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## **Salazar among lawmakers offering energy security bill**

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An unusual coalition of Democratic and Republican senators, environmental groups and even evangelical Christians is supporting legislation to promote alternative fuel vehicles and cut the nation's dependence on foreign oil.

U.S. Sen. Ken Salazar, D-Colo., joined with Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., the Natural Resources Defense Council and the conservative American Values organization in introducing the legislation Wednesday, called the Energy Security Act.

Among other features, the wide-ranging measure would establish tax credits or other incentives for:

Automakers to produce alternative- or dual-fuel vehicles, and require that 10 percent of their fleets be alternative fuel vehicles by 2012, and 50 percent by 2016.

Consumers who purchase those vehicles.

Producers and refiners of alternative and renewable vehicle fuels, such as ethanol.

Establish a fuel efficiency standard for heavy-duty vehicles (trucks and buses).

Salazar said a bipartisan group of eight senators formed to support the measure, which also has attracted support from both conservative and environmental groups that want to lower the nation's use of and dependence on imported oil.

"There is a great possibility here to get some exciting things done for the country," Salazar said. "I'm hopeful that with this kind of bipartisan support, we can keep this coalition together to work on energy policy."

He said the galvanizing force was the widespread consumer shock when gasoline and diesel prices skyrocketed after Hurricane Katrina. With energy prices more than doubling for some sectors of the economy, the public recognized how vulnerable the economy is to oil prices.

"Back in 1973, during the first (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries') oil embargo, we were only importing 30 percent of the nation's oil supply. Now we import 60 percent," Salazar said Wednesday. "I think there is general recognition

that this situation poses a national security threat to our country."

The other senators sponsoring the bill include Lindsey Graham, R-N.C.; Joe Lieberman, D-Conn.; Evan Bayh, D-Ind.; and Jeff Sessions, R-Ala.

Brownback told the Associated Press, "This is just good common sense. This is where the public wants us to go."

Supporters said the measure would cut U.S. daily oil consumption by 2.5 million barrels per day within the next decade. Currently, the nation consumes about 20 million barrels per day.

A similar measure is being drafted in the House of Representatives, Salazar said.

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