

Wayne Allard

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Contact: Sean Conway
(202) 224-6207
Lawrence Pacheco
(202) 225-2161

ALLARD AND UDALL RESPOND TO ATTORNEY GENERAL SALAZAR'S ROCKY FLATS LETTER LAWMAKERS SAY ISSUES RAISED COULD DELAY CLEANUP EFFORT, JOINT BILL ON FUTURE LAND USE

Washington, D.C. – Colorado U.S. Senator Wayne Allard and Second District Representative Mark Udall today responded to the letter sent to them last week by Colorado Attorney General Ken Salazar concerning legislation the two lawmakers are working on involving the future land management of Rocky Flats.

“We want you to know that we do have concerns about your proposals,” wrote Allard and Udall. “Specifically, we are not sure that this is the best time to be considering this issue.”

In their letter to Salazar, the two Colorado lawmakers pointed out that while they agree with some of his suggestions, the proposal for a natural resource damage (NRD) fund was premature for several reasons. First, by filing natural resource claims now instead of waiting for a majority of the cleanup to occur, the state does not put itself in a strong position for any compensation through a natural resources action. Second, the issues raised by the Attorney General could detract from the focus on producing the strongest cleanup prescribed in the Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act. And third, the concern that seeking NRD funds could undercut congressional funding directed to the ongoing cleanup.

“We are at a critical stage in the cleanup and closure of Rocky Flats. I am concerned the Attorney General’s letter could have a negative impact on the ongoing cleanup and closure of Rocky Flats,” Allard said. “His request seeking funds for compensation for natural resource damages will make it more difficult for the Colorado congressional delegation to continue to secure the needed funding for the ongoing cleanup of Rocky Flats.”

“Ken has some creative ideas, but it’s too early in the game,” said Udall. “I’m concerned that addressing this issue right now may actually delay our efforts to draft a joint bill that the Colorado delegation can get behind and that the Congress can pass to protect the 6,000 acres of high prairie surrounding Rocky Flats.”

“Our number one goal must remain the safe, expeditious cleanup of Rocky Flats,” concluded Allard.

Udall agreed by stating “It’s critical that we keep Rocky Flats on an accelerated track for cleanup and closure by 2006. Senator Allard and I have agreed to work on legislation that we can introduce and pass this year to determine the future land use of the Flats. I’d like to get that done this year and I look forward to our continued efforts to that goal.”

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