Montana Democratic Officers Convention

Max S. Baucus

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR MAX BAUCUS
MONTANA DEMOCRATIC OFFICERS CONVENTION
Lewistown, Montana
November 5, 1983

George (Turman), thank you for those kind remarks.

It is great to be here with you and with our fellow Democrats.

I care deeply about this Party.

I probably shouldn't admit this in front of this group; but there was a time that I was an independent voter. And I remember the process of deciding which party I wanted to join.

The Republicans were for the status quo. They were tight and greedy. They were pessimistic, cynical and they wanted to keep what they had.

The Democrats stood for progress. They were optimistic about the future. They stuck up for the little guy. They were committed to civil liberties.

You can see the terrible dilemma I was confronted with.

And I know you'll never guess what I concluded.

Simply put: I am proud to be a Montana Democrat.

Our Party has provided this state with strong, effective leaders like Ted Schwinden and George Turman.
Our Party has provided forceful, thoughtful representatives in Washington like John Melcher and Pat Williams.

Our Party has creative and hardworking Party organizers like Sharon Peterson and Tony Jewett.

Our Party has advocated innovative legislative accomplishments like the coal severance tax.

I am proud of all this.

But I am most proud of the principles on which this Party rests...

It is these principles that I want to discuss with you today; in the context of our economy and in the context of our foreign policy.

Montana's Economy

Never before has there been as much debate about the future of Montana's economy.

Seldom before has our state's economy faced the challenges we face today.

Montanans already have a good start in meeting these challenges.

The "Build Montana" program has been very constructive and good for the state.

It is a real tribute to Ted and George's leadership.

The "Build Montana" program is a valuable foundation for
ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE EIGHTIES.

It has created a way for us to define our economic goals and to decide how to achieve them.

As we go about this job, let us remember that economic growth must be consistent with the values of our Party. We need the kind of economic growth:

- That provides jobs for Montanans.
- That respects our basic commitment to the environment.
- That is fair and equitable to all Montanans.
- That is consistent with our basic commitment to the elderly.
- That is consistent with our basic commitment to the economic and political rights of women.

The National Economy

And we must bring these same values to our discussion of the national economic picture.

As we in Montana know, the success of our “Build Montana” program depends in large part on a sound recovery for our entire economy.

Right now that is not guaranteed.

The spectre of huge, unfathomable deficits looms on the horizon.

Unless we do something now, the deficits will dry up the recovery.
Several weeks ago, I was in Great Falls speaking before the Farmers Union.

I said then -- and I say it again today -- President Reagan and Tip O'Neill are doing us all a great disservice by not getting together on a plan to reduce the deficit. I said then that nothing is more fundamental to our economic recovery than reducing the deficits.

I'm pleased to report that my pleas have not fallen on deaf ears. A group of us -- three Democrats and three Republicans -- have been appointed by the Senate Finance Committee to try to draft a deficit reduction plan that will save the economic recovery.

I don't know if we will succeed. This is a tough job.

But as Democrats, we must face the problem head on and we must do it in a manner consistent with our basic values.

- We are the party that won't stand for reducing deficits on the backs of working men and women.

- We are the party that won't stand for reducing deficits on the backs of our elderly.

- We are the party that won't stand for a solution that doesn't include decreases in defense spending.

- We are the party that will only accept a solution that requires every sector of our society to shoulder part of the
JURDEN OF GETTING THE DEFICITS DOWN.

I AM CONVINCED THIS IS A PROBLEM THAT CAN BE TACKLED.

But we must do it now.

And I believe we can do it in a way that is fair to Democratic constituencies and Democratic principles.

FOREIGN POLICY

There is one other aspect of national policy that has been on all of our minds the past few weeks and that is the state of our foreign policy.

We were disturbed by the continued "covert" bombings in Nicaragua.

We were concerned by the deployment of the Pershing missiles in Europe.

We were anguished by the massacre of our Marines in Beirut.

We were confused by the invasion of Grenada.

We were outraged by the flagrant violations of the First Amendment.

