

Harry Reid Doesn't Let a Good Colorado Crisis Go To Waste

✘ One of my favorite leisure destinations in my home state of Colorado is Estes Park. It's a popular, very friendly mountain town that sits at the base of Rocky Mountain National Park, about an hour and fifteen minute's drive from where I live. It's a beautiful place.

A number of times each year, my family and I find ourselves taking a road trip on up there. We drive through the majestic Big Thompson River canyon along U.S. Highway 34. It's a windy road that provides miles of lush scenery. When we reach the top of the canyon, we cruise around one last bend before the wide-open Estes Park valley presents itself like the opening scene of an epic film.

Tranquil Lake Estes sits off to the left, often shimmering under the sun while small boats skim gently across it. Sharp, sometimes snow-capped mountains jet out from behind a wooded forest in the distance.

The first establishment we pass is the Estes Park Ride-A-Kart, a family amusement park that my children love for its bumper-boats, go-karts, and miniature golf. My wife used to go there often with *her* family years ago when *she* was a kid.

Our attention is always captured by the familiar site of the hundred year-old, bright white, Stanley Hotel that overlooks the valley. Back in the 1970's, the stately hotel inspired author Stephen King to write his famous novel, "The Shining," which was later turned into a movie. The Stanley still gets a lot of tourism interest because of that association.

It's not uncommon to witness large, glorious elk meandering their way through the area, and even through Downtown Estes Park where small, quaint shops line the narrow Elkhorn Avenue.

My family usually eats lunch at Bob & Tony's Pizza. We devour one of their specialty pizzas made from homemade ingredients in no time, right before my children head to the restaurant's game room. There they spend a couple of dollars on an old arcade game or toy crane that actually lets them occasionally win a stuffed animal.

Afterwards we walk past ice cream and taffy shops, weighing our options for later.

This summer I got to meet the friendly employees at Macdonald Bookshop at the center of town. They were kind enough to host a book-signing event for me there, where I spoke with many fascinating people from all over the country, who chose to make Estes Park one of their vacation stops. They brought their tourism dollars with them – money that the local community relies on.

A couple of weeks later, I paid a visit to the rustic Baldpate Inn, another century-old institution, in preparation for a second event. I was greeted by a young intern named Caitlyn who gave me a tour of the Inn that sits high above Estes Park on Twin Sisters Mountain. Everyone there was hospitable, energetic, and happy to be working.

Estes Park, Colorado is a special place for me and my family. That's why I was devastated last week when six days of epic rainfall led to heavy flooding that ravaged the area, along with several other parts of Colorado.

The overflowing Big Thompson river swept through, and even submerged, several local businesses and residences before wiping out the two main roadways leading into the town. U.S. 34, the highway my family uses to get to Estes Park, is in absolute shambles and will likely be unusable for at least a year.

People lost their homes and livelihoods not just in Estes Park, but all across the eastern slope of the state when the

roaring, overflowing rivers reached the plains and the incredible volume of water had nowhere else to go.

The BaldPate Inn – the place that I had just visited a couple weeks ago – suffered enough surrounding infrastructure damage that they had to shut down operations for the rest of the year. And they're certainly not alone.

While the Estes Park community has come together and worked hard to get businesses back up and running, there's little doubt that their fall tourism season will take a significant hit this year with limiting entry routes into their town.

It's times like this that we often see the best in people. Communities rally together to help out those who need assistance. Charitable organizations like the Red Cross and churches set up shelters and provide food for those who have lost so much. Donations pour in from generous individuals and corporations to help ease the pain and get people back on their feet. We've certainly seen this in the state of Colorado over the past week.



Estes Park, CO

But it's also during times like this that we can reliably count on some opportunistic, self-serving D.C. politician to tastelessly use the crisis to push forth some extraneous political agenda. This time, it was Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid who decided to blame the Colorado flooding on... you guessed it, global warming.

"We should be facing the reality of climate change," Reid said on the U.S. Senate floor Tuesday. "Look what happened in Colorado. I talked to Senator Bennet yesterday, he said the floods were biblical. In one part of Colorado, it rained 12 inches in two hours. I can't imagine that."

Reid went on to deliver a broader speech on on climate change, having used the Colorado floods as a segue.

Now, I have no problem with Reid talking about climate change. If he thinks it's a real issue and he wants to talk about it, that's fine.

But what he did is use the suffering of countless Coloradans, in the immediate aftermath of a catastrophic act of God, to put forth shameless political spin. No one in the scientific community is even seriously suggesting that such events are attributable to climate change. Yet, Reid clearly had no qualms in asserting exactly that, and in doing so, using the crisis for political gain.

Sadly, this is the kind of thing that we've come to expect from Harry Reid. He is, after all, the same guy who proclaimed that America had lost the Iraq war while our troops were still there, putting their lives on the line in combat against insurgents and other extreme elements. We're talking about a guy who publicly complained that tourists in Washington D.C. smelled bad, and told school kids that President Bush was a "loser." We're talking about a guy who invoked the spirit of Mitt Romney's dead father in order to criticize his son, before stating a baldfaced lie during the 2012 presidential election that Mitt didn't pay taxes for ten years. 

While Reid's Colorado flood comments probably weren't his worst offense, they were offensive *enough* – a shameless game played at the expense of people's suffering.

And sadly, you know that no one in the media will ask Reid to explain his comments or cite which data he is basing such a claim upon. When Michele Bachmann does this type of thing, the media is all over her (and rightfully so). But Harry Reid? Nope. The media will once again just play off the remark as "Harry being Harry." Or worse yet, they might even lend blind credence to his bogus commentary.

The people of Estes Park and in the rest of the state of Colorado have a lot of work to do to get their lives together, and the truth is that some lame, disingenuous comments from the top clown in the U.S. Senate really isn't going to have much of an impact on them.

This incident does, however, provide a stark contrast – an important one. On one hand, you have hard working, determined Americans who are tirelessly and effectively dealing with the serious problems that affect them. On the other, you have the completely un-serious Washington D.C. elites who are not only incapable of solving real problems, but eagerly marginalize real problems in order to bolster their own sanctimonious sense of self-worth.

At what point are we going to stop voting these same *excuses for public servants* back into office?