Montana Logging Association Convention

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Record Type*: Speeches & Remarks

MONTH/YEAR of Records*: June-1997
(Example: JANUARY-2003)

(1) Subject*: Environment
(select subject from controlled vocabulary, if your office has one)

(2) Subject* Montana Logging Association Convention

DOCUMENT DATE*: 06/04/1997
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* "required information"
Good evening, everyone. I'd like to thank you for inviting me to speak to you.

I hope you are enjoying your conference here in Kalispell. I can't think of a better location for this event -- a place where it is easy to see how lucky we are to be Montanans.

With Glacier Park just up the road a ways, Flathead Lake just south of here, and the Cabinet Mountain Range off near Libby, we are surrounded by nature's reminders of why this is the Last Best Place. But there are other reasons why we love to call the Big Sky State home.
One of those reasons is our people.

We care about the communities we live in. We say hi to strangers we see in the street. And we still take time to help a neighbor in need. Those qualities make Montana a community.

And the timber industry is an irreplaceable part of that -- especially here in the Northwest, where we have beautiful towns like Libby, Lincoln, Troy and Trout Creek.

Communities like these don’t spring up by accident. They depend on families. And families depend on jobs that pay honest, livable wages.
And that's why we need to work together to make sure that Montana's timber industry stays healthy and strong.

I think there are two ways to do that.

SMALL BUSINESS PACKAGE

The first is to make life easier for small businesses in Montana. Small business is the anchor of our Montana economy. Family businesses hold communities together. I've recently put together a small business package that will help business owners all across Montana -- including loggers.
Here are some of the highlights of my package:

Reduction of the capital gains tax for small businesses.

Increasing the threshold of the estate tax.

Increasing the deduction for health insurance for the self-employed.

Providing one-stop shopping for businesses that deal with government agencies.

And giving retirement incentives to small businesses and their employees.
Together these goals will make our state an environment where small business can thrive.

MAKING SURE LUMBER IS AVAILABLE

Second, we need to make sure there is a good supply of timber.

One way is to bring some common sense reform to the Endangered Species Act -- reform that is based on sound science.

I've talked with a lot of folks -- scientists, loggers and mill owners, and environmentalists. And most people
agree on a few basic things. Nobody wants to lose the wildlife that makes our Western heritage so special. And we also don’t want to jeopardize the family businesses and community stability that make our corner of America such a great place to live.

With good will on all sides, and a continued commitment to bipartisan reform, I believe we can do it.

Another way we can ensure a constant source of timber is by negotiating good land exchanges. Done right, land exchanges consolidate public lands, help our tourism industry, and improve the economic position of Montana’s timber industry. A win-win solution. One exchange that I’m working on now is the Gallatin II. This
exchange will free up 50 million board feet from the Gallatin National Forest. That’s an increase over existing levels and is good news for Montana’s loggers.

And finally, my staff has been working with Keith Olson on a project that could provide additional small sales for Montana loggers. While it’s too early to tell whether we’ll succeed in this venture, I’m excited by the prospect of helping Montana loggers through this and other efforts.

CONCLUSION

I’m not trying to say that I have all the answers to
the problems that face Montana's timber industry.

But I do know that we aren't going to accomplish anything alone. We need to work together -- whether it's trade, taxes or timber. Together we can find solutions to the pressing problems before us.

And in order to work together, we need to communicate. I need to hear from you, to know how I can help. I look forward to hearing from each and every one of you.

Thank you all very much. Enjoy the rest of your convention.