

ARAFAT ILL; COMMITTEE TAKES REINS
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THE DENVER POST

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Young voters a wild card

Twice as many 18- to 24-year-olds in Colorado registered this year than in 2000, but turnout is poor.

By Erin Cox
 Denver Post Staff Writer

There's a new force in Colorado politics, an elusive voting bloc that both parties want on their side: the young voter.

Almost twice as many Coloradans 18 to 24 registered to vote in 2004 than in 2000, according to state records. The 115,000 new young voters this year are mostly without party identity: Those unaffiliated outnumber Republicans or Democrats by a nearly 2-to-1 ratio.

"It's more difficult for me to align myself with any one group," said Tanya Wollerman, 20. "We're trying to figure that out. Both as a generation and as individuals, we're trying to figure out what our political identity is going to be and what our future is going to be like."

According to the secretary of state's records, 35 percent of all voters who registered this year are young voters. The actual number may be less because the most recent available data includes thousands of duplicate registrations.

But both parties say Colorado's nearly 375,000 young voters are a powerful wild card in this election.

Wollerman is a political activist and sometimes gives her parents advice. She avoids affiliation with political parties so she won't be trapped by loyalty when she votes.

"I feel like we're very ignored, and we're only used for votes," Wollerman said. "When it comes to being represented, youth issues are the last to be addressed."

That may be because young voters are not alike.

"I don't think you can define a young voter," said Jordan Martin, 19. He voted a Republican line Wednesday, like his father and brother.

> See **YOUNG** on 16A

Five days until election

Kerry and Bush: Barbs traded over missing explosives. > **15A**

Voting technology: Colorado voters cast their ballots using the most modern and the oldest systems. > **17A**

Iraq showdown looms

Senate candidates putting on the miles and smiles



John Epperson | The Denver Post

Brewery executive Pete Coors greets Fort Collins mayor's assistant Theresa Ramos-Garcia on Wednesday.

Coors' route paved with pep

The Republican speaks to chamber and Rotary groups off the cuff, calls his campaign "simple."

By Mark P. Couch
 Denver Post Staff Writer

Pete Coors ambles out of his house before sunrise Wednesday to the idling SUV in his driveway.

The Republican U.S. Senate candidate climbs into the passenger seat, still groggy from late campaigning Tuesday.

He gobbles a Krispy Kreme doughnut, grumbles about falling asleep during the World Series game the night before and cracks the books to prepare for another long day on the campaign trail.

At 6:49 a.m., Pete Coors is on the road again.

"Six more days," says campaign spokeswoman Cinnamon Watson.

"Seven more days," Coors replies — noting that he has a full slate of campaign events

this day before he can cross it off the calendar.

Coors is traveling the last miles on his 30,000-mile trek and the final hours of his seven-month candidacy to succeed retiring Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell.

At this stage, time flies, faces blend, places look alike and roads tie together.

"Cinamon," Coors asks, "do you know who's got my credit card?"

The multimillionaire brewery executive left his card with a staffer Monday to pay for lunch for volunteers.

Watson tells him not to worry. Meanwhile, the road ahead is paved with meetings, tours, rallies, pep talks, speeches and a hundred handshakes.

Coors preps for his first speech — at the Longmont Area Chamber of Commerce — by glancing at a column of simple phrases typed on a sin-

> See **COORS** on 14A

More online: Transcripts of exclusive Web chats with Pete Coors and Ken Salazar, an interactive presentation on the Senate race and an archive of Post political coverage. > denverpost.com/campaign2004



Shaun Stanley | The Denver Post

Schoolchildren and supporters surround state Attorney General Ken Salazar during a campaign stop in Alamosa.

Salazar's bus is hive of activity

The Democrat addresses the concerns of farmers and seniors in the region where he grew up.

By Karen E. Crummy
 Denver Post Staff Writer

Alamosa — Ken Salazar gets off his campaign bus in almost every Colorado town armed with a smile, swagger and a small, white index card that fits in the palm of his hand.

On it, aides have neatly printed names of a sheriff, business owner, retiree or any other supporter Salazar should remember and thank. Before he leaves the bus, he studies it — and keeps it in his palm, just in case.

"Don't want to forget anyone who helps bring me to victory," Salazar says, edging down the aisle from the back of the bus.

As Salazar's campaign bus — brimming with doughnuts, chips, soda, candy and an ap-

ple — leaves the Eastern Plains and climbs U.S. 160 toward the southern mountains, the Democratic U.S. Senate candidate sits in the back, cellphone at his ear.

