Colorado Presentation

Speaker: Barbara O’Brien, lieutenant governor, State of Colorado

Biographical Information on the Speaker

Barbara O’Brien is a long-time advocate for young children and teens and has a history of innovative policy initiatives.

Prior to becoming Lt. Governor, O’Brien spent 16 years as president of the Colorado Children’s Campaign, a statewide public policy and advocacy nonprofit organization. Her leadership has produced major statewide policy initiatives that increased funding for schools, created charter schools, expanded early childhood education, increased access to health care for uninsured children, reduced teen smoking and expanded after-school programs.

As lieutenant governor, O’Brien has an ambitious agenda for education, health and wellness, and aerospace issues.

Education

Colorado has one of the most educated populations in the nation but faces some education challenges. Gov. Ritter appointed Lt. Governor O’Brien to serve as the co-chair of the P-20 Education Council, which oversees education reform and innovation from pre-school to post-secondary education. In its first year, the P-20 Council successfully advocated for expansion of full-day kindergarten and pre-school statewide.

Health & Wellness

Colorado is one of the nation’s healthiest states, but its residents are on the same obesity trend upward as the rest of the country. To help change the trend, Lt. Gov. O’Brien is working with the Metro Denver Health & Wellness Commission and LiveWell Colorado, a public-private partnership to encourage small steps toward healthier habits in schools, communities and at work.

Aerospace

Colorado is home to the second largest aerospace industry (after California). There are 26,650 private aerospace jobs in Colorado and 171,200 people in space-related jobs. So it is no surprise that aerospace is one of four economic development sectors targeted by the Ritter administration as critical to the state’s future. Lt. Gov. O’Brien serves as co-chair of the Colorado Space Coalition, a group of business, government and military representatives that support and promote Colorado’s aerospace industry. Lt. Gov. O’Brien actively promotes science, technology, engineering and math education to ensure Colorado’s next generation of aerospace workforce.
Commission on Indian Affairs
The lieutenant governor’s office is also home to the Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs and Lt. Gov. O'Brien serves as its chair. The Commission was created in 1976 to foster productive relationships between state government, Colorado’s two Ute tribes and other American Indian residents. In January 2008, the tribal chairs for both the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Tribes were invited to attend Governor Ritter’s State of the State speech for the first time in modern history.

Personal Background
Lt. Gov. O’Brien and Dr. Richard O’Brien have been married for 36 years. They have lived in Colorado since 1982. They are parents to two grown sons, Jared and Connor, and live in Denver with their two dogs Tas and Tika.

Past Professional Experience
Colorado’s 47th Lieutenant Governor 2007 - present
President, Colorado Children’s Campaign 1990 - 2006
Executive Director, Institute for International Business, CU-Denver 1988 - 1990
Director of Campus Affairs, University of Colorado at Denver 1985 - 1988
Project Assistant, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Columbia University 1977 - 1979

Educational Background
University of California at Los Angeles, Bachelor of Arts 1972
Columbia University, New York PhD 1981