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## 61st Montana Legislative Assembly

Max S. Baucus

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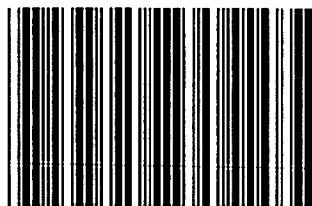
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BAUCUS

**U.S. Senator Max Baucus**

**Remarks to the 61st Montana Legislative**

**Assembly**

**February 18, 2009**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

Good afternoon.

Mr. Speaker. Mr. President. Members of the House  
and Senate. Visitors joining us in the gallery.

Distinguished guests:

- Lt. Governor Bohlinger
- State Auditor Monica Lindeen
- Superintendent Denise Juneau

-Secretary of State Linda McCullough

-Attorney General Steve Bullock

-Members of the Supreme Court

**JEAN:**

But perhaps the most distinguished guest here today is the person who raised me. She taught me the values of hard work, faith, community and doing what's right. My mother, Jean Baucus. Hi Mom!

It's good to be back here. I have very fond memories of this chamber. I'm glad to see Representative Jopek is still sitting at my old desk. Thanks Mike for your continued service.

## **CONDOLENCES:**

[George Groesbeck:] Looking out at many familiar faces, one that is sadly not here is our old friend, George Groesbeck. George was such a great guy. It's no surprise that he was liked by folks on both sides of the aisle. Just a solid Butte guy. His passing was a tragedy felt by all. We thank Art Noonan for stepping in to serve.

[Donna Metcalf:] Another pillar who is no longer with us is Donna Metcalf. She was a true Montana woman, who we all loved and respected.

## **A GRAVE SITUATION:**

As we gather here today, we do so with a somber determination -- aware of the turmoil that face our towns, our state, and our great nation. Montana and America faces a grave situation.

I know you hear it when you go into coffee shops in Plains and Plentywood, and you see it when you pass by abandoned construction sites in Scobey and Somers.

But this isn't the first time our nation has been challenged. And each time we have risen with grit and determination.

- When President Roosevelt looked upon tired, hungry people stricken by poverty he didn't see despair, but a challenge to the American spirit.
- When President Kennedy looked upon the moon high in space he didn't see an insurmountable obstacle, but a challenge to American ingenuity.
- When President Reagan looked upon a massive concrete wall denying people freedom, he didn't see defeat but a challenge to American fortitude.

And as citizens went back to work. As Neil Armstrong took one small step. As people united by freedom tore down the wall.

Our nation once again reminded the world why we are the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And today our nation faces yet another challenge. And yet again, I am confident we will rise and history will note that we as Americans and Montanans met this challenge with a fierce determination.

### **JOBS Bill**

There is no denying that our nation is facing the largest economic trial in 80 years. Since this recession began, across the country 3.6 million mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, wives and husbands, have lost their jobs.



Companies that have been pillars to our economy have been forced to cut jobs in record numbers:

- Caterpillar announced it cut 20,000 jobs
- Microsoft has cut 5,000
- Even Harley Davidson had to let go more than 1,000 employees.
- The list goes on.

Did you know the number of people who attended the Super Bowl in Tampa was less than the number of people who lost their jobs the week before?

That's more than 70,000 Americans.

And we have felt it right here in Montana, too.

Recently we have lost:

- 1434 jobs from outfitters and hotels
- 985 manufacturing jobs
- 722 jobs from places like Applebees and Dairy Queen
- 711 jobs for carpenters, contractors, and engineers
- 452 jobs from places like Home Depot and Safeway.

And too many more to name.

Sometimes in public service we can become numb to numbers.

But I want you to think for a moment about a friend, a family member, or a neighbor who lost their job. Think about how hard it must be knowing you just cashed your last paycheck – with a family at home who depends on you.

But, as legislators, we have the power to change that. Not only do we have the power, we are obligated to change that. We are just the hired hands. We must act to jumpstart our economy.

Representative Steenson recognized this with her Jobs Recovery Resolution here in the House. Cheryl, stand up so we can thank you. Stand up so the many Montanans who've lost their jobs can thank you.

## **11,000 JOBS:**

I've been using my position to help meet this challenge as well.

I worked 'round the clock on the jobs bill that President Obama signed yesterday. Not everyone agreed on the final package. Negotiations were tense at times. At one point I thought Rahm Emanuel, the White House Chief of Staff, and I were going to have a fist-to-cuffs.

But one thing is clear: The economic recovery and jobs bill will provide the jolt our economy needs. This bill will pump \$626 million into our economy right here in Montana. \$626 million.

That's almost half of the state's annual budget, as you well know.

But more importantly, it will protect or create 11,000 jobs here at home.

That means 11,000 of those friends, family members, or neighbors you talked to will have a job.

That means 11,000 families won't have to worry about how they will pay for groceries, or the heating bill.

