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The Code Of The West;
What [Barack Obama](#) can learn from [Bill Ritter](#).

BYLINE: Ryan Lizza

One day in early August, Bill Ritter, Jr., the governor of Colorado, met with Steve Feld, a professional filmmaker, to work on the video that will welcome delegates to the Democratic National Convention and present Colorado to the rest of the country. Feld, whose television credits include "The New Lassie" and "America's Funniest People," steered the Governor toward a conference room on the seventeenth floor of a downtown building and clipped a microphone to his lapel. The backdrop for the shoot, visible through a window, was the city of Denver-bristling with construction cranes and skyscrapers for high-tech companies like Qwest Communications-and, in the distance, the Rockies.

Ritter was elected governor in 2006 by a persuasive seventeen-point margin-a victory that emphasized Colorado's political transformation. In just the past four years, Democrats have won control of the sixty-five-member Colorado House, where they now hold a fifteen-seat majority, and the thirty-five-member Senate, where they're up by five seats. In 2004, the Democrat Ken Salazar, a former state attorney general, won the United States Senate seat that was vacated by the Republican Ben Nighthorse Campbell, and Democrats now occupy four of Colorado's seven seats in the House of Representatives. This November, the Party is favored to win the state's other Senate seat (the incumbent Republican, Wayne Allard, is retiring), and Democrats are increasingly confident about picking up a fifth House seat. (George W. Bush won Colorado in both of his Presidential elections, but his margin fell from eight points in 2000 to less than five points in 2004.) There's a reason that the Party chose Denver as the host city for this year's Convention: they expect that it will only help the Democratic Presidential nominee to win the state this fall.

Ritter, who is soft-spoken and oddly reticent for a politician, told Feld that the film should help to tell the story of how Democrats have been winning in the West. "It shouldn't be just a Chamber of Commerce video," he said. "It should be political in its orientation and talk about what we in the Democratic Party have really achieved in the West. If you take a map and just look at where Democratic governors have succeeded Republicans, it's pretty dramatic."

It is in fact a startling change. Since 2002, Democrats have replaced Republican governors in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona. It is possible to drive from the Canadian border to the Mexican border and not pass through a single state governed by a Republican. "That's a good pictorial of how you can think about what Democrats have done out here," Ritter said.

Ritter, who is scheduled to address the Convention on Thursday night, is an improbable choice to be pointing Democrats toward the Party's future. He is a Catholic in a Protestant state. In his opposition to abortion, he is out of synch with Party members as well as with the Party platform; twice during his rise through Colorado politics, pro-choice Democrats tried to derail his career-in 1993, when he was appointed district attorney of Denver, and in 2005, as he was preparing to run for governor. "When I was making phone calls, raising money," he said, "I probably talked about abortion in ninety to ninety-five per cent of my calls." Many potential donors said that because of his view they couldn't support him.

Nor is Ritter a particularly magnetic politician. In a party that is now defined by the youth and energy at the top of the ticket, Ritter, who is fifty-one, is a sort of anti-Obama. A self-described "policy wonk," he reaches a pitch of excitement when he talks about the benefits of highly efficient photovoltaic cells or when he recalls what he learned from glaciologists on a recent trip to the Arctic. Rather than charisma, he exudes a beguiling genuineness. "He's in the Colorado mold," Gary Hart, the former Colorado senator and Presidential candidate, told me. "He's smart but he's not uppity. He's a down-to-earth, everyday guy, which is very important out here."

On a recent morning, I met Ritter outside the governor's mansion, an imposing building on a hill in downtown Denver; its entrance is bracketed by two-story Ionic columns, and the interior is filled with museum-quality furnishings from all over the world, the legacy of a Colorado pioneer family that built the house in 1908. Ritter emerged in a suit and open collar, looking slightly dishevelled, with his tie undone and slung around his neck. He carried a newspaper in one hand and, in the other, a briefcase so heavy it threw his stride slightly off balance. We drove to the closest Starbucks. "Can I get you anything?" he asked his travelling companions-his press secretary, a state trooper, an economic adviser, and me-as he stepped out of the car. He returned carrying two grande coffees and he finished knotting his rep tie-quickly and without recourse to a mirror-as we drove the thirty miles to the college town of Boulder, where Ritter was going to speak about the state to a conference of venture capitalists. In his low-key, no-frills way, Ritter may be in the vanguard of what the national Democratic Party is becoming, both in its demographics and its policies. After about four years of lively discussion, strategists and Party leaders have decided that growth for Democrats is more likely to occur in the conservative but idiosyncratic West than in the solidly Republican South. [Barack Obama](#)'s campaign, for example, is competing seriously in Colorado, Montana, Nevada, and New Mexico-places where Democratic Presidential candidates have had only limited success during the past three decades.

