

# The Pueblo Chieftain

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## Arrogance personified

**W**HEN COLORADO Attorney General Ken Salazar urged Aurora to up its ante in its proposed purchase of Rocky Ford Ditch shares, Aurora Mayor Paul Tauer accused Mr. Salazar of political grandstanding.

Mr. Salazar urged Aurora to commit another \$1 million toward the study of the proposed Arkansas Valley conduit and to pledge that it won't make any more water transfers from the Arkansas River Basin. He made the two recommendations with respect to any final agreement and consent decree in the current case.

Subsequently, and again this week, Mr. Tauer went further in his criticism of the attorney general, alleging that Mr. Salazar was making "the first salvo in his campaign to run for governor in five years." That makes absolutely no sense.

There are many more potential voters for Mr. Salazar to woo in Aurora than in the Lower Arkansas Valley. If Mr. Salazar wanted to make water an issue in any gubernatorial campaign, he'd be politically a lot smarter to seek the support of Aurorans and others in the thirsty metro suburbs.

What has prompted Mr. Salazar is the knowledge that taking more water from the Arkansas near Buena Vista is going to leave less in the stream to dilute pollutants, mainly salts, that occur east of Pueblo as a result of irrigated agriculture. That point has been made by scientists at the Colorado State University Agriculture Research Station in the Arkansas Valley.

It was reiterated last week by a federal conservation agronomist working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. According to agronomist Lorenz Sutherland, total dissolved salts in the river measure 240 parts per million just below Canon City. By the time the river reaches the Kansas border, salt levels have risen to 3,800 parts per million.

Because of this increasing salt load, the Arkansas Valley conduit has been part of the planning for the Frying Pan-Arkansas Project since its earliest days. Piping relatively clean water for municipal uses would make domestic water treatment a lot less costly, more so now in the face of increasing federal water quality standards.

Since Aurora would be getting high-quality water at a cost far below what water in the South Platte River Basin is selling for, it was only natural for Mr. Salazar to urge Aurora to help facilitate the conduit. That's not political grandstanding, or even running for governor sometime in the future. It's sound public policy.

Mr. Tauer frankly doesn't give a fig for what will happen in the Arkansas Valley as a result of its previous or current water transfers. In our book, his attitude is the height of arrogance.

But impoverishing one part of Colorado will in the long run end up being a drag on Aurora and other population centers along the northern Front Range. That's a heck of a