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Disabled American Veterans Convention

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR MAX BAUCUS
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS CONVENTION
Butte, Montana
June 2, 1984

Maury Holland, Commander Joyner, Commander Daley, Adjutant Adams, Judge McClernan, N.S.O. Sloane, Don Peoples, members of the D.A.V., I am pleased to be here with you today.

I am always proud to address veterans.

MONTANA'S CONTRIBUTION

But I am particularly proud to address Montana veterans.

We in Montana have done more than our fair share of contributing to the security of our country.

President McKinley asked 500 Montanans to volunteer for the Spanish--American War.

1,400 Montanans responded.

One of them was Joe Montgomery of Lewistown, who died a few months ago.

In every other war since the one Joe fought in, Montana has continued to give more than its expected share of soldiers.
In our most recent war, 259 Montanans died in Viet Nam. And 11 Montanans are still missing in action.

We in Montana are proud of the men and women who have represented us in the armed services.

Montana’s Veterans

You veterans are the backbone of this great state.

We owe you so much for the sacrifices you made so that this nation can remain free.

I know it goes against the grain for veterans to claim they are a special breed. But they are.

The debt our nation owes you is considerable. We need to ensure that this debt is repaid.

I believe America should reward veterans for the time you spent in far-off countries, fighting in strange climates, not knowing what the next day would bring, separated from your families.

You paid the price for America’s freedom. You can be proud of the role you and your fellow veterans played on the battlefield.
And you can be certain that I will continue to fight for your benefits and your health care system from those who would like to see veterans programs scaled back.

I am proud of my voting record on behalf of veterans:

0 In 1980, I voted for a $600 million increase in funding of veterans programs.

0 In 1981, I voted to restore $300 million of proposed cuts in veterans health services, and I voted in favor of transferring $104 million from foreign aid programs to veterans programs.

0 In 1982, I voted to provide a full cost of living increase for service connected disabled veterans.

0 And just last week I am proud to have voted for legislation which passed the Senate which permits veterans compensation for war victims of Agent Orange poisoning. Compensation will also be provided for atomic veterans—those who were exposed to ionizing radiation in the test of a nuclear device or during the American occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

That legislation will hopefully be enacted and signed by the President later this year.
As we continue to stand by those who have served us in the past, we can't afford to neglect those who are serving us today.

I am concerned, and I know you are concerned that we as a country aren't doing enough to stand behind today's military personnel.

And it is that troubling development that I wanted to discuss with you briefly this evening.

Bolstering our conventional forces

As we look around the world there are many "trouble spots" we must be concerned about:

- The Persian Gulf
- The Middle East
- Central America

In each of those areas, and in others, we have to be prepared to defend our interests in a variety of ways:

- To rescue our citizens
- To display strength through a naval presence, or
- To show our resolve through joint military exercises.

These maneuvers require capable and trained soldiers as we
had when you were serving our country.

and they require dependable equipment, weapons and ammunition to support those personnel.

these are the two basic elements of our "conventional forces".

and it's these forces that provide us with the capability to meet the challenges we face today.

unfortunately, that capability is being threatened.

it's being threatened because this country is neglecting its conventional forces.

we are spending too much on extravagant oversophisticated weapons hardware.

and we are spending too little on the training and support of our soldiers.

next year's defense budget calls for a 37 percent increase in nuclear, strategic forces...

... and only a 9 percent increase in funds for conventional forces.
THESE PRIORITIES ARE WRONG.

WE SHOULD BE SPENDING MORE ON OUR CONVENTIONAL FORCES. WE NEED:

0 INCREASED NUMBERS OF MILITARY PERSONNEL
0 BETTER PAY SCALES FOR PERSONNEL
0 INCREASED FUNDING FOR TRAINING AND PREPAREDNESS
0 MORE AMMUNITION PROCUREMENT
0 INCREASED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE COMBAT WEAPONS

I AM PROUD OF MY VOTING RECORD IN SUPPORT OF CONVENTIONAL FORCES:

0 IN 1980 I VOTED AGAINST AN EFFORT TO SLASH ARMY PERSONNEL BY 25,000.

0 IN 1981, I VOTED FOR AN ADDITIONAL 12,000 PERSONNEL FOR THE NAVY AND THE AIR FORCE AND AN ADDITIONAL $148 MILLION FOR AMMUNITION PROCUREMENT.

0 IN 1982, I VOTED IN SUPPORT OF THE C-5 AIRCRAFT, AND A FOURTH NIMITZ-CLASS AIRCRAFT CARRIER.

0 AND IN 1983, I VOTED TO RESTORE $582 OF PROPOSED CUTS IN READINESS AND CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS CAPABILITIES AND TO ADD $15.8 MILLION TO THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD FOR OPERATION AND
MAINTENANCE.

All of these components of our conventional forces need increased funding...

... and instead these areas are being cut back while nuclear strategic spending is going out of control.

We, as Americans, need to reverse this trend.

We need to get behind an effort to rearrange our defense spending priorities.

CONCLUSION

It was Franklin Roosevelt who said in one of his Fireside Chats:

"We build and defend not for our generation alone.

We defend the foundation laid by our fathers.

We build a life for generations yet unborn".

Today, let us resolve to do both:

Let us honor and be faithful to you, who have built that foundation and fought to defend it. We can do that by continuing our commitment to our nation's veterans.
AND AS A TRIBUTE TO YOU LET US STRENGTHEN AND OUR ABILITY TO DEFEND SOUND FOUNDATION YOU HAVE BEQUEATHED US.

WE CAN DO THAT:

BY STRENGTHENING OUR CONVENTIONAL FORCES.

BY WORKING TIRELESSLEY TO ACHIEVE MUTUAL AND VERIFIABLE ARMS CONTROL.

AND BY CONTINUING TO FOSTER THE LIBERTY WE ALL CHERISH.

DOING ALL OF THIS IS THE BEST TRIBUTE WE CAN PAY TO YOU, OUR DESERVING VETERANS.

AND, IF WE DO, WILL WE BE WORTHY OF THE PROUD LEGACY YOU HAVE LEFT TO US.

THANK YOU.