

SEN. KEN SALAZAR



FIRST 100 DAYS:

A REPORT TO THE CITIZENS OF COLORADO

MAY, 2005

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 1, 2005

To the Citizens of Colorado:

I promised to be a Senator and independent voice for all the people of Colorado. I will always put the people first, ahead of all of the powerful special interests that want to control our Nation.

I am working tirelessly to better protect our homeland and ensure that every person has the opportunity for a good job, a quality education, affordable health care, and that we act as responsible stewards of our land and water.

I will represent all the people of Colorado – rural, suburban and urban. In that regard, we have opened offices in Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Grand Junction, Fort Collins, Fort Morgan, Durango and Alamosa. In February, I traveled almost 2,000 miles around the state hosting 17 regional planning workshops. I heard about the issues most important to Coloradans. We identified regional priorities that highlight transportation, health care and land and water issues. I hosted five meetings on Social Security to hear your perspectives on what should be done to preserve this important program. I have sought to seek solutions on many issues like those concerning the Arkansas River basin and the Fitzsimons veterans hospital in Aurora.

I have begun my legislative work on many matters that include: (1) national and homeland security – for example, foreign relations, veterans and law enforcement issues; (2) economic opportunity and security – for example, education, economic development, trade, transportation, consumer protection, Social Security, civil rights, and the federal budget and deficit; (3) rural America and agriculture; (4) health care; and (5) energy, the environment, and natural resources.

I am a member of three Senate Committees: Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources, and Veterans Affairs Committees, where I am busy advocating for veterans, rural communities, and helping craft national energy policies.

This report updates you on our work for the people of Colorado in my first 100 days as your United States Senator.

Sincerely,

Ken Salazar
United States Senator

NATIONAL AND HOMELAND SECURITY: PROTECTING COLORADO AND AMERICA

HOMELAND SECURITY/FIRST RESPONDERS

- Pushed the Department of Defense to honor its commitments to destroy over 700,000 mustard gas weapons stored at the Pueblo Chemical Activity.
- Joined a bi-partisan group of Senators in introducing S.737 (the SAFE Act) to amend the PATRIOT Act to better protect our civil liberties while continuing to fight terrorism.
- Joined a bi-partisan group of Senators in introducing legislation to assist rural law enforcement agencies in combating methamphetamine-related crimes.
- Surveyed Colorado's state and local law enforcement agencies and first responders on their needs and concerns regarding homeland security.
- Voted to restore \$1.6 billion in cuts to first-responder programs and to provide \$855 million in additional funding for the Department of Homeland Security, including \$565 million for first responders programs, \$140 million for border security, and \$150 million for port security.
- Voted for efforts to restore \$1 billion in funding to the highly-successful COPS program that helped place over 100,000 police officers on our streets across the Nation, including 1,289 in Colorado.

SERVICE MEMBERS & VETERANS

- Convened meetings with the Colorado delegation and state and local officials to seek a solution on the construction of a state-of-the-art Veterans hospital on the University of Colorado Fitzsimons campus in Aurora.
- Co-sponsored legislation to expand mental health care to all VA hospitals, place a PTSD clinical team at VA Medical Centers, improve outreach to at-risk veterans, revoke the so-called "disabled veterans tax" and enact a new GI Bill by excluding GI benefits from financial aid eligibility computations.
- Opposed Administration budget proposals that would force hundreds of thousands of veterans out of the veterans health care system and thousands of elderly veterans out of nursing homes.
- Requested the Veterans Administration to reduce the GI Benefits administrative backlog that has resulted in many Colorado veterans being unable to pay tuition or register for classes in a timely manner.

- Succeeded in renaming the “death gratuity” payable for deaths of members of the Armed Forces to “**Fallen Hero Compensation,**” to appropriately honor the men and women who sacrificed their lives for our Nation.
- Cosponsored and voted during the budget resolution to add \$2.8 billion in medical care budget authority for veterans for FY06.
- Cosponsored and voted for amendment to add \$1.9 billion in medical care for veterans.
- Voted during the budget resolution debate to add \$410 million to veterans health care.
- Proposed two different amendments to the budget resolution to increase VA community-based outpatient clinic funding by \$150 million paid for by closing corporate tax loopholes.
- Joined in efforts to **support wounded and/or disabled veterans**, including co-sponsoring or voting for legislation to:
 - Provide that a service member wounded or otherwise injured in a combat zone continue to receive the same level of pay during their recovery;
 - Allow retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation and retirement pay concurrently;
 - Provide catastrophically injured soldiers with an insurance benefit up to \$100,000; and
 - **Increase the death benefit** paid to the families of our fallen heroes killed on active duty from \$12,000 to \$100,000.
- Cosponsored legislation to establish a **veterans cemetery in Colorado Springs.**
- Supporting the **families of our service members** who make the ultimate sacrifice for our nation by:
 - Cosponsoring efforts to expand higher education support for children of our fallen heroes killed while serving on active duty;
 - Cosponsoring efforts to expand health care coverage for children of our fallen heroes from 30 days to three years or when the child reaches 21 years of age; and
 - Cosponsoring legislation to allow military survivors to collect both VA benefits their spouses paid for (Survivor Benefit Plan) and the special assistance the Department of Defense provides for premature loss of life (Dependency and Indemnity Compensation).

