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Local News

Senate jostling follows president's immigration speech

Matt Hildner
 Daily Press Writer

MONTROSE — One day after President Bush addressed the nation from the Oval Office on the country's efforts to deal with illegal immigration, Colorado's delegation to the U.S. Senate successfully attached a pair of amendments to current legislation.

Colorado's Republican Senator Wayne Allard added an amendment that would close a State Department loophole, while his Democratic counterpart Ken Salazar passed a measure requiring the president to certify that national security needs at the border had been met before provisions regarding guest workers and illegal immigrants currently in the country could take effect.

Salazar regarded the passage of his amendment by a 79-16 margin as a sign that there would be enough votes in the Senate to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill much along the lines advocated by the president in his Tuesday night address.

Salazar would like to see S.B. 2611 strengthen the nation's border security, effectively police the country's interior and require current illegal immigrants to register and pay a fine to become citizens.

"We need to bring the 11 million undocumented workers out of the shadows," Salazar said during a Tuesday conference call with the media.

The vote on Salazar's amendment was preceded by an amendment from Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., that would have required the Department of Homeland Security certify improvement in security at the border before other provisions of the bill could be implemented. It failed 55-40.

"I think the more important signal was in accepting the amendment that I proposed," Salazar said. "I think that indicates there are more than 60 votes."

That vote total would be the number needed in the Senate for cloture, the procedure for ending debate and bringing the measure to a vote.

Salazar said the Senate would debate the bill through the week and hopefully see it through conference negotiations with the House of Representatives by Memorial Day.

Sen. Salazar has been meeting daily with a bipartisan group of senators that includes John McCain, R-Ariz., Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Sam

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NASDAQ May-17-2006 6:28 pm ET

Index	Last	Trade	Change
NASDAQ	2195.80	-33.33	•
SP 500	1270.31	-21.77	•
Russ 2000	725.85	-11.62	•
AMEX	1934.78	-35.09	•
NYSE	8199.38	188.19	•
30 YR BOND	52.74	0.56	•

May 18, 2006 12:58 AM ET

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Brownback, R-Kan.

In his televised address Monday evening, Bush moved to find middle ground regarding the estimated 11 million immigrants in the country illegally.

Allard successfully placed an amendment in the Senate bill that would close a loophole in U.S. immigration rules that allows advocates of terrorism to enter the country. The provision mandates all U.S. consular offices to deny Visa requests to anyone who advocates terrorism.

"Under the current standard, one of Osama bin Laden's henchmen could qualify to enter our country," Allard said in a written statement.

Salazar did not object to the deployment of the national guard at the border to Mexico other than to say that they should be deployed on the northern border as well.

"There is no person who's in the know who wouldn't conclude that we don't have porous borders in the north as well," Salazar said.

The logistics of using the National Guard to provide support to the Border Patrol must also be worked out with governors, according to Bush's speech.

While California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson expressed their doubts about the President's proposal, Colorado Gov. Bill Owens joined Arizona's Janet Napolitano and Texas' Rick Perry in welcoming the proposal.

On Monday, Owens issued a statement saying he had been assured by the Guard's leadership, that "reasonable calls for assistance to help secure our borders can be fulfilled without compromising the Guard's responsibilities in Colorado or overseas."

Contact Matt Hildner via e-mail at matth@montrosepress.com

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