Health in Rural Areas Act Talking Points

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(1) Subject*: Health in Rural Areas Act
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(2) Subject* none

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* "required information"
Talking Points
Promoting Health In Rural Areas Act

What the bill does:

- It gives rural communities assistance in recruiting health care providers;
- It expands the range of services that can be provided with telemedicine, so that a patient in Baker can be "seen," via video link, by a health provider in Billings;
- It increases payments to hospitals in rural areas;
- The bottom line is, this bill corrects the government’s tendency to view all areas with a one-size-fits-all lens.

The need for the bill:

- Rural providers and patients are hurting. Montana’s small rural hospitals lost 6.5% treating Medicare patients in 1997, and that was before major cuts to the Medicare program. As the health care facility goes, so goes the community.
- You know, it seems like I spend 2/3 of my time trying to correct the bias Washington has against rural areas. Whether it’s highways or health care, rural America is too often ignored. This bill is a step towards changing that.

What are its chances of passing?

- It’s a bipartisan bill, with the support of the Minority Leader and several Republicans. I am very optimistic that some of its provisions will be passed this year.
- We are holding a Senate Finance Committee hearing on BBA rollbacks after Memorial Day recess. I could sure use your help in getting input for that hearing.