A significant reallocation of resources to the Western states is likely to have remarkable political consequences. As an election nears, voters in swing states like Colorado get much more attention from candidates, and a party's consulting class spends a disproportionate amount of time developing strategies tailored to the demands of these spoiled voters. Over time, the political process may change the very outlook of a party, forcing it to become more attuned to the peculiar issues and coalitions of new voters. (That's the effect that Iowa and New Hampshire have had on both parties.) As the Democrats take the first steps toward remaking themselves as a Western party, Ritter's Colorado offers a glimpse of what may be the Democratic future.

On a recent afternoon, Jim Carpenter, Ritter's chief of staff, a goodnatured political junkie steeped in the arcana of Colorado demographics, stood in front of two giant state maps tacked to a wall in his office in the capitol building. Like the mansion, the capitol is impressive-a Corinthian-style structure capped by a gold-leafed dome. A brass disk on its steps marks a spot that is exactly a mile above sea level. One of Carpenter's maps showed cities and highways, and the other depicted the state's natural resources-a

way to help Carpenter keep track of issues unique to Colorado, such as public lands, oil and gas reserves, invasive species of insects, and fire threats. "So much of Colorado's history and economy is wrapped up in our land," Carpenter said.

Carpenter has worked in Democratic politics for thirty years and has seen his party's fortunes come full circle. In the nineteen-seventies, the state's politics were partially defined by ardent environmentalists and the slow-growth movement—they were able to keep the 1976 Winter Olympics away from Denver—and by Democrats with national profiles, like Gary Hart (who was born in Kansas) and Patricia Schroeder (who was born in Oregon). By the nineties, the state was known as a cradle of both the religious right and the anti-tax movement. Colorado Springs, the most conservative area of the state, serves as home to James Dobson's Focus on the Family, as well as to Douglas Bruce, a California transplant who wrote and helped pass Colorado's Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, or TABOR, a set of laws restricting government spending.

Using the roadmap, Carpenter indicated a swath of cities and towns to the east of the Continental Divide, which bisects the state. Stretching for about a hundred and seventy-five miles along Interstate 25—from Fort Collins, in the north, through Denver, in the middle, to Pueblo, in the south—this twenty-five-mile-wide area, known as the Front Range, is home to some eighty per cent of Coloradans, or about four million people. "Colorado really is one of the most urbanized states in the country, in terms of population concentration," Carpenter said. "Even with all this landmass."

The old method of winning Colorado, Carpenter explained, was similar to the approach that Democrats used in the East: a statewide candidate needed to dominate in a big city—Denver—as well as in the steel town of Pueblo, a rare sort of Western city whose politics were closer to those of a Rust Belt state than to those of the Rockies. "It's an old traditional blue-collar type of place," Carpenter said. "There were ethnic politics in Pueblo, blue-collar politics. It was like Milwaukee. There was the Hispanic part of town, and the Italian part of town, and the Eastern European part of town." Finally, Democrats also needed a big turnout in the heavily Hispanic San Luis Valley, in the south-central area of the state, as well as in Boulder, the epicenter for the environmentalists and a place where the politics were akin to those found in Berkeley, California, or Madison, Wisconsin. In some ways, it was a classic coalition for a Democratic victory: the urban core of a big city, the white working class, minorities, and student activists. Republicans, meanwhile, dominated the rural areas of the state and the fast-growing Denver suburbs. "In the eighties and nineties, the demographics moved very far away from the Democratic Party,"

Carpenter continued. Since 1990, the Front Range has added almost 1.3 million residents—most of that growth in the Denver suburbs, where Democrats were routinely defeated by wide margins. During the nineties, Republicans found these new arrivals to be eager companions in the populist movements of the right, such as term limits and the Contract with America. The most influential political actor during this period—Douglas Bruce, now a state representative—managed to put TABOR on the Colorado ballot three times, starting in 1988, and kept it there until it finally passed, in 1992. The law mandates a popular vote on any tax increase, strictly limits over-all government growth, and requires that budget surpluses be returned to taxpayers via rebate checks. Bruce's ballot initiative served as a model for small-government conservatives nationwide, and it has played such a dominant part in Colorado political life that jurisdictions trying to overturn its restrictions call the process "de-Brucing."

