

A stumble on road to D.C.

Montana's would-be
senator calls acid
rain a 'scare tactic'

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HELENA, Mont. — Lt. Gov. Allen Kolstad's Republican Senate campaign is reeling after he told coal industry officials that acid rain and global warming are "scare tactics."

Kolstad has endured the scorn of Democrats and the silence of Republican officials since he told the Montana Coal Council last week that acid rain and global warming are "really more scare tactics than actual harm to our environment."

Kolstad is challenging two-term Democratic Sen. Max Baucus. President Bush recently visited Montana to raise money for Kolstad's campaign.

Gov. Stan Stephens has declined to dispute Kolstad, who was his Republican running mate in 1988. But last year, Stephens wrote Bush that acid rain provisions in the pending Clean Air Act are "critical to the state of Montana," according to letters released by Baucus, who managed the bill on the Senate floor.

Kolstad spokesman Stuart Brown said Monday that Kolstad is not at odds with Bush and Stephens because he agrees that both issues need more study.

But Tuesday's editorial in the state capital newspaper, Helena's Independent Record, accused Kolstad of "spouting divisive environmental rhetoric . . . that suddenly sounds old-fashioned and a little bit stupid."

Two days earlier, in the Republican bastion of Montana's coal country, a Billings Gazette editorial accused Kolstad of "ring kissing" and "political chicanery" at the coal meeting, and added he had "distinguished himself in office by throwing a cup at a dozing member of a Japanese trade delegation."

The previous week, when Bush visited Billings, Kolstad was forced to endure the presence of Baucus alongside Republican dignitaries at the president's anti-drug rally.

Baucus, who drew the loudest applause of any Montanan at the rally, had been invited to attend by Montana U.S. Attorney Doris Poppler, a recent Bush appointee, because of his rural, anti-drug efforts.