

Column – Don't Think Back, Think Comeback

Posted on Jan 21, 2010 by [Todd Dorman](#).

It's fitting that Terry Branstad's comeback campaign for governor started in a history museum.

And it's not because he's a political relic on display. It's because the State Historical Building houses exhibits interpreting and reinterpreting Iowa's history. And now that's Branstad's job as well.

Branstad [launched his campaign this week](#) with bold, specific promises that, if they are to be believed, require a reinterpretation of his 16 years as governor between 1983 and 1999. Don't think back. Think comeback.

Branstad vowed to slash the cost of state government by 15 percent. But please forget how during Branstad's four terms as governor the number of state workers increased by nearly 8,000 while the state's population shrank by 1,000. Don't focus on how total general fund tax receipts that stood at \$1.9 billion in fiscal year 1983 grew to \$4.9 billion by 1999.

Forget that as he prepared to leave office, the Cato Institute [gave his fiscal performance a D](#), citing his propensity to spend too much and his lack of action on tax reforms. He's going to fix property taxes now.

Please, remember the \$900 million surplus that existed when he left office and was squandered by Democrats. Forget that during his last two years in office, Branstad and a Republican Legislature responded to a temporary surplus by enacting

\$400 million in permanent tax cuts and \$390 million in spending increases for ongoing programs. Branstad wasn't around for the next economic downturn in 2001 when the house of cards collapsed.

Democrats controlled the Legislature during much of his tenure. But that's likely what he'll face in 2011, if elected.

Branstad promises to increase family incomes by 25 percent. He's running for a four-year term, but during a 14-year period on his watch between 1985 and 1999, median household income grew just 28 percent. Branstad promises to create 200,000 new jobs. Iowa added 500,000 nonfarm jobs during his 16 years in office.

The good news for Branstad is he has several months to explain how he plans to make our future perform better than his past. Elections are about the future, after all, and a throwback candidate like Branstad faces an even higher bar in convincing us that we should reach back to move ahead.

Branstad's problem is that living people recall his governorship. That's unlike his rival Bob Vander Plaats, whose supporters have repeatedly, and hilariously, compared his fight against marriage equity to Abraham Lincoln's fight against slavery. A Lincoln administration spokesman could not be reached for comment.

Comments: (319) 398-8452 or todd.dorman@gazcomm.com

Related Articles:

- [Branstad formally enters governor's race](#) – January 19, 2010

- [Fun with Numbers – Branstad's Back](#) – *January 19, 2010*
- [Rivals say Branstad announcement changes little](#) – *January 19, 2010*
- [Branstad speaks with supporters in Cedar Rapids](#) – *January 20, 2010*

Comments (2)

[Login](#)

[Login](#) or [signup](#) now to comment.

Sort by: [Date](#) [Rating](#) [Last Activity](#)



[tandog](#) 59p · 22 hours ago

+1

"That's unlike his rival Bob Vander Plaats, whose supporters have repeatedly, and hilariously, compared his fight against marriage equity to Abraham Lincoln's fight against slavery."

Wow, how could this anyone come to this conclusion??

I think Jay Leno better subscribe to an Iowa paper for some new jokes!!!

Reply

[Report](#)



[RevDave](#) 38p · 16 hours ago

+1

I would hope the Republican Party could come up with better than this - Terry acts like none of these things happened while he was governor. Vander Plaats is more suited to be Steve King's crazy successor in Congress. Makes you nostalgic for the sizzle of Bob Ray.

Reply

[Report](#)

Comments by

© 2010 GazetteOnline.com. All Rights Reserved.