IRAQ AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- Won broad bipartisan support to amend the Iraq-Afghanistan supplemental bill to provide \$5 million for programs and activities to promote democracy, including help for elections in **Lebanon**.
- Won broad bipartisan support to amend the Iraq-Afghanistan supplemental bill to provide stronger oversight of **U.S. police training procedures abroad**, including background checks for trainees and training conducted by seasoned professionals.
- Proposed amending the pending State Department authorization bill to require standards and training for foreign police and security forces when funded by the U.S.
- Voted to add \$213 million for **up-arming Humvees**.
- Voted to have the federal government set an example for employers around the nation by requiring the federal government to continue to pay federal employees at their federal wage/ salary level while serving active duty as a member of the uniformed services or National Guard.
- Voted to create a 50 percent tax credit to employers that continue to pay the salaries of Guard and Reserve employees who have been called to active duty.
- Co-sponsored the Targeting Terrorists More Effectively Act of 2005. The bill affects U.S. global terror policy in a number of areas, including:
 - **Military Actions** – increasing Army special operations forces;
 - **Political** – preventing the growth of Islamic fundamentalism by promoting democracy in the Middle East and across Asia, revising U.S. diplomacy and relations strategy abroad;
 - **Financial** – preventing funding of terrorist groups, prohibiting transactions with countries that support terrorism and revising provisions on war profiteering;
 - **Interrogation** – increasing U.S. foreign language expertise, reviewing treatment of detainees and establishing a commission to review U.S. detainment policy; and
 - **Domestic Security** – revising border and seaport protection provisions as well as law enforcement training.
- Participated in bipartisan fact-finding mission with seven fellow Senators to Israel, Palestinian Authority territory, Kuwait, Iraq, Georgia, Ukraine, and France, holding meetings with American military commanders, presidents and prime ministers, with NATO and ally officials, and American troops.
- Cosponsored bipartisan legislation to impose accountability for crimes against humanity committed in **Darfur** in the Sudan.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND SECURITY

- Working to pass a transportation bill that addresses the needs of Colorado in:
 - Roads and highways, by cosponsoring legislation to designate the Heartland Expressway – Highway 71 from Limon north to the Colorado-Nebraska border and I-76 from Denver to Brush – as a high priority corridor on the National Highway System and therefore eligible for additional funds from the Borders and Corridors program.
 - Bridges in rural Colorado by introducing an amendment to the transportation reauthorization bill to ensure rural communities receive more funding to fix the growing number of structurally deficient bridges in rural America.
 - Mass transit by providing incentives for employers to encourage mass transit use.
- As a member of the Senate Energy Committee, working to develop bipartisan legislation to address America's energy supply, including development of Colorado's and the nation's natural resources, conservation and renewable energy.
- Compiled and submitted Colorado-specific funding requests to the Senate Appropriations Committee and its subcommittees to help address Colorado's local and regional priorities.
- Opposing proposals to privatize Social Security because privatization hastens the insolvency of Social Security and creates an additional \$2 trillion in debt.
- Voted to restore funding for Medicaid, Community Development Block Grants and for health care, veterans, education and environmental protection programs.
- Joined bi-partisan groups of Senators in urging appropriators to adequately fund education and job training programs for Adult Basic Literacy Education, TRIO, Upward Bound, National Math and Science Education Partnerships, and JobCorps.
- Proposed an amendment to the Iraq supplemental appropriations bill opposing proposed cuts to the Earned Income Tax Credit, which provides a financial boost to the nation's working poor, including thousands of families of military service members.
- Cosponsored legislation to amend the No Child Left Behind Act to provide for greater local flexibility in achievement and progress standards.
- Cosponsored the **Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Reauthorization Act of 2005** to continue payments to counties that have seen a decline in federal funds from the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) through the Forest Service Payment to States program.
- Pushed for funding for the **Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical vocational education grants**.

