

Guest Editorial, March 2008  
By State Senator Roy Brown, Candidate for Governor

Governor Brown or Governor Schweitzer...Why should you switch horses in the middle of the stream? Things are going reasonably well. Jobs are plentiful and wages are up. What is the problem?

First you need to ask, "Why are things better now?" From the 1970's to the mid 1990's, Montana was a "Tax and Spend State". Anything that prospered was severely taxed. Any time the treasury needed money, taxes were raised and our economy went from prosperity to poverty.

In the mid 1990's, a Republican legislative majority decided it was time for a change. From 1995 to 2005, the tax structure of Montana was greatly improved. Business equipment taxes, oil and gas taxes, income taxes, capital gains taxes, and vehicle registration taxes were all reduced. Property tax increases from reappraisal were mitigated and the death tax was eliminated. These taxes were previously among the highest in the nation. The economy came back to life. Our new economy, fueled by tax cuts has been setting records that are the envy of the nation.

Tax revenues to Montana at these reduced tax rates are now double what they were just 10 years ago. **When taxpayers are allowed to keep more of their money, they will spend it...they will save it...they will invest it. When businesses are allowed to keep more of their money, they will buy more equipment...they will hire more employees...they will pay more in wages.** That's how you make more revenues from lower tax rates.

As the Governor took the oath in January 2005, he inherited a \$400 million surplus of unexpected funds followed in 2007 by an enormous \$1.4 billion surplus in your tax dollars. What happened with those funds? The Schweitzer administration masterminded the two biggest spending increases in the history of Montana. He also bragged he did not raise taxes but forgot to mention he removed the economic trigger on the business equipment tax. That meant 16,000 small businesses were stuck with this onerous tax that was scheduled to disappear. He also tripled the tax on cell phones and increased numerous fees. **Spin it all you want but a fee is still a tax.**

In the first term of the Schweitzer administration spending has increased 41%. The total spending for the next two years is approximately \$9.15 billion dollars. That equals a staggering \$40,000 spending for every family of four in Montana. That would go a long way toward health insurance and college tuition for Montana families. At the same time government grew by nearly 1000 new employees. If there is even a slight economic set back, the automatic escalators in the spending frenzy will undoubtedly lead to calls to raise taxes. That's exactly what our history tells us not to do.

So, "**What can Brown do for you?**"

1. Propose real property tax relief and the elimination of the business equipment tax. This economic stimulus will keep the economy going.
2. End this out of control spending frenzy and replace it with a process that returns responsibility and accountability. We need **BETTER GOVERNMENT NOT BIGGER GOVERNMENT.**
3. Action on development of our natural resources, not just talk. If we truly want more money for our schools, universities and human services let's develop those valuable natural resources in a sound and sensible manner.
4. Promote Montana, not myself.

I am very excited and optimistic about the opportunities and possibilities for Montana's hard working families. Yes, there are many challenges. But we are up to the challenge. Montana's greatest resource is its people. We can and we will find workable solutions. However, let's not go back to the tax and spend philosophy that was such a failure in the past.

I have a vision for Montana that includes a vibrant economy coupled with a healthy environment. A vision where our well educated college students find high paying jobs right here in Montana when they graduate. It is a vision where government is less intrusive and more people friendly. It is a Montana where our strong traditions of faith, family, and freedom are respected, protected and defended. I hope you will join me in that vision.

I started off with the analogy of switching horses in the middle of the stream. Look at it this way. If you are out in the middle of the stream on your **show horse** and you are about to be swept away, why not jump on that **work horse** standing firmly on tested ground right next to you?!