Ken Salazar, ’81, is currently serving as partner of the Denver, Colorado office of WilmerHale.

In December 2008, President Obama selected Salazar to serve in his cabinet as secretary of interior. Salazar was confirmed as the 50th secretary of the interior by a unanimous Senate vote on January 20, 2009. Salazar helped to lead the United States energy efforts in developing and implementing President Obama's energy strategy. The effort included overseeing the exploration and development of conventional and renewable energy resources on the nation's public lands and oceans, and working on matters relating to climate change, exploration of frontier areas like the Arctic, leading the successful response to the 2010 Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill, and overhauling the regulatory oversight of oil and gas exploration and production. He also created the five-year plan that governs the leasing for oil and exploration for the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Arctic Seas.

Prior to his confirmation, Salazar served as U.S. Senator for Colorado, winning the election in 2004 and serving on the Energy and Natural Resources and Finance Committees, which oversaw the nation's energy, natural resources, tax, trade, social security and healthcare systems. He also served on the Agriculture, Ethics, Veterans Affairs and Aging Committees.

Salazar was also attorney general and top legal officer for the State of Colorado. He led the resolution of some of the most complex natural resource and environmental conflicts in Colorado history, including longstanding natural resource damage cases at places like the Summitville mine and other CERCLA cases that had been filed some 25 years earlier.

From 1987 to 1994, Salazar served first as chief legal counsel and then as executive director of the Department of Natural Resources for the Governor of Colorado.

Besides his public sector experience, Salazar also has substantial experience in the private practice of law. He practiced natural resources and water law for 11 years in the major Denver law firms of Sherman & Howard and Parcel, Mauro, Hultin and Spaanstra. In his practice, Salazar represented ski areas, land developers, farmers and mining companies in both transactional and litigation matters.