- Voted to increase the maximum **Pell Grant** scholarship to \$4,500, and increase future math and science teacher student loan forgiveness to \$23,000.
- Pushed to fund **Impact Aid** to help school districts that educate large numbers of military children with disabilities, the **Job Corps** program.
- Cosponsored:
 - Bipartisan legislation to preserve federal financial aid for students in college; and
 - Bipartisan legislation to expanded higher education support for children of members of the uniformed services who die while serving on active duty to include room and board costs.
- Introduced legislation to improve workers compensation for workers previously employed at the **Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons facility**.
- Co-signed a March letter to Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt regarding Special Exposure Cohort Status for some former Rocky Flats employees with Senator Allard, Congressmen Udall and Beauprez in calling for HHS to give a full and fair consideration to a petition filed by the Rocky Flats United Steelworkers of America, Local 8031.
- Co-sponsored S.19, to reduce federal budget deficits by restoring budget enforcement and strengthening fiscal responsibility.
- During Senate consideration of the FY 06 budget resolution, voted for amendments to:
 - Restore fiscal responsibility through the **PAYGO** rules so that any new expenditures or future tax cuts be paid for prior to their enactment; and
 - Close the so-called “**offshoring tax loophole**” that encourages domestic manufacturing firms to move manufacturing operations and American jobs to low-tax jurisdictions offshore and use the \$3.2 billion in savings to pay down the debt.
- Supported the **class action tort reform** bill and co-sponsored or voted for common sense amendments to:
 - **Exempt state Attorney General lawsuits** from the limitations in the underlying bill;
 - **Exclude civil rights lawsuits** from the limitations of the underlying bill; and
 - **Prevent defendants from delaying a case**, sometimes for years, by petitioning to have a lawsuit sent to federal court when it should be in state court.
- Supported the **bankruptcy reform** bill and supported amendments to improve protections in the legislation for special circumstances, including:

- Exempt service members, **veterans** and their families from the bill’s “means test” provision;
- Protect **disabled veterans** if their debt was accrued during active-duty service or during a homeland defense activity;
- Protect the **elderly** by voting to create a \$75,000 homestead exemption for debtors over the age of 62 filing for bankruptcy;
- Protect victims of **identity theft**;
- Protect those who were driven into bankruptcy by **job loss**,
- Protect debtors incurring high individual or family **medical bills**; and
- Protect persons driven into bankruptcy by **deadbeat ex-spouses** failing to pay child support or alimony.

TACKLING THE HEALTH CARE CRISIS

- Joined a bi-partisan group of Senators in introducing several bills to reduce the cost of prescription drugs, allow the importation of prescription drugs from Canada and to lift the ban preventing Medicare from negotiating with drug companies to obtain the cheapest possible price for the drugs.
- Co-sponsored legislation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance and employment.
- Joined bi-partisan groups of Senators in urging appropriators to adequately fund various health initiatives, including Healthy Start and breast cancer research.
- Cosponsored bipartisan legislation to ensure that hospitals certified as a **Critical Access Hospital** (receiving cost-based reimbursement from Medicare) would also be reimbursed at-cost for laboratory services, even if patients are not present in the Critical Access Hospital when the specimen is collected.
- Voted to:
 - Add \$1.5 billion in funding to the budget of the National Institutes of Health (**NIH**);
 - Protect **Medicaid** from \$15 billion in cuts over five years; and
 - Fully fund the Community Development Block Grant (**CDBG**) program by \$2 billion.

RURAL COMMUNITIES – THE FORGOTTEN AMERICA

- Helped lead successful Senate vote to temporarily continue the U.S. ban on the importation of **Canadian beef** and urged the Secretary of Agriculture to immediately take the necessary steps to ensure health and safety compliance so that the ban can be appropriately lifted.
- Urged the **Japanese government** to take action to open up its borders to American beef. Japan has a ban against the importation of American beef due to fears that Canadian beef imported into the U.S. could infect American beef.
- Obtained Senate passage of floor amendments to (1) fund the Payment In Lieu of Taxes (**PILT**) program at approximately \$350 million for next year, an increase of \$150 million, and (2) restore \$65 million in funding for **rural education and health care** assistance.
- Introduced S.496, legislation to provide permanent funding for the PILT program.
- Joined Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) in introducing bipartisan legislation to establish a 7-day pre-slaughter **packer ban ownership rule** to ensure competitive markets for family ranchers.
- Urged America ambassadors to Mexico, Japan and South Korea to increase their efforts to encourage international sales of American beef products.

ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Joined a bi-partisan group of Senators in introducing S.610 and S. 650 to promote the production of ethanol and biodiesel as ways to reduce over-reliance on fossil fuels.
- Drafted legislation to establish a national renewable energy standard and provide tax incentives for the development of alternative sources of energy.
- Opposed opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil exploration.
- Joined a bi-partisan group of Senators in urging appropriators and the Department of Interior to fund and support the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program and San Juan River Basin Recovery Program.
- Expressed opposition to additional drilling on public lands atop the Western Slopes' Roan Plateau and helped win a 30-day extended comment period on the Roan Plateau Planning Area Resource Plan Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

- Co-sponsored legislation to establish a real property buffer zone bordering Fort Carson.
- Working with stakeholders to address the **Arkansas Valley** conduit and water storage issues.
- Co-sponsored legislation to establish the **Rio Grande Natural Area** in the State of Colorado.
- Joined with Senators McCain, Lieberman and Alexander in introducing the **National Park Centennial Act, S. 886**, a bipartisan measure which would address the \$600 million annual shortfall faced by our parks by providing funding through a voluntary check-off on federal income tax returns and the general treasury.
- Cosponsored the **Transit In Parks (TRIP) Act, S. 890**, would create a six-year, \$90 million grant program administered by the Department of Transportation to encourage our national parks to develop new and expanded transit services such as rail lines, clean fuel buses, pedestrian and bike paths, or waterborne access.