Over dinner one night at the Elephant Bar, a chain restaurant in Colorado Springs that boasts of its "elephant-size portions," Bruce, a heavysset man of fifty-nine with fierce opinions (Obama is a "moron," a gay person is a "homo," illegal immigrants are "illiterate peasants"), complained that the conservative

movement, even in Colorado Springs, was on the wane. "We have nine socialists on the city council and five RINOs"-Republicans in Name Only-"as county commissioners," he said between sips of a mango-raspberry swirl and outbursts directed at our waitress and the restaurant manager concerning the service. Bruce may have been unusually agitated that night; when we met, he was facing a primary challenge in ten days. "In the Republican Party, there's probably twenty-five to thirty per cent of the people who hate my guts," he said. "I have what are known as high negatives." Then again his opponent, Mark Waller, a former Air Force officer whose views were not so conservative as Bruce's, was a mere novice. "He's doing everything wrong," Bruce said. "So, frankly, it'll be a miracle if he won."

The Republican crackup in Colorado occurred early this decade, when a tenuous pact between economic and social conservatives came undone, and the Party's religious wing alienated moderates in the Denver suburbs by putting what was seen as an excessive emphasis on social issues. In 2004, in the midst of a state fiscal crisis-Colorado's budget deficit was a billion dollars, which threatened a cut in funding for higher education by a third-the Republican legislature spent an inordinate amount of time debating a resolution in support of a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage and revising a statute that required students and teachers in public schools to recite the Pledge of Allegiance every morning. The following November, the Democrats took over the legislature.

A year later, with the exploding population of the Front Range demanding more government services, Colorado Republicans faced their most serious crisis: they were divided over a ballot measure to suspend some TABOR rules for five years, allowing the government to use budget surpluses for health care, education, and transportation rather than refunding them to taxpayers.

Bill Owens, the Republican governor, surprised conservatives by coming out in favor of the referendum. Owens, after all, had been elected as an anti-government warrior. ("He sold us out," Bruce told me.) The measure passed in 2005, although not by much. The following year, [Bill Ritter](#) succeeded Owens, who had to step down because of term limits.

By 2006, the Democratic coalition was further altered by some striking new demographics. An area of opportunity had sprung up in what Carpenter calls "the blue strip"-the resort communities on the western side of the Rockies, including Steamboat Springs, Vail, Aspen, Crested Butte, and Breckenridge. "That's a change, because this used to be rural, traditional, Western, Republican ranch country, and now it's full of second homes and growing," Carpenter said. "It's a brand-new phenomenon." In effect, the ranks of blue-collar voters in places like Pueblo, where growth has come to a standstill, are being augmented by wealthy skiers. Furthermore, the Latino population in the state has doubled-to twenty per cent-since 1990. But, more important than the rise of the resort class and the growing number of Hispanics, Democrats became competitive in the Denver suburbs.

The Front Range is expected to have 6.3 million residents by 2040-a fifty-per-cent increase over today-and demographers have devised a new vocabulary to describe the distinctive characteristics of this and similar regions in the Southwest, such as Arizona's Sun Corridor, Nevada's Greater Las Vegas, and Northern New Mexico; the Brookings Institution, in a report called "Mountain Megas," has recently dubbed them "megapolitans." The fastest-growing suburbs in these areas, such as Westminster and Lakewood, outside Denver, are known as "boomburbs." What these megapolitans have in common are economies that are moving away from agriculture and the extraction industries (like mining, gas, and oil) and toward service industries (like tourism and hospitality) and high technology (like aerospace and biosciences). According to Brookings, the region will soon become the center of the postindustrial economy, meaning that "the southern Intermountain West is well on its way to earning itself the title of

the New American Heartland." Change in Colorado is occurring even in Doug Bruce's home town of Colorado Springs. On August 12th, Bruce, the leader of the once ascendant anti-government movement, lost his primary to Mark Waller, the novice.

