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Montana Aviation Conference

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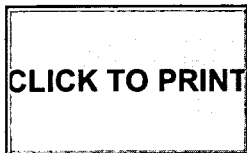
MONTH/YEAR of Records*: **November-2004**

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MT Aviation Conference

Hello everyone! I'm sorry I can't be with all of you in Great Falls today, but Senate business has kept me in Washington.

I want to commend all of you who have put this worthwhile conference together. It's a great opportunity to bring people together from different areas of aviation. Working together we can make our state's aviation program even better!

I thank all of you for your hard work. Each and every one of you are essential to our state's aviation program running smoothly. You're all doing a great job!

Over the next couple of days you will be working on many issues important to Montana's aviation program and I'd like to touch on a couple of them.

As all of you know, essential air service is vital to our state. Folks in rural states like Montana depend on EAS to travel around the state for business. To visit family. For vacation. And we shouldn't have to pay more for their flights than people in urban areas.

Last year, I fought to include funding to keep EAS alive in our state. It was a tough fight. But by working together with Conrad and Denny we got the job done.

The President wanted to cut funding for EAS by 50%. That would've wiped out the program in our state. But we fought back.

We were able to secure \$5 million for EAS in Montana. That kept the program alive in Glasgow, Glendive, Havre, Lewistown, Miles City, Sidney and Wolf Point. This year we're going to have to do it all over again.

But you can bet, I'm committed to working with all of you. Conrad and Denny. And the Administration to keep air service to those areas in our state that otherwise would not receive it.

The best way for Montana to have a strong future is to bring more businesses to our state – which will boost our state's economy. And the best way to have a strong economic future is to have a strong aviation infrastructure.

Currently I'm working on ways to boost Montana's economy. That's my top priority – jobs. I'm working to bring new businesses to our state. Cut taxes for our Montana manufacturers. And pass the new highway bill that will create good-paying jobs and ensure our roads are safe.

Aviation is a big part of our state's economy. That's why I'm glad Deb Kottel is going to join me on my trip to Asia March 13 to 20.

Deb, as Board President of Great Falls Airport Authority I'm counting on you to help me sell the great air services our state possesses.

I also think it's important we continue to make air travel to and from Montana reliable and affordable. Afterall, a strong aviation program is key.

An important component of that is making sure our aviation program is safe and efficient. That's why I'll continue to work to secure federal funds for Montana airports and our aviation program as a whole.

Since September 11, I know that Montana airports have faced many challenges getting the funding needed to keep air travel safe. I'm very aware of the safety issues at hand.

In last years' appropriations bill I secured millions of dollars in funds to help with airport safety improvements. This year I'm committed to doing the same thing. I'm going to do all I can to see Montana receive the funding needed to have the safest, most-reliable and affordable aviation program in the country.

I wish all of you the best of luck during your conference over the next few days. Get some good work done.

Kim Falcon from my staff will be with you so please let her know if there's anything we can do to help you.

On a personal note, I want you to know that I feel extremely lucky to represent Montanans in the U.S. Senate.

The next time you're in Washington, please feel free to stop by my office – my door is always open.

All the best.