it.

“Are you going to tell me that solar energy is not a pollutant in the end?” Reams said. “Those solar panels don’t make themselves. A windmill doesn’t make itself. It still takes raw materials to do that. Those are the things that scare me the most.”