It's 8:30 a.m., and he has already done two radio shows and events at a railroad station and a senior center in Lamar. Now he's fundraising for his campaign against Republican Pete Coors. He estimates he's made more than 100 calls in the past three days.

His top adviser, Mike Stratton, is on the phone with the campaign's media consultant, Mandy Grunwald, debating which TV ad they should put up for the final week before the Nov. 2 election.

In the front of bus, his aides are on cellphones — when they can get a signal in remote parts of the state — setting up events later in the week. One organizes the hand-

> See **SALAZAR** on 14A

Rebel cities may face U.S. attack

FALLUJAH, RAMADI

The goal of an assault would be to restore control before January elections, but there are huge risks.

By Robert H. Reid
 The Associated Press

Baghdad, Iraq — An uptick in airstrikes and other military moves point to an imminent showdown between U.S. forces and Sunni Muslim insurgents west of Baghdad — a decisive battle that could determine whether the campaign to bring democracy and stability to Iraq can succeed.

American officials have not confirmed a major assault is near against the insurgent bastions of Fallujah and neighboring Ramadi. But Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi has warned Fallujah leaders that force will be used if they do not hand over extremists, including terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

A similar escalation in U.S. military actions and Iraqi government warnings occurred before a major offensive in Najaf forced militiamen loyal to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to give up that holy city in late August. And U.S. and Iraqi troops retook Samarra from insurgents early this month.

Now U.S. airstrikes on purported al-Zarqawi positions in three neighborhoods of eastern and northern Fallujah, 40 miles west of Baghdad, have increased.

And residents reported this week that Marines appeared to be reinforcing forward positions near key areas of the city. Other military units are on the move, including 800 British soldiers headed north to the U.S.-controlled zone.

The goal of an attack would be to restore government control in time for national elections by the end of January.

However, an all-out assault on the scale of April's siege of Fallujah would carry enormous risk — both political and military — for the Americans and their Iraqi allies.

> See **ATTACK** on 9A

More online: An archive of Denver Post coverage of Iraq, plus searchable lists of U.S. casualties in the war. > denverpost.com/war

"It's a wonderful demonstration of apparently 'archaic' humans adapting to the special conditions."

Dr. G. Philip Rightmire, a paleoanthropologist at State University of New York at Binghamton

New human species: the strong and short of it

Archaeologists on a tropical island unearthed skeletons of small, mighty hunters whose 3½-foot frames show that downsizing can have an upside.

By Nicholas Wade
 The New York Times

Once upon a time, but not so long ago, on a tropical island midway between Asia and Australia, there lived a race of little people, whose adults stood just 3½ feet high.

Despite their stature, they were mighty hunters. They made stone tools to spear gi-

ant rats, clubbed sleeping dragons and hunted the packs of pygmy elephants that roamed their lost world.

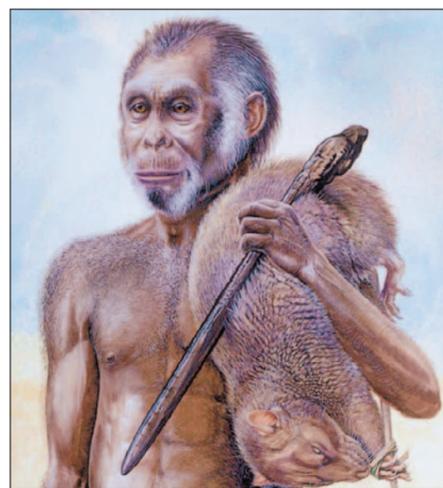
Strangest of all, this is no fable. Skeletons of these miniature people have been excavated from a limestone cave on Flores, an island 370 miles east of Bali, Indonesia, by a team of Australian and Indonesian archaeologists. Reporting their find in today's issue of Nature, they assign the people to a new human species, Homo floresiensis.

The new finding is "among the most outstanding discoveries in paleoanthropology for half a century," say two anthropologists not associated with the study, Dr. Marta

Mirazon Lahr and Dr. Robert Foley of the University of Cambridge, in a written commentary in the same issue.

The little Floresians lived on the island until at least 13,000 years ago — and possibly to historic times. But they were not a pygmy form of modern humans. They were a downsized version of Homo erectus, the eastern cousin of the Neanderthals of Europe, who disappeared 33,000 years ago. Their discovery means that archaic humans, who left Africa 1.5 million years earlier than modern people, survived far longer into recent

> See **DWARF** on 9A



Peter Schouten | National Geographic, The Associated Press

The adult Homo floresiensis, despite standing only 3½ feet tall, were mighty hunters. They made stone tools to spear giant rats, clubbed sleeping dragons and hunted the packs of pygmy elephants that roamed their lost world on the island of Flores.