



## Obama comes under attack on western swing

*From CNN Deputy Political Director Paul Steinhauser  
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**Washington (CNN)** - As President Obama heads west Thursday to help out two Democratic senators facing tough elections this year, a Republican senate candidate in Colorado scolds the president in a new campaign television commercial.

Obama travels to Denver, Colorado Thursday afternoon, where he'll be the headliner at two different fundraisers for Sen. Michael Bennet, who's running this November for a full term in office. But before he gets to the general election, Bennet first needs to successfully fend off a Democratic primary challenge from former Colorado House Speaker Andrew Romanoff.

Bennet was plucked out of political obscurity last year, when Gov. Bill Ritter named him to replace Sen. Ken Salazar, who stepped down to serve as Interior Secretary in the Obama Administration. Bennet leads Romanoff in the battle for campaign cash and Thursday's visit by Obama may help Bennet widen his fundraising margin.

As the president arrives in Colorado, former Lt. Governor Jane Norton, who appears to be the front-runner in the battle for the GOP senate nomination, launched an TV ad that accuses the president of "massive spending and debt" and urges Obama to "pledge to balance the budget or decline to seek re-election."

Colorado was a success story for the Democrats over the past decade, as they made major gains in federal and state elections, which culminated with Denver hosting the 2008 Democratic National Convention and Obama winning the state in the presidential election.

But politically it appears the times have changed.

"What a difference a year makes," said Evan Tracey, president of Campaign Media Analysis Group and CNN's consultant on political advertising. "The Norton ad is the most direct so far that we've seen; however it's likely the first of many ads by Republicans who will try and use the president and his sagging poll numbers to nationalize the mid-term elections by attaching Obama to their races and opponents."

Ironically the political attack on Obama comes on the same day the president issued an executive order that formally creates a bipartisan fiscal commission, a first step to forcing difficult decisions needed to get the U.S. debt load under control.

Following the events for Sen. Bennet, the president travels to Las Vegas, Nevada, where he'll headline a fundraising dinner for the Democratic National Committee.

Obama and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid team up at a town hall Friday on the economy where they'll take questions from citizens and business leaders. Obama will also visit the local chamber of commerce. The Nevada Democrat is battling this year for a fifth term in the Senate. While he's raised a large amount of campaign cash, polls of Nevada voters indicate that Reid faces a very tough re-election.