



## Special Olympics Colorado Delegation Travels to Nation's Capital

Four members of Special Olympics Colorado recently traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with Colorado's U.S. Senators Michael Bennet and Mark Udall plus Representatives Mike Coffman, Diana DeGette, Doug Lamborn, Betsy Markey, Ed Perlmutter, Jared Polis and John Salazar in support of FY 2010 Appropriations Requests. Comprising the SOCO delegation was President/CEO Mindy Watrous, Mile High Area Manager Jenny McVoy and athletes Erin Holloway (Strasberg) and Melissa Stokes (Aurora).

The four-day trip included training provided by Special Olympics, Inc., and Special Olympics North America staff members for athletes, families and staff personnel representing Special Olympics chapters around the country in preparation of the meetings March 4 on Capital Hill. The purpose of the meetings was for Special Olympics representatives to share the impact government spending has on the organization. The FY 2010 funding will help provide critically important programs and services to people with intellectual disabilities.

Capital Hill Day was culminated by an evening reception including speeches by Tim Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics, Inc., and Patrick Kennedy, U.S. Representative from Rhode Island and cousin to Shriver. In addition, recently appointed Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy Kareem Dale told the athletes and their families that U.S. President Barack Obama's administration is dedicated to improving services, access to care and job opportunities for people with disabilities. Dale, the first person to hold this position, assured them that they now "have someone with the ear of the administration."

Since 2005, Special Olympics athletes have met with their state members of Congress to share their success and their need for support as people with intellectual disabilities. In addition to funding in Fiscal Year 2010, the Special Olympics contingent sought reauthorization of the Sport and Empowerment Act. The act provides critical funding for Special Olympics sports, education and health programs through the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education and State. Special Olympics relies on this funding to provide vital services to athletes and families, including the Special Olympics [Healthy Athletes®](#) program and several educational programs. Healthy Athletes was launched in 1997 to provide health screenings for athletes at the local, national and international level who otherwise may go without any medical care.



*Left to Right: Mindy Watrous, Melissa Stokes, Tim Shriver and Erin Holloway*



*Left to Right: Jenny McVoy, Managing Director of SONA Bob Gobrect, Colorado U.S. Representative Jared Polis, Melissa Stokes and Mindy Watrous*

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