

6-4-1994

Jefferson-Jackson Dinner

Max S. Baucus

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Recommended Citation

Baucus, Max S., "Jefferson-Jackson Dinner" (June 4, 1994). *Max S. Baucus Speeches*. 551.
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DOCUMENT DATE*: **06/04/1994**

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BAUCUS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Remarks of Senator Max Baucus
Jefferson-Jackson Dinner
Butte, Montana

June 4, 1994

Good evening, friends. It is a great pleasure to come home to Butte.

Butte is a town with a big heart. It's a town where people work hard and -- at least sometimes -- live hard. It's a town where people do big things, and it always has been.

That is why Butte is the birthplace of America's labor movement. A hundred and one years ago, in the building that today houses my own local office, the Butte Miners Union organized hard-rock miners from across the West in the Western Federation of Miners.

You can trace the eight-hour work day; the minimum wage; last year's Family and Medical Leave Act; and even this year's health reform bill back to those days. It will come as no surprise to learn that a hundred years ago, the Butte Miners Union was Local Number One.

And everybody here knows that today, Butte is still number one -- especially to Montana Democrats.

The Democratic Party has been the leader in all of those reforms. We have stood with working men and women for good jobs and decent lives. Like Tip O'Neill once said, our Party's bedrock belief is that "the humblest, meekest person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect."

Our Party, here at home in Montana and across the country, has lived by that since the days of Franklin Roosevelt. And America is the better for it.

When you remember FDR, you think about the New Deal. And particularly with the D-Day Anniversary coming up, you think about the Second World War.

Butte-Silver Bow is home to 1,847 World War II veterans. I'd bet that's as many, in proportion to population, as you'll find anywhere in the country. We are honored with the presence of at least three of them here tonight. And I'd like to ask them to stand, and give them some special recognition now:

Jack McGlynn.

Ed Shea.

Al Trafford.

I hope I haven't missed anybody, but if I have, stand up and let us know you're here.

We have some difficult issues in our time. Jobs, health care, crime, the economy. We can only tackle these issues because of men like you. You risked your lives to give us a safe and peaceful world, and we are grateful for it.

Stand up and give Jack, Ed and Al some special thanks.

But let's come back to our job this fall. We may not have wars or depressions. But we have some hard work ahead -- whether it's creating jobs in Montana, reforming health care or cutting the deficit.

We're doing that hard work now. Because we have a Democratic President, and good Democrats in Congress to back him up, we created more than a million jobs in the first three months of this year. That's more than George Bush did in four full years. At the same time, we've cut the federal deficit back. While we've got a ways to go, the deficit is lower than at any time since the last Democratic Administration.

The economy here in Montana and across the Rocky Mountain states is healthier than ever. Our unemployment rate is 5.2% and falling. Our economic growth is as strong as it's been since the Bush recession ended and the Clinton boom began. But if we get complacent, it could all end fast.

When you take on a job this big, you take some knocks along with it. Because there's plenty of people who don't want to see us put things right. You hear people attacking the President all the time. Maybe you've even seen the a bumper sticker that reads "Don't Blame Me, I Voted Republican."

Well, next time you see it, pull your Ford or Chevy over and flag down that fancy foreign car, that certainly won't have a license plate beginning with the number one.

Tell the driver that we'll take the credit for the highest rate of economic growth in a decade.

We'll take the credit for the lowest real deficit since the last Democratic Administration.

We'll take the credit for putting the criminals in jail and reforming health care.

We'll even take the credit blame for all the new jobs. Just get out of our way and let us get the job done.

Our party has a big challenge ahead this fall. But we are on the right track. Our policies are working. It will be a tough campaign, but the issues are on our side, and the candidates here tonight are up to the job.

Good luck to all of them, and thank you all.