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Flathead County Democratic Dinner

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Remarks For The Flathead County Democratic Dinner
September 29, 2007

Intro

Welcome to everyone! Well, today was the perfect Montana day. I started the morning in Billings where a new GE center is going to create at least 150 good-paying jobs, then this afternoon I watched the Griz trounce Weber State, now I get to spend the evening with all of you here in the Flathead.

The Flathead is truly one of the most beautiful, pristine areas in the world, and that is one of the reasons while as I long as I am a United States Senator this beauty will not be destroyed by mining in British Columbia.

I see a lot of old friends out there, including Mayor Kennedy. I don't know if you folks know how hard Pam works for the city of Kalispell, but let me tell you it's second to none. I also see Dan Cordier [cord-ear] and Mike Jopek [joe-peck], who are constantly fighting for the Flathead down in Helena.

Finally, this evening wouldn't be possible without Joan Ehrenberg [Air-in-berg], Richard Kuhl [cool], Pauline Sjordal [Jor-doll], JoLynn Yenne [yinny rhymes with whinny], and Roxanne Brothers who work so hard for the Democratic party. Let's give them a big round of applause. They're just aces.

Charles Hash Tribute

Before we go on, I want to take a minute to recognize a man who epitomized what it meant to be a Montanan and a Democrat.

As a loving husband, devoted father, civil servant, and avid fly fisherman, Charles Hash dedicated his life to making others better. While he may no longer be with us, his memory, and his legacy, will echo across this valley that he loved for generations.

Great to be a Democrat

Isn't it great to be a Democrat? I can't hear you. Isn't it great to be a Democrat?

As I was wondering around the Fairgrounds, seeing old faces, and meeting new friends, it made me proud to call myself a Montana Democrat. We are doing great things across the Valley, across our state, and across our nation. But, if you talk with Bobby Hauck or any other coach, they will always tell you that the proof is in the numbers. So let's look at some numbers.

49 state representatives, 26 state senators, seven statewide officials, three public service commissioners, plus hundreds of county commissioners, mayor, and city council members.

So what do those numbers mean?

- It means millions of dollars for the Kalispell bypass
- It means 500,000 acres of public land won't be auctioned off

- It means 18,000 good-paying highway jobs
- It means zero destructive mines in Canada

But what it means most to me right now is 12,000.

12,000, nearly double the population of Whitefish, is the number of kids who would get the health insurance they need and deserve under my plan to expand the Children's Health Insurance Program.

If there is one program that represents the best of policy, and the best of humanity, it would be CHIP. CHIP will give kids in Yak, and Eureka, in Columbia Falls and Kalispell, the ability to get check-ups and immunizations.

And these are the building blocks that will help them lead successful, happy, healthy lives. And this is all because of Democrats.

Democrats like Dan Weinberg who worked with Governor Schweitzer to increase CHIP eligibility in Montana, and Democrats like Jon Tester who stood with me as we fought for more funding in the United States Senate.

This week Congress passed my plan to increase CHIP by \$35 billion. But you know what President Bush is saying? That's right, he says he'll veto our CHIP bill. President Bush isn't a fan of CHIP.

Well, neither am I. I'm not a fan of CHIP. I'm a rabid, huge fan of CHIP, and if President Bush gets his way not only will 12,000 kids be denied coverage, 3,500 kids who rely on CHIP will lose their coverage.

Well I'm here to tell you that the president is going to be in for a rude awakening if he thinks that we are just going to roll over and turn our backs on our children. The President tried to back me down once before. He tried to get me to support his plan to privatize Social Security.

But we sent him packing. So, if he tries to play politics with our kids lives, we are going to send him packing again, and get our kids covered.

Closing

We're proud to be Democrats. We've had some great victories and accomplished some great things. But we must keep pushing forwards. Tonight we've talked a lot about numbers, and there is one more I want to throw out at you: 402.

That's how many days are left till the next election, and it's up to us to make sure even more Democrats get elected. You can bet for the next 10,200 hours I am going to be going like a gang buster, knocking doors, pounding signs, whatever it takes. Will you join me? I know it seems like a long way off, but remember 12,000 children are counting on us.