

Comments on Denver Post Article October 26, 2014 by
Kirk Mitchell, Joey Bunch and John Frank re:
John Hickenlooper and Bob Beauprez and their
2014 run for the Governor's Office

A great deal of noise is made about Public Safety locally, statewide, nationally and internationally. Whether it concerns kidnappings, burglaries, murders, sexual assaults, hit and runs, lone wolf or larger scale terror attacks, we hear about Public Safety every day many times over, and spend billions of dollars promoting the legitimacy of the concept. In reality, Public Safety too often turns out to be "clean-up" after a tragic event. In the Post article named above, two candidates for governor of Colorado are discussed in regards to their perceived ability to protect the safety of the public. The challenger, Bob Beauprez, chastises the incumbent, John Hickenlooper, because a mistake was made on a court paper, allowing a gang affiliate out of prison 4 months early, resulting in the death of Tom Clements, the then head of the Colorado Department of Corrections. Whose fault is it really, that these terrible things happen? Often it is ours.

Take the case of murders, especially the murders of people who have been drinking heavily. They could be college co-eds or adults who frequent bars for something they call friendship and a good time. It is not unusual to see a kidnapping and sexual assault mixed in where alcohol is involved. No matter how many times a murder, kidnapping and/or sexual assault happen, we seem not to learn from our mistakes, or "bad choices".

While I agree that the person who commits a murder, kidnapping or sexual assault must take responsibility for what they have done, I also know that better decisions by the person or persons offended against could have made a big difference in what happened to them. Despite large numbers of offenses against co-eds on campuses, people continue to drink too much which impairs their judgment, and then walk or drive home alone. Our desire for a "good time" in this country and results of that good time frequently account for the vast majority of the morning news.

Increased attention to our own safety will help to eliminate some unnecessary pain, suffering and death, including always locking our screen doors as well as our inside doors, locking our windows, always jogging or walking or going home after a party with at least one other person, being aware of our surroundings at all times etc. Some negative events will happen, however, whether we plan carefully and always exercise caution or we don't. Furnaces explode, people break in to houses and commit crimes of all kinds, and 9/11 happened, sadly enough. The recent axing of a group of policeman in New York clearly points out the fact that even those most trained and most prepared, at least in theory, cannot always protect themselves or protect us.

In my mind, public safety, and the billions we spend on it, is a misnomer. It is a false perception that people have that if you throw enough money, people, training and politicians at it, it will be safe. While everyone knows that is not true, we like to live in a world where we choose to believe it is true.

I hope that John Hickenlooper wins the election, not because I think he has done a perfect job being governor, but because the heads of the Colorado Department of Corrections will once again change if Bob Beauprez is elected. An organization as large as the CDOC needs one person's attention for longer than a couple of years if improvements of any kind are to be made in the way the system works. For Bob Beauprez to say that he has never seen a system so "felon friendly" as under Governor Hickenlooper shows that he does not understand that it takes all of us working together toward living

better, safer, wiser, kinder lives, as well as making less mistakes and better choices to REDUCE the risks surrounding the safety of humankind. Those who have offended must be held accountable but treated humanely and with dignity; those who have been offended against must take steps to be as wise as they can about the decisions they make concerning alcohol consumption, who they leave a party with etc. We must all be vigilant regarding our surroundings, lock our doors and windows, and keep our furnaces and other household equipment in good running order. None of that, however, ensures that we will be safe.

Having a candidate for governor in Colorado who harasses the incumbent and his administration is silly, as there will surely be nightmarish events happen on the candidate's watch if he/she is elected. Rather, we should all work together to restore those who have offended, care for those who have been victimized, practice prevention, and educate humankind regarding practices that reduce the likelihood that bad events will happen. Bad events will never completely go away. Throwing money only at the criminal justice system and keeping everyone who has committed an offense under lock and key for the rest of their lives does not solve the problem. Being careful how much we drink, who we leave parties with, how fast we drive, and being constantly aware of our surroundings will help to reduce bad happenings, but it will never eliminate them.

I believe the concept of public safety is a misnomer, yet politicians running on public safety platforms assure people that on their watch, they will be safe. It is sad that a good politician cannot be elected on fact, but rather is elected on perceived truth. Perception regarding public safety is not truth regarding public safety.

Let's restore the person who has offended, protect and care for the person who has been victimized, hold high the concept of prevention, and educate each other regarding the "enhancement of the safety of us all". Never will we be completely safe, but it takes all of us working together to enhance our safety.

Susan Walker, M.A.
Director, CSOR (Coalition for Sexual Offense Restoration)
P.O. Box 27051
Denver, Co 80227
www.csor-home.org
Affiliate/Nat'l. RSOL (Reform Sex Offender Laws)