On the short drive to Boulder, Governor Ritter talked about his unlikely passage to the statehouse. He grew up outside Denver, in what is today Aurora-now one of those boomburbs-on a five-acre wheat farm where he and his eleven siblings helped his parents raise chickens, pigs, and cows. His father, a rancher, was an alcoholic who deserted the family when Bill, the sixth child, was thirteen, forcing the older Ritter kids to work to help support their mother, who was a bookkeeper, and the rest of the family.

[Bill Ritter](#) laid pipe and worked as a roofer. He was educated in both Catholic and public schools before attending Colorado State University as an undergraduate and then the University of Colorado as a law student. He worked his way up to chief deputy prosecutor in the Denver D.A.'s office and abruptly left the job for something completely different: a Catholic mission to Zambia, where for three years he and his wife ran a nutrition center and quietly taught villagers in the grip of an H.I.V. pandemic how to use condoms. When he returned home, he worked for two years as a federal prosecutor and then went back to the D.A.'s office. In 1993, after the elected D.A. retired, the Democratic governor, Roy Romer, appointed Ritter to the top post. Romer was won over by Ritter, at least in part, because of Ritter's unusual history, especially the chronicle of his experiences in Zambia. Ritter was elected district attorney of Denver three times and retired in 2004, because of term limits.

In the car, Ritter explained how, when he and David Beattie, his pollster, plotted his 2006 gubernatorial race, they divided the state's electorate into five groups. Ritter, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, took out a pen and paper and sketched a pie chart. He drew one wedge and marked it with the number twenty, which he said represented the "very liberal" base of the Democratic Party. "Then another sixteen per cent are what we call Fox News conservatives," he said, drawing a second wedge. "They're just really conservative and they're never gonna be with a Democrat because they're just hardened conservatives in terms of thinking the government has no role. They would privatize just about every public function except perhaps law enforcement." No chance with those guys? I asked.

"No chance."

Ritter continued: "Then there's thirteen per cent of what we call moral conservatives, and there's some overlap between the morals and the Fox News conservatives, but they're hardened moral conservatives and they will not vote for a Democrat, even a pro-life Democrat, because he's a Democrat. I have a brother-in-law who's a moral conservative-didn't vote for me." The rest of the electorate, according to Ritter, was split between what he called "government pragmatists," which are thirty-seven per cent of voters, and "moral pragmatists," which are fourteen per cent. The first group, he said, "are pro-choice and they don't have issues around gay marriage. They just want to make sure government works, but they're *not* liberals, and they don't think the government should be increasing. It should spend your tax dollar prudently and wisely." Finally, the moral pragmatists, Ritter explained, "do have issues around gay marriage and they have issues having to do with abortion, but at the same time they don't want those issues to bog down government's ability to deliver appropriate functions."

These voters were the key to Ritter's victory. "If you win among the liberals, and you win all the government pragmatists, then you're over fifty per cent," he said as we pulled off the highway and

arrived at the sprawling and very modern campus of the University of Colorado at Boulder. "But you may not win all the government pragmatists for one reason or another. So you have to carve into those moral pragmatists, and I think the reason we won pretty significantly was because we carved heavily into that group."

Ritter's emphasis tends to be on the pragmatic. At the stop in Boulder, he told the venture capitalists how, during his gubernatorial campaign, his opponent ran ads portraying him as soft on crime. Ritter's aides told him that he needed to respond with commercials that showed his toughness. Ritter, though, recalled saying, "No, the first commercial we're gonna make will be in a wind farm."

In "Whistling Past Dixie," a book widely read and debated in Democratic circles when it was published in 2006, Thomas Schaller, a political scientist at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, argues that Democrats should give up on the South and focus on the West, partly because white Southerners, more than any other group, use social issues as a prism through which they view all other issues-and that attempts by Democrats to express some cultural affinity with these voters are rarely successful.

Therefore, if the South remains the unattainable goal for Democrats-a political white whale-striving to win the region will end up pulling the Party to the right on social issues like abortion and gay marriage, while achieving no electoral benefits. At the very least it will force Democrats to pander, leading voters to question the authenticity of candidates like John Kerry in 2004, who tried to pay homage to Southern culture. (No one quite believed that Kerry really enjoyed hunting and NASCAR.) Ritter's analysis suggests that he agrees with Schaller. Democrats don't need to speak in tongues to win the West. They simply need to give the electorate an honest signal that they take the concerns of moderate religious voters seriously. In office, Ritter's top priorities have been education, climate change, and the effort to move his state closer to a post-fossil-fuel energy economy. He almost never talks about social issues, and there is by now a bipartisan consensus in Colorado that emphasis on such issues is not good for a party's long-term health.

