National Association of Development Organizations

Max S. Baucus
Senator * or Department*:

Instructions:
Prepare one form for insertion at the beginning of each record series.
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* "required information"
While I welcome each of you to Washington, I must say what a privilege it is to speak to this very un-Washington organization. You represent the grassroots of economic development -- where the work gets done, where the jobs are created -- all across America.

No matter what else you have on your agenda, I urge you to pay the Senators and Representatives from your state a visit. Let them know what you are doing; let them know what the folks back home are saying and, above all else, let them know how they can help you.

As Tip O'Neill was so fond of saying, "all politics is local." Truer words were rarely -- if ever -- spoken.

And there is one sure-fire way to build congressional support for the work you and the Economic Development Administration are doing at the local level: tell people -- particularly your Congressmen and Senators -- about it. If what's happening in Montana is any indication, they will be impressed.

In just three words, I can tell you why I've become such a strong believer in EDA: Libby, Havre, and Poplar. These words may not mean much to many in this town. But, to me, they are communities -- they are people -- they are Montanans -- that I care deeply about. Unfortunately, each of these communities has now fallen upon hard times.

- Libby, for instance, is a timber dependent community in Montana's Northwest corner. The timber mill that is Libby's largest employer recently changed hands and cut its work force by half, costing about 300 jobs.

- At the other end of the State, on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, lies Poplar. In the face of Poplar's historically high unemployment, A & S Tribal Industries became a success story. As a tribal run defense procurement contractor, A & S developed into Montana's largest manufacturer. But the end of the Cold War has meant the loss of almost 400 jobs at A & S.

- And, finally, there's Tony Preite's home town of Havre. Located along the old Great Northern line, Havre is primarily a railroad town. In 1992, we were all shocked to learn that the Burlington Northern Railroad planned to shut the doors on its machine shop, costing Havre 300 jobs.

They say tough times never last, but tough people do. I know this applies to folks in Libby, Havre, Poplar and economically troubled communities all across America. With hard work and a strong spirit, these communities are fighting to rebuild their economic base -- to bring the jobs back. And, in each case, EDA has been there; not offering a handout; but, rather, offering a helping hand by empowering people to help themselves.

Havre is an excellent example. With the help of EDA's revolving loan fund, strong community teamwork and Tony Preite's hard work a new manufacturing business has already been brought in. And there is an excellent chance that this new business will ultimately employ more that the 300 people thrown out of work by the BN shutdown.
EDA REAUTHORIZATION: A NATIONAL PRIORITY

All of this is why, after more than a decade of uncertainty, I believe Congress should act to reauthorize EDA. For better or worse, our economy is changing. And, while these changes will bring hardship, they may also bring opportunity; opportunity to build a new and sustainable economic base for many communities.

All across America -- from the Rust Belt of the Midwest; to timber dependent communities of Montana; to defense conversion states of the Sunbelt, EDA is needed. Its reauthorization is in the national interest and should be a national priority.

I understand the uncertainty that all of you have faced since the last EDA authorization in 1980. I find it remarkable that, despite this limbo, EDA has survived and produced impressive results.

Yet I believe a reauthorized and revitalized EDA can do even more. With President Clinton's leadership and support the time may be ripe for reauthorization.

Toward this end, prior to Memorial Day, I intend to introduce a bill to reauthorize EDA. I also plan to hold hearings on this legislation this summer. While I have not yet settled upon any specific provisions, my bill will be the product of close consultations with this organization, with the Administration, and with my colleagues -- both Democrats and Republicans -- on the Environment and Public Works Committee.

It won't be easy. We must avoid the partisan gridlock that has been the hallmark of past reauthorization battles. If a reauthorization bill is to pass the Senate this year, it must be the product of a bipartisan consensus. And I am willing to work with Senators from both parties and all regions of the country to achieve such a consensus.

While I'll admit to being an incurable optimist, I believe such a consensus can be achieved. Much has changed since the Senate last voted on the future of EDA. The agency itself has a record of quiet, but solid accomplishment. And 39 new Senators have arrived since the last vote in 1985. I believe most of my colleagues will approach reauthorization with an open mind.

CONCLUSION

For this reason, I close these remarks as I began them. Don't forget: all politics is local. Make the best of your time here in Washington. Burn up the shoe leather. Reach out to your Senators and Representatives. And tell them about your accomplishments -- about the jobs you and EDA are working to create -- back in his or her home state or district.

We hear a lot of talk about high powered lobbyists in this town, but you are the most effective advocates for this particular cause. One familiar face is worth at least a thousand hired guns. So go out and spread the word.