

Jeffco News ►

Visit 'better late than never' for Perlmutter and Salazar

By Jeff Francis write the author

July 24, 2008

U.S. Congressman Ed Perlmutter, D-Lakewood, thinks that the Golden-based National Renewable Energy Laboratory may be the key to the nation's energy predicament, and he's eager to show his Republican colleagues what he means.

On Friday, July 18, Perlmutter and U.S. Sen. Ken Salazar, a Colorado Democrat, hosted a delegation of Republican congressmen to tour NREL, in an attempt to hopefully head off any further budget cuts to the facility.

Salazar said that in 2006 the Republican-controlled Congress cut \$28 million in funding for NREL, resulting in 32 employees being let go. He and Perlmutter are hopeful that when Republicans see the work done by NREL, future budget cuts will be less likely.

"Today's gracing of NREL by Republican leaders is something I very much welcome," Salazar said. "It's not just a Republican or Democrat problem, it's an American problem."

The visit was the latest in a summer of appearances and press conferences by Perlmutter addressing increasing gas prices and other energy costs. Perlmutter espoused his "three Ps" of his energy plan, which included Producing energy from already-leased lands, Punish those who have hoarded oil futures that have affected the markets and to Promote energy efficiency.

"In the past Republican leaders have shied away from renewable energy," Perlmutter said. "It's the right time for us to focus on this so we're not addicted to one commodity and beholden to the Middle East."

However, not everyone saw a positive in the visit. Pam Kiely, a legislative director for the nonprofit advocacy group Environment Colorado, said the Republican representative consistently voted against renewable energy and investments, and that the NREL visit was too little, too late.

"The time for touring NREL is over," Kiely said. "The time for action is now. Get on a plane, go back to D.C. and vote for energy bills."

Perlmutter spokeswoman Leslie Oliver was optimistic, though, that some good will come from the NREL tour.



Photo by EMILY MEHRING

Steve Grund, left, Chief Marketing Officer, gives Senator Ken Salazar a tour of the energy efficient AARDEX building Friday, July 18.