Other factors are at work out West for the Democrats. For one, the racial dynamics of Colorado and the region are not as fraught as they are elsewhere. "We never had slavery out here," Gary Hart said. "I mean, it's a Southern issue. And obviously the number of African-Americans is smaller, but that's not the point. The point is we just didn't have the heritage of slavery." The Obama campaign has claimed that a huge increase in black turnout could make him competitive in the Deep South, especially Georgia. But this doesn't seem a likely outcome to most analysts, who argue that the larger the black population in a Southern state the more the white population tends to vote Republican. David Beattie told me, "From a lot of work we've done in Georgia in state legislature seats, we learned that when the black percentage passes eighteen per cent, the whites in that seat tend to be more Republican than whites in seats where it is under eighteen per cent black."

Another fact of Western politics-one that also helps Democrats-is an absence of a strong party tradition. "They didn't have political machines two hundred years ago that dictated party, because they weren't even states," Beattie said. "They don't have that history like Chicago or New York or anything along the East Coast." There's no culture of political patronage, so individual candidates and personalities matter far more than party labels. Colorado's voter registration is divided roughly into equal thirds:

Republicans, Democrats, and independents, with independents growing the fastest. That's why Ritter governs ruthlessly from the center. He sees independence from the extremes as his guiding philosophy, and is therefore almost as quick to buck Democrats as he is to oppose Republicans. Among many

Democrats, being associated with the centrist Democratic Leadership Council has become toxic, but not in the West. "In Colorado, it's a badge of honor," Ritter told me. One of his first acts as governor was to veto a piece of legislation that would have made it easier for unions to organize in the state. The veto so infuriated national labor leaders that James P. Hoffa, the president of the Teamsters, confronted Ritter at the annual Gridiron Dinner, in Washington, and warned him that labor issues could "blow up" the Democratic Convention. (Recently, Ritter has steered in a more pro-labor direction.)

Ritter is vigilant about correcting the impression, often stoked by the national press and liberal Democratic strategists, that Colorado is turning a deep blue. During his session with Feld, the filmmaker eagerly suggested that the theme of his video might be "from red to blue to green" and excitedly noted that it would show "how Colorado has transformed from a red state to a blue state, and now we're going green!" The Governor visibly cringed at the idea and delicately steered the project in a different direction.

"I am a little concerned about that," Ritter said, "because I think, while we have great emphasis on green, that it should be about different kinds of symbols than the color green-wind farms, solar, renewable-energy laboratories, those things that are symbolic of the new energy economy. People think that we overuse the concept of green, and it could become trite in its expression." Later, Ritter returned to the point. "This idea about green in a lot of people's minds still conjures up this notion of a fringe or something that's out-there," he told me. "It doesn't inspire this notion of a new America. It just seems more substantive than a color." He continued, "If you only make it about being green, you lose the sense that you can build a national economy around this."

In the fall of 2006, Gary Hart sent Howard Dean, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, a memo outlining a new, Western-oriented political future. Under a grand-sounding title-"Manifesto: Democrats and the West"-Hart presented a ten-point plan for the transformation of the Democratic Party. When Dean announced, in January of 2007, that Denver would be the site of the 2008 Convention, he mentioned Hart's document as having influenced his decision. Hart's prescription is provocative. It calls for an outlook that is simultaneously more libertarian and more progressive. There is a renewed emphasis on private-property rights, accompanied by the suggestion that Democrats condemn the Supreme Court's 2005 Kelo decision, which expanded the right of eminent domain by allowing governments to seize private property in the name of economic development. Taking land "for public use is one thing," Hart wrote. "Taking homesteads, family farms and ranches, and small businesses for 'public purposes,' such as malls, shopping centers, and Wal-Marts, is quite another." Much of Hart's document dealt with how the Party should balance resource development and conservation. Like Ritter, Hart urged Democrats to promote the interior West as a center for the high-tech industry and a showcase for the transition to an economy built on renewable sources of energy. Hart's approach for de-emphasizing the culture wars is different from Ritter's. Whereas Ritter appealed to the religious convictions of voters, Hart suggests a more laissez-faire approach. "Westerners are individualists who do not like the beliefs of others imposed on us," he wrote. "We are people who believe in principles: integrity, honor, courage, accountability. The religious right preaches values. Democrats, regionally and nationally, should espouse *principles*, for ourselves and for our country." He argues that while "values" have religious connotations, "principles" are secular.

