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## WASHINGTON REPORT

*Western Skies Strategies, August 2009*

Western Skies Strategies (WSS) is a full-service bipartisan government relations and public affairs firm dedicated to representing agricultural, rural, and Native American interests in our nation's capital. WSS is a unique presence on the national scene, because it follows the code of the West—where a reputation is based on your handshake, hardy work ethic, and good word....

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## **CARBON-CAP AND TRADE BILL NARROWLY PASSES HOUSE, STILL FACES TOUGH BATTLE IN THE SENATE**

President Obama is urging members of the Senate to support a plan to reduce carbon emissions and invest in clean energy via “Cap and Trade” which he says will reduce carbon emissions up to 70% by the year 2050. A key element of the American Clean Energy and Security Act, “Cap and Trade” bill, means some form of regulation of Green House Gas emissions by setting a maximum limit or ‘Cap’ on facilities and sectors covered by the regulation, of which any unused amount can be traded-off to other regulated facilities on the open market. The measure narrowly passed the House in June, and so far most Republicans and a growing number of Centrist Democrats are raising concerns about the House version of the bill.

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., the ranking Republican of the Senate Environment and Public Works committee, a key committee needed for passage of a Cap and Trade bill, says the bill will not pass in the Senate, and some key Senate Democrats such as Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) who sits on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) have expressed concerns over of the bill. The Senate is scheduled to vote on the American Clean Energy and Security Act this fall.

## **MONTANA SEN. BAUCUS, CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE, PLAY CRITICAL ROLES IN SHAPING NATIONAL HEALTH REFORM**

As the national debate over healthcare covers the airwaves – both in news reports and paid advertising, one low-key Senator, and one not-so-well-known head of a government agency, are helping steer the debate in a big way. Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT) and Doug Elmendorf, head of the Congressional Budget Office, have emerged as key players in what is shaping up to be a fierce battle on Capitol Hill.

The CBO flexed its muscles with Congress in June, when it came out with a report estimating that healthcare reform legislation drafted by Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) would end up costing taxpayers around \$1 Trillion, and would only provide insurance for an additional 16 million people, while the federal government currently estimates there are more than 40 million Americans who lack health insurance.

Despite a sizable majority in the House of Representatives, and a filibuster-proof majority in the U.S. Senate, President Obama may have some difficulty passing healthcare reform on party lines, in no small part because of Max Baucus, who chairs the powerful Senate Finance Committee.

Baucus, a Centrist Democrat, has hinted at wanting bi-partisan healthcare reform, which will make it more difficult for the White House and Majority Leader Harry Reid to push through a party-line vote on health reform, exactly what many on the left of the Democratic party are hoping to do by including healthcare reform legislation in budget “reconciliation” - a move that would only require 51 yes votes in the Senate, rather than the filibuster-proof 60 that are needed under the normal rules. Baucus said, “My view is, we can get more than 60 votes. To do otherwise, is to risk having the whole program come apart as it is being put in effect. Once it becomes partisan,” he warns, “the chance of success is diminished.”

## **SUPREME COURT TO WEIGH IN ON MCCAIN-FEINGOLD**

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts announced recently that the Supreme Court would re-examine McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform, an outcome which could drastically change the landscape of U.S. elections in 2010 and 2012. The DNC recently released a brief urging the court to keep McCain-Feingold in place, arguing that overturning the law would

undermine small donors who were critical to the fundraising efforts of Barack Obama in 2008. Obama shattered every major fundraising record during his Presidential campaign, much of which was achieved through small donations, the DNC has argued. If the court were to overturn McCain-Feingold, unions and corporations would be able to spend unlimited amounts of cash once referred to as “soft money” either in support or in opposition to candidates. The court is expected to take up the case in early September.

#### **WSS TO ASSIST ‘SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT’ IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Western Skies Strategies is proud to be assisting the Society for Range Management (SRM). WSS will be collaborating with SRM on its membership recruitment and public relations outreach, as well as bolstering its Washington, D.C. presence. SRM is one of the nation’s oldest and most respected groups of its kind. SRM was founded in 1948 to ensure the conservation and sustainable management of rangelands and to support persons who work with rangelands and are committed to their sustainable use. SRM has a diverse membership from across the country that includes ranchers, academic researchers, and professionals from many walks of life. WSS is looking forward to working with SRM in both the countryside and the nation’s capital.

