



## Obama Said to Tap Vilsack for Agriculture Secretary (Update1)

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By Julianna Goldman and Kim Chipman



Dec. 17 (Bloomberg) -- Former Iowa Governor **Thomas Vilsack** is set to be named by President-elect **Barack Obama** as his choice for Agriculture secretary, and Colorado Senator **Ken Salazar** is being selected for Interior secretary, a Democratic official said.

Obama will formally announce his intention to nominate the two men today in Chicago, according to the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. Vilsack and Salazar will join Obama at the news conference, scheduled for 10:45 a.m. Chicago time.

Vilsack, 58, was elected as Iowa's governor in 1998, the first Democrat to win the office in 32 years. He was re-elected in 2002. Now an attorney at the **Dorsey Trial group**, Vilsack endorsed New York Senator **Hillary Clinton** during the Democratic presidential primary campaign after ending his own presidential bid in February 2007, before the first contest took place.

He would bring to the Department of Agriculture experience as the former chief executive of a state heavily reliant on agriculture and related industries. Iowa is one of the nation's top producers of corn, soybeans, hogs and eggs and ranks third in the value of agricultural products sold, according to government statistics.

Agriculture is the fourth-largest Cabinet agency, with a budget of about \$100 billion and 110,000 employees.

Salazar, 53, is in his first term in the Senate after serving as Colorado attorney general and executive director of its department of natural resources.

### Oil Production

He has criticized the Bush administration's efforts to develop oil from Western shale formations, saying that while shale may have potential to produce billions of barrels, the technology may not be commercially viable. He also says it isn't clear how much pollution would result from shale oil development or how much water would be needed for the process. Salazar supports more oil and gas drilling off U.S. shores.

The Interior Department, which has been called the "department of everything else," encompasses the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs, among other agencies. It has more than 70,000 employees and a budget of \$16.8 billion.

Salazar's support for expanded energy production raised concerns from some environmentalists.

"The Department of the Interior desperately needs a strong, forward looking, reform-minded secretary," **Kieran Suckling**, executive director of the Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement yesterday. "Unfortunately, **Ken Salazar** is not that man."

### Announcement in Chicago

Both posts are subject to confirmation by the Senate. Colorado Governor **Bill Ritter**, a Democrat, would name Salazar's replacement in the Senate for the remainder of the term if Salazar is nominated and confirmed.

Obama has moved faster than any modern president-elect in selecting his Cabinet and other top members of his administration. He is expected to wrap up the remainder of his Cabinet appointments this week before he leaves for vacation in Hawaii.

Obama named **Arne Duncan**, chief executive of the Chicago public school system, to be the next secretary of education. He has yet to name secretaries of Labor, Transportation and the Director of Central Intelligence. His

choices for U.S. trade representative and director of national intelligence also haven't been announced.

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