

# The Gazette

## OUR VIEW: Welcome Christo's 'Over the River'

### Artist proposes a genuine gift of wealth

*Colorado Springs Gazette* – Editorial  
July 30, 2010

Gifts don't get much better than "Over the River," a \$50 million exhibit proposed by a world-renowned artist.

In stark contrast, federal pork bill HR 4812 would pump \$42.8 million of borrowed cash into local government. Some people want it. When the Colorado Springs City Council declined to support the bill, critics were incredulous. Anything that would push cash into the economy must be a valuable gift, right?

Only the economically illiterate view borrowed cash as an asset. Wealth is the creation and production of goods and services that elevate the human condition.

Nothing represents wealth better than literature, music and art. Michael Jackson combined melodies, lyrics and ideas that brought his customers joy.

Likewise, Christo creates wealth by daring to express the bold and unique ideas in his head. The value of his wealth is represented by cash, which he invests in more beauty.

Christo decided 18 years ago to create wealth right here in southern Colorado with "Over the River," which will involve draping silver fabric over eight sections of a 42-mile stretch of the Arkansas River. The project will display for two weeks in the summer of 2013, if all goes well.

The artist asks for nothing other than permission of taxpayers who own the river. Permission must be granted by the federal Bureau of Land Management, Chaffee County, Fremont County, the Colorado Department of Transportation and a few other government entities.

Christo will use \$50 million of his own cash, which he generates by selling artwork that improves lives, to construct "Over the River." The \$50 million will go into the pockets of people who live and work in Colorado and will circulate throughout our economy. The government estimates the exhibit will bring \$121 million in economic activity to the region and create hundreds of jobs.

Unlike the gift of congressional pork, none of Christo's gift is borrowed cash that will burden our youths while jeopardizing our nation's standing in the world. It's cash that represents real wealth in the form of artistic beauty. It will benefit the collective and substantially burden no one.

Those are the economic considerations. More important is the fact that Coloradans will have easy access to a world-class endeavor that others will traverse oceans to see.

Christo and his team have worked cooperatively with permitting entities, spending \$2.5 million on a federal environmental impact study. A small faction of critics want to stop the display, but their complaints about traffic snarls fail to inspire. Concerns for wildlife collide with the fact this exhibit will line a bustling transportation corridor, above a river that flows through artificial embankments. A pristine, rural wildlife preserve it is not.

Those who would stop this expression might also block other social events that temporarily disrupt routines. A culture intolerant of disruption is one devoid of parades, Renaissance festivals, concerts in parks, fireworks, sporting events, motion picture productions and Woodstock.

Christo proposes a gift of art and prosperity to Colorado. We should welcome it with gratitude and joy.

— **Wayne Laugesen , editorial page editor, for the editorial board.**