

U.S. should add nuclear power to energy portfolio, Salazar says

By GARY HARMON/The Grand Junction Daily Sentinel
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The federal stimulus package pumped about 300,000 jobs into the national economy in the first quarter of the year, lessening the blow of the nation's worst recession in seven decades, U.S. Rep. John Salazar, D-Colo., said Saturday. Without the stimulus spending on transportation projects, the 600,000 jobs lost in March would have been far worse, Salazar said at the spring meeting of Club 20. Unemployment would have approached 1 million, he said.

The nation has seen signs of a recovery in the past four weeks, among them the new transportation hiring, he said.

The budget approved by Congress is "huge" but contains the elements of recovery, said Salazar, a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition of the Democratic Party.

The budget will cut the \$1.7 trillion budget deficit to \$586 billion by 2013, he said. The deficit will fall from 12.3 percent of the gross domestic product to 3.6 percent in the period, he said.

President Obama's firing of General Motors Corp. Chairman Rick Wagoner, he said, probably should have been a "recommendation. But he did take a lot of credit for it. I personally felt very uncomfortable with that."

The government, he said, should not be involved in business.

The United States needs to add nuclear power to its energy portfolio and spend more on clean-coal technology, Salazar told Club 20.

He reiterated his interest in oil shale and the need for caution in pursuing it as a major source of domestic energy.

"I've heard rumors of expanded research and development leases," he said, adding that would be acceptable so long as the leases were for research and not commercial-scale development.