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January 18, 2008

Mr. Paul Loether
Chief, National Historic Landmark Program
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

I write in strong support of the designation of the Ludlow Tent Colony as a National Historic Landmark. The site of the 1914 Ludlow Massacre is central to our nation's understanding and memory of the labor struggles of the early 20th century, to the region's identity, and to the descendents of all those involved in the 1913-1914 strike and other labor conflicts of the era. It is fully deserving of National Historic Landmark status.

The 1913-1914 coal strike in southern Colorado was one of the most visible and violent labor conflicts of the early 20th century. The strike began in September, 1913, when tens of thousands of coal miners and their families walked out of southern Colorado coal mines and company towns to protest for higher wages, enforcement of state mining laws, and union recognition. For more than a year, strikers lived in tent colonies at the mouths of the canyons that held the mines. They were a multi-ethnic group composed of Americans from the east and west - including many Hispanos from northern New Mexico and my native San Luis Valley - along with immigrants from around Europe. They spoke English, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Polish, Slavic and other languages.

The strikers clashed frequently, and often violently, with armed guards employed by the coal companies. The Governor of Colorado dispatched the National Guard in October, 1913, but tensions continued to escalate. On April 20, 1914, after a long winter and with a continuing stalemate between the coal companies and the United Mine Workers of America, a day-long battle erupted at the Ludlow Tent Colony. In the most horrific episode of the day, two women and eleven children, seeking shelter in a pit under one of the tents, died when the tent colony caught fire.

The violence of April 20, 1914 focused the eyes of the nation on southern Colorado, the dangers of coal mining, and the relationship between the miners, the union, and the coal companies. Congress and the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations investigated the incident, which had been dubbed the 'Ludlow Massacre.' The news media scrutinized the conditions in southern Colorado's coalfields and public sentiment turned against the owners of the coal companies

involved, including industrialist John D. Rockefeller Jr., the majority owner of the largest coal producer in southern Colorado, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. Rockefeller Jr. hired Ivy Lee and William L. Mackenzie King, the future prime minister of Canada, to lead what became the first major public relations campaign by a company whose image was in need of repair. Under Rockefeller Jr.'s leadership, the company overhauled many of its towns, sought to provide additional services and amenities to workers, advertised its reforms to the public, and experimented with the concept of a company union – a concept that that was outlawed under the 1935 National Labor Relations Act.

Although the southern Colorado strikers failed to win union recognition in the 1913-14 strike, the story of the Ludlow Massacre spread rapidly among workers and union members across the country – for them, “Remember Ludlow” became a rallying cry. In 1917, the United Mine Workers of America memorialized the tragedy at Ludlow by building a monument at the site, which still stands today. Ludlow drew the attention of social reformers like Jane Addams and Upton Sinclair. Woody Guthrie wrote a song about it. George S. McGovern, long before he was a presidential candidate, wrote about the Ludlow Massacre; his 1953 doctoral dissertation is one of the most authoritative histories of the strike.

The history of the Ludlow Massacre, and the site that holds the archaeological remains of the conflict, are central to our nation's story. But this history is of particular importance to those who still live in the region. Residents of Las Animas, Huerfano, and Pueblo counties, along with people across my state, rightly see the 1913-14 coal strike and the Ludlow Massacre as key to their shared history and to the region's identity. The Ludlow Tent Colony and the Ludlow Massacre Memorial are places where visitors can learn of the area's turbulent history, and where the memories of the events can be passed from generation to generation.

I strongly believe that the Ludlow Tent Colony should be designated a National Historic Landmark and that the National Park Service should play a greater role in assisting with the protection and interpretation of this vital chapter in our nation's history. I stand ready to assist in the landmark designation, which is strongly supported in the local communities, by championing legislation in the U.S. Senate to create the Ludlow National Historic Landmark.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Salazar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ken" and last name "Salazar" clearly legible.

Ken Salazar
United States Senator

Cc: Mr. Charles Haecker, National Park Service, Santa Fe, NM