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The Petroleum Club

Max S. Baucus

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Introduction

Thanks.

I'd like to talk about my agenda for the 101st Congress.

It comes down to one single, simple, overriding objective. I hear about it every day. And I see it every morning when I sit down and open the mail from home.

It's not foreign policy. It's not House Speaker Jim Wright. It's not even the wilderness bill.

It's jobs.

a future on.

Jobs in timber, agriculture, oil, mining, outfitting, and tourism. Jobs in our growing high-tech industry. Jobs in banking and insurance.

And it's my job, and the job of our entire delegation, to help you create jobs.

Let me tell you what I'm doing to accomplish that.

**Tax and Trade**

Last year, I chaired the Taxation Subcommittee. When Lloyd Bentsen ran for Vice President, he asked me to manage the tax corrections bill. I'm glad that we were able to repeal the heifer tax, the diesel tax, and several other harebrained provisions.

That pretty much cleared the decks. This year, I don't expect much tax legislation. That's a blessing.

I have, however, taken over as Chairman of the 's International Trade Subcommittee, and I expect that Subcommittee to be very, very busy.

Last year, Congress passed a major trade bill. The
Administration is now beginning to enforce it. I intend to see that they do so responsibly, but aggressively.

We’ll be paying particular attention to a provision called "super 301," which directs the President to take action against countries that impose unfair barriers to U.S. exports.

This will help us crack foreign markets for our beef, wheat, and timber.

I also intend to review the implementation of the Canadian free trade agreement, and the U.S.-Japan beef agreement.

I worked long and hard for that beef agreement. I want to see a dramatic increase in sales of U.S. beef, rather than sales of U.S. ranches.

Small Business Committee

I also chair the Rural Economy Subcommittee.

Here, I’m working on legislation that extends the economic recovery into the heartland states.

To be blunt about it, deregulation has been a bum
deal for Montana and other rural states. From air
service to telecommunications to banking, deregulation
has benefitted the east and west coasts at our expense.

This is a sharp departure from the long tradition,
from Lincoln to Roosevelt to Eisenhower to Kennedy, that
we’re all in this together: E pluribus unum. People
shouldn’t have to pack up and leave Montana to find a
decent job.

I’m working to revive that notion.

Not by creating new government bureaucracies. But
by giving businesses the tools they need to compete in
the 21st century.

As chairman, I have put together a package of bills
designed to accomplish this, by helping Montana
businesses overcome barriers.

One such barrier is the lack of an adequate
telecommunications infrastructure. Today,
telecommunications is as critical to Montana’s future as
electricity, railways and highways have been in the
past.

Two weeks ago, I introduced legislation to establish
a loan fund at the Rural Electrification Administration
to bring state-of-the-art telecommunications services to rural areas by the year 1994. My legislation will enable Montana residents, businesses, hospitals and schools to join in and fully participate in the coming "information age."

A second barrier is lack of access to capital. We need more capital, for our banks and for our businesses.

Last week, I introduced legislation, along with Senator Boschwitz of Minnesota, to establish two new loan funds for rural businesses. One fund will provide equity capital and guarantees to rural businesses on a 50-50 cost split between the fund and private financial sources.

A second fund will assist "microbusinesses" located in rural areas. The legislation will establish a special fund designed to make technical assistance and loans of up to $25,000 available to businesses employing 15 people or less.

Finally, I will soon introduce legislation to ensure that the essential air service program does not run short of funds again. My bill will make EAS an entitlement under the Airport and Airways Trust Fund. That way, funds will always be available for the program. Rural communities will be able to plan for the future and
attract business investment without fear that air service may one day be eliminated.

These are solid, bipartisan bills. And they're moving. Majority Leader Mitchell has appointed an economic development task force, to develop a comprehensive bill. I'm a member of this task force, and will be pushing to include legislation on telecommunication capital, and air service.

The Environmental Protection Subcommittee

I also chair the Senate's Environmental Protection Subcommittee.

As many of you know, this has become a political "hot seat." President Bush plans to move forward aggressively. We have a long agenda, including clean air, the oil spill, hazardous waste legislation, and global warming.

For some, these are ideological issues. Right versus wrong. No middle ground.

Well, the extremists won't like Chairman Baucus. Because I'm not looking for ideological purity. I'm looking for results.
We all have a stake in a safe environment. And we all have a stake in a strong, growing economy.

Both goals are important.

The Clean Air Act is a good example. Here in Billings, we have a sulfur dioxide problem. It's complex, and I know that BLAQ-Tech and others are working hard to develop solutions.

At the national level, we can level the playing field. As we all know, air standards have been a concern to some companies that have been considered locating in Billings. Other states don’t necessarily have cleaner air. Just looser standards.

And Billings is paying the price, as companies like Annheiser Busch look elsewhere.

That’s not right. Air pollution is a national problem. We need a national solution, that doesn’t force states like Montana to choose between health and jobs.

On clean air and other environmental issues, I’ll be taking a balanced approach.

Last week, I introduced the first element of the
clean air bill--legislation to limit emissions of toxic air pollutions. We had bipartisan support, from Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives.

We also had bipartisan opposition. The Chemical Manufacturers Association thought it was too tough. And the Sierra Club thought it was too lenient.

So I figure we got it just about right.

Let me say a few things about the Alaskan oil spill. As Chairman, I’ve been looking into this. And it isn’t pretty. And there’s plenty of blame to go around. Exxon. Alyeska. The Administration. Congress.

I’ll be frank with you. I’m a committed supporter of the oil industry. Always have been. Always will. Whether its oil depletion or the diesel tax, I’ll be leading the fight, the way Russell Long showed me how.

But we also have to acknowledge mistakes. And if any Montana operator had prepared as poorly, or responded as slowly, as Exxon did in Prince William Sound, he would have been run out of the state--by other oilmen.

Because that kind of conduct is inexcusable, and destroys public confidence.
At this point, we have to learn from the spill, and make improvements. That will be the focus of my efforts.

On each of these issues, I’ll be working with the Administration. And I’ll be listening to your advice.

Because I know that Montana’s business men and women care deeply about the environment that our children will inherit.

** PAUSE **

Conclusion: Working Together

There’s another element to my job. It may be the most important of all.

It’s helping attract new companies and new jobs.

Sometimes, that means fighting for an appropriation.

Other times, it means helping convince a CEO that Montana is the absolutely best place for him to locate his company.

Some Senators don’t do this. They think it’s beneath them.
But, believe me, I’m the most enthusiastic salesman you’ll ever have. I’ll do every single thing I can to attract companies, whether it’s flying to Denver to meet with the CEO of U.S. West or meeting with Auggie Busch.

I don’t mind. In fact, it’s one of the best parts of my job.

As we pursue economic development, we have to work together. Each of us has an important role. Me, Conrad, Pat and Ron in Washington. The Governor and the legislature. And each of you.

Anheiser Busch is a good example. Working together, we’ve convinced Aggie Busch that Montana is competitive. We may get the plant, or we may not. But everyone involved in the Billings bid has done a great job. And that kind of enthusiasm and cooperation is going to pay off.

That’s what it takes. Enthusiasm and cooperation.

I’ll continue to use both, to bring jobs to Billings.

Thank you.