I asked Hart how the Democratic Party would look if it faithfully followed his counsel. "If we brought the mountain states into the Democratic Party for the next twenty, thirty, forty years, it would make the Party younger. It would make the Party more environmentally concerned and attentive. It would certainly move energy-related issues to the forefront," he said. "And you will find people here more technologically sophisticated. It would be much more new economy versus old economy. This is not an

industrial area. This is small business and cutting-edge technologies. We're about where California was twenty-five, thirty years ago."

Hart would like the Democratic Party to become closer to the coalition that he rallied in his 1984 insurgent primary campaign against Walter Mondale. "Fritz Mondale and I split the country," Hart said. "I swept the West, including California, and almost every Western state. The signature issue was globalization, even at that period, twenty-five years ago. Every state that was benefitting from international trade voted for me, and every state that was being hurt by international trade voted for Fritz. That was the issue." It hardly needed pointing out that Obama and Hillary Clinton were divided by the same set of issues in their primary contests this year, with Obama rallying the Hart coalition and Clinton winning the Mondale voters. "I didn't get the nomination and Obama did," Hart said. "But the country has moved into the new economy much more than twenty-five years ago."

There is an irony in the party of the downtrodden becoming the party of America's economic winners, but in fact Democrats are doing better among voters in places that are prospering, like Colorado and New Mexico, and losing ground among voters in regions that are experiencing hard times, such as West Virginia or parts of Pennsylvania and Ohio. A Democratic turn toward the West would accelerate this trend. A party of the Western megapolitans and resort communities would be a party less and less like the party of F.D.R., Truman, and Lyndon Johnson. It would be more oriented to the haves than to the have-nots. It would rely more on educated voters. Its approach to social issues would be more matter-of-fact, and candidates would be less fearful of alienating the most reactionary evangelicals. It would be more oriented toward small businesses and thus more skeptical of workplace regulations. It might become a party that puts more emphasis on achieving energy independence and combatting global warming than on providing universal health care and social justice. "It's a party that becomes more Hispanic, and less African-American," Kenneth Baer, the co-founder of *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, said. "More oriented toward high-tech workers and less towards labor. It's the end of the New Deal coalition."

Schaller sees the American West as a place to refashion a Democratic future—one less tethered to the Party's old interest groups. "Democrats have the chance in the Western states to forge parties that reflect a post-Great Society, new-economy identity," he said. "That will be much harder to do on the Eastern Seaboard, where the parties are dominated by Catholics and union households. The Colorado Democratic Party is a much better opportunity to forge a new party than, say, the Democratic Party of New York, which is filled with patronage politicians and dominated by identity politics and the barons of the old New York metropolitan machine."

Such changes are not going to take full effect this year, or next, in part because the Obama campaign is wealthy enough to compete in every region of the country. (Think of the Obama organization as a political venture-capital fund with enough money to test various theories of Democratic growth.) The campaign is certainly not about to pursue Western states at the expense of other regions of America.

For example, along with Colorado, Virginia is one of Obama's most important targets.

It may be more useful to think of "the West" not just as a place beyond the Great Plains but as shorthand for all those places where the demographics are moving in a direction similar to Colorado's Front Range. In that sense, Obama's hope to win Virginia is consistent with his party's Western strategy. Democrats have recently done well there because northern Virginia has become increasingly moderate, suburban, and high-tech; the Party still falls short with rural and culturally conservative voters.

Democrats often pay homage to the symbols of the American frontier. But the iconography of their Western strategy is not so much about mountains, cowboys, and tumbleweed as it is about tract houses, research labs, and wind farms. Over the next decades, the Party will inevitably follow the lead of politicians like [Bill Ritter](#) and focus more attention on the West and all that it represents. As the population and electoral votes flow in that direction, so will the Democrats.