

Opinion: Potty-mouths have long history in politics

By Forrest Whitman, High Country News

A pre-school teacher buddy of mine thinks Donald Trump ought to be scolded for being such a potty-mouth. She thinks no politician in history has uttered such deliberately shocking phrases. This was after Trump said that Hillary “is a loser and should be schlonged.”

She might be right about Trump, but politicians making shocking statements uttered are nothing new in the West. Some candidates have even been elected anyway – think Davis Waite, a member of the Populist Party who served as Colorado governor from 1893-95.

Waite was given to saying things like: “It is better, infinitely better, that blood should flow up to the horses’ bridles than that our national liberties should be destroyed.” That got attention 123 years ago. When candidates throw off outrageous statements like that, the press often goes “tut-tut,” but that never seems to stop the shock talk. The Denver press teased Waite unmercifully for his wild statements and he was inevitably nicknamed “old bloody bridles.” Yet he won the governorship, though he lost it badly just two years later.

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