Frankly, it feels like our foreign policy is out of control.

Not that it is misguided, but that it is unguided.

As Democrats, we stand firmly behind the need for a national defense second to none.
It was John Kennedy who said "we dare not tempt (our enemies) with weakness." But he also warned us never to fear negotiations.

This Administration continues to offer us only military solutions to our foreign policy problems. And it continues to thumb its nose at Congress.

Meanwhile, the Republican Party of Montana offers us only a warning that any criticism of our foreign policy is unpatriotic.

But you and I both know that the truly unpatriotic act would be to sit by in silence.

Those who are speaking out with their concerns are the true patriots;

o Like Pat Williams, who is a member of the House Democratic Ad Hoc Committee on Lebanon, which is monitoring the War Powers Act.

o Like John Melcher who is attempting to revoke the 18-month authorization of our Marines in Beirut.

And, I have co-sponsored and voted for amendments that would apply the War Powers Act to both Lebanon and Grenada and limit the U.S. presence in both places to 60 days.

And I am working with the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee to plan hearings on the constitutional responsibility of Congress to set military and foreign policy.
This is a record of which we can be proud and it builds upon those basic principles which our Party stands for:

- We are the party that is willing to say "NO" to the senseless arms buildup.
- We are the party that will leave no stone unturned in its quest for meaningful arms control.
- We are the party that advocates a bilateral nuclear freeze.
- We are the party that opposes the militarization of Central America.
- We are the party that stands for tireless negotiations to find regional political solutions in that part of the world.
- We are the party that stands for human rights...in Central America...in Poland...in every nation.

Protecting Montana

But it turns out it's not enough to have principles.

We have to fight for them.

There's an old Latin maxim that says: "The law is fair to those who are vigilant, but not to those who slumber."

And we in Montana can't afford to slumber.

Never before have the interests of Montana and the West been under greater attack in Congress.
JUST THIS PAST MONDAY, I Fought AGAINST AN AMENDMENT ON THE
SENATE FLOOR THAT WOULD HAVE SEVERELY LIMITED MONTANA'S ABILITY
tO IMPOSE ITS COAL SEVERANCE TAX.

THIS PROPOSAL IS AN OUTRAGEOUS AND PERNICIOUS ASSAULT ON
MONTANA'S RIGHT TO SURVIVE.

IT IS A TOTAL AFFRONT TO ANYONE WHO RELIEVES IN OUR FEDERAL
FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

Fortunately, we were successful in forcing Senator Dixon to
withdraw his proposal temporarily -- but he has vowed to raise it
again.

If that attack were not enough, actions of the House Ways
and Means Committee threaten to cut back on some of the federal
authority on which the "Build Montana" program is based.

And there's more:

1. Some House members are trying to rewrite estate tax laws
to penalize Western landowners.

2. Some Senators are trying to raise revenues by hurting the
timber industry -- an industry that's nearly been devastated by
the recession.

3. Others are trying to rewrite revenue sharing and other
federal formulas to penalize states with rich natural resources.

All of the proposals I've mentioned are within the
jurisdiction of the Senate Finance Committee on which I serve.
I am proud to be in a position to fight these proposals.

They threaten our state's financial well-being.

They threaten our state's sovereignty.

They threaten to undermine the principles of our party.

So, we can't simply espouse those principles.

We must remain vigilant.

We must fight hard to preserve them -- and we must win.

**Conclusion**

There is room in this Party for a broad range of views on how to tackle the problems we face.

That diversity of opinion will equip us to deal with the complexity of those problems.

But we must remember, if we stand for everything -- we stand for nothing.

Let us embrace our diversity.

But let us not abandon our values.

Let us use our differences to bring people together.

But let us never abandon those principles that set us apart.

The values I've discussed with you today are what bind us together as Montana Democrats.

And they are the basis upon which we can proudly go forward.
In the 1984 elections.

In previous efforts, you've been there for me, doing all the essential work that needs to be done. I am counting on that help and support once again.

I look forward to our working together to articulate what we stand for as Montana Democrats.

Thank you.