

# City News

From Councilwoman Jeanne Faatz



## Raises for elected officials send wrong message to taxpayers

Council could not have angered the public and demoralized city employees more than when it recently voted itself a pay raise. Even in a good economy, raises are unpopular. But in a bad economy with revenue down, city services at risk, layoffs inflicting pain, and a \$500 million projected shortfall in future years, they're inexcusable.

Yet they happened, in spite of votes of "NO" from me and council members Carol Boigon, Marcia Johnson, Jeanne Robb and Paula Sandoval.

It isn't as if Denver elected officials are poorly paid. Council salaries are already \$78,173 and now will rise to \$83,332 by the end of next term, a 6.6% increase. The mayor's pay will jump to \$155,211 and salaries for the clerk and recorder and the city auditor will go to \$134,235. If those were small paychecks, we wouldn't have 10 people running for mayor, four for clerk, three for auditor and in some districts as many as seven council candidates.

So, why did the subject of raises even come up? That's because the city charter requires that elected officials' pay be set every four years prior to the city election. The charter limits raises, but doesn't mandate them. All it says is that once salaries are set, they stand for four years.

Granted, the new raises are below the law's limits and won't begin for two years, but they go into effect regardless of the city's fiscal situation. How do you suppose taxpayers feel about that?

The average household income in Denver is \$45,789, the average family income is \$56,909, and the average city Career Service worker earns \$55,789. Teachers make \$45,000 on average, and only bump to \$74,000 when they meet national standards or have a doctorate or master's plus 60 hours and log at least 13 years. Will the economy be churning, the city humming and everyone back to work two years from now when the new raises go into effect? Who can say?

Just know, on your behalf, I **opposed** a pay raise for elected officials.

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