#### **KIDRON LEWIS JOINS THE WSS WASHINGTON, D.C. TEAM**

WSS is proud to announce the addition of Kidron Lewis to its Washington, DC staff. Kidron is a 5th generation native Texan who began her career in Washington as an aide to Congressman Martin Frost of Texas. Kidron went on to help organize Frost’s 2004 bid to be chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and then helped Frost’s former Chief of Staff, Matt Angle, create the Lone Star Project, a nationally recognized political action committee which provides legislative analysis, strategy, and funding to Texas candidates.

Upon leaving the Lone Star Project, Kidron went on to do company metrics and customer service

analytics for NGP Software, a leading provider of campaign based software. While working at NGP, Kidron also served a key role in the development of the company’s online fundraising program. In 2007 she was tapped by the NGP’s Founder to be an IT and Logistics consultant on the Hillary Clinton for President Campaign. There she provided technical, data and logistical support to the campaign on a national level, as well as worked as the campaign’s Veteran’s outreach coordinator during the Texas primary. She currently does IT, data, and web consulting for a number of DC firms. Kidron is a graduate of Texas Tech University, and served in a Special Operations Unit of the United States Army Reserve. Kidron will be bringing her extensive knowledge of research, data analysis, emerging technologies, online organizing, and politics to WSS.

#### **JENNIFER MILLER DUNEMAN JOINS THE WSS WASHINGTON, D.C. AND RURAL AMERICA TEAM**

WSS is proud to announce the addition of Jennifer Miller Duneman to its staff. In her position as WSS’s Director of Public Affairs and Special Programs, Jennifer specializes in public relations, internship coordination, research, and business consultation.

A Montana native with a 14-year background in sales and customer service, Jennifer excels in providing clients with the high quality of service that they deserve. With a wide variety of professional experiences in the retail, insurance, accounting, education, and social work fields, Jennifer has a vast knowledge of different industries.

Working with the public and helping others is a passion of hers, and she aspires to some day run her own non-profit organization. A proud alumnus of Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA, Jennifer currently resides in Montana with her husband and one-year-old son and enjoys spending her “spare” time volunteering as a mentor at her local elementary school.

## From the President's Desk

Howdy Friends,

I hope this August newsletter finds you well. I've had the good fortune of spending some quality time out west. Notably, I was able to sneak up to the Beartooth Mountains near Cooke City, Montana. Combining family campfire time with some trout fishing was truly a blessing! It certainly puts things back into perspective; that's for sure.

And "perspective" is exactly the theme for this update! These past few months have found WSS enhancing its staff, issues involvement, and visibility. Our team is committed to ensuring that the perspective from rural America is being heard and enhanced in both Washington, D.C. and throughout this great country! First you will note that we have brought on additional staff. These young leaders are a great addition to the core of WSS. The strength of WSS lies in its staff and strategic alliances with various firms and groups.

Even with new staff, our vision remains bipartisan and core-issue oriented. Often those qualities can be lost in Washington, D.C., but here at WSS, you will always see a strong focus on advancing core issues along both sides of the aisle. Plus the staff additions enable WSS to continue its excellent relations with both the media and industry associations.

When you need a break from the rat race of life, please take a look at the WSS blog at [www.westernskiesstrategies.com](http://www.westernskiesstrategies.com).

"Somewhere between boots and saddles, briefcases and taxis" is an adventure, and Stacia Couch and I are working hard to constantly update it. Our goal is to share the stories that make us smile and keep us going down this road that we started down just a little over two years ago!

I won't go into a lot of details with my legislative outlook. Simply stated: we have a jammed Congressional floor schedule coming this fall. This "log jam" is a good thing if you are not a supporter H.R.2454—the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, S. 787—the Clean Water Restoration Act, or H.R. 1018—Restoring Our American Mustangs (ROAM) Act. None of these bills will likely pass due to lack of support and Congress's packed fall schedule.

In closing, WSS communicates with several organizations and individuals about the various levels of representation. It's not uncommon to hear how folks are not able to afford the investment. However, with the never-ending list of legislation and regulation that can either help or hinder your business opportunities and your livelihood, you really can't afford NOT to have representation and a seat at the table.

Enjoy the rest of your summer; get out to that lake or mountain get-away. Trust me, it will be worth it! And when you want to talk policy advocacy or media strategy, give me a call at 202-870-3867.

Ride Tall,  
Jess Peterson  
President and Founder