11,000 breadwinners won't have to toss and turn in bed worried about providing for the little ones sleeping in the next bedroom.

But mostly, it means that 11,000 people will feel the sense of dignity and accomplishment that comes with holding down a good-paying job.

In November, you -- well at least 73 percent of you --voted for me to continue representing you in our nation's capitol.

With that came a responsibility that I cannot deny, a sense of honor that I cannot describe, and a call to action that we cannot ignore. That call was to continue to create good-paying jobs and keep propelling our economy.

And, working with Senator Tester -- who is not only one of the best Senator's in the Senate, but also one of the best people in the Senate -- we helped craft this Jobs legislation that will give our state the jumpstart it so desperately needs.

We crafted legislation that will build roads and water projects. A jobs bill that will put shovels back to work.

We crafted legislation that will provide:

- \$212 million dollars to keep our highways safe.
- \$39 million dollars to provide clean water to rural areas
- \$38 million dollars to modernize more than 400 schools

We crafted legislation that will put more money in people's pockets through tax cuts that will help send more kids to college, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and help people retire.

But more importantly we crafted legislation that is right for Montana.

Now we began the process of making sure those dollars are spent on Main Streets in Montana – the right way..... right away.

It seems the number one question on your minds right now is how these dollars are going to flow to Montana. As you know, those details are still being hammered out.



But I have no doubt that Montana – all of you, Governor Schweitzer, and our capable state agencies – will hit the ground running.

While this common-sense bill was critically necessary, it is not a silver bullet, or a cure-all for our economic ills.

This bill was necessary but not sufficient. It's one leg of a three-legged stool. The other two being addressing the housing crisis and freeing up credit. It's a solid start. But there are still many long days ahead of us.

People will grow tired of being tired.

People will grow weary of being weary.

But like the miners of Butte, the farmers and ranchers who homesteaded here, or Lewis and Clark who prevailed through sheer willpower – so too will we.

We will prevail.

With the strain of our backs, the calluses of our hands, and the sweat of our brow, we will pass on an even better state to our children with hope and promise.

Our children. The next generation. That is why we enter public service. That is why parents work night shifts. So we can give our children a better life than we had.

## **CHIP**

Amidst all of the dark clouds surrounding our economy, there is one bright ray of sunshine. And that's our effort to cover more kids under the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Health care is as essential to kid's futures as learning the ABCs. I'm sure if you asked any pediatrician, any teacher, any parent, they would tell you that a healthy child is more likely to get a good education. And a good education is the key to our economic future.

Earlier I talked about three great Presidents, three great individuals who changed our nation and our world at pivotal moments in history.

Yet, Roosevelt overcame polio, Kennedy battled a litany of illnesses his entire life, heck even the Gipper probably had a few bumps and bruises along the way. But they all were able to get the care they needed, and go on to accomplish great things.

But what if they wouldn't have had access to quality health care? How would our nation be different today?

## **Not a CHIP Fan:**

You know, I have a confession to make. I'm not a fan of CHIP. . . .

I'm not a fan. I'm a BIG fan. I'm a fanatical fan of CHIP.

But, seriously, CHIP is a real program that helps real families who really need it.

## **PITMAN FAMILY:**

The Pitman family is just one example. Stephanie and her husband, Travis, are small business owners – they run a day care here in Helena. They work hard day in and day out, but don't make enough to afford private insurance for their kids.

Patterson who is 8 and Corbin who is 4.

Yet, because of CHIP their youngsters are able to get the check-ups that they need to grow healthy. Travis isn't here today---- he's managing their daycare business -- but Stephanie, Patterson and Corbin are here today. Stand up, guys, so we can thank you!

I helped create CHIP in 1997, and it has since become one of the most successful programs we have ever undertaken.

Since 1997, CHIP has helped 51,000 kids in Montana. And we're just getting started.

There are still 34,000 kids in Montana without health insurance. That is 34,000 too many.

**The CHIP DEAL:**

For those of you who were here last session, in 2007, I took my few minutes up here to offer you a deal.

I said that I would use my chairmanship of the Senate Finance Committee to expand CHIP in Washington -- if you would expand it here in Helena.

I was proud to learn that you upheld your end of the deal in 2007, by expanding CHIP eligibility from 150 percent of the poverty level to 175 percent. For that, I congratulate you.

As for my end of the deal. Well.... it took a while.

There is the old saying that Rome wasn't built in a day. That was sure true for CHIP.

It took more than two years. It was vetoed twice. And let me tell you, it wasn't easy.

But, two weeks ago today, I stood proudly over President Obama's shoulder as he signed my bill to expand CHIP!

And as I watched him sign the legislation, I cannot describe the sense a pride that I felt. It's something that I've felt very few times in my life.



It wasn't pride of authorship, it was pride in knowing that thousands of children in Montana -- maybe even a future President of the United States -- will be able to live a healthy life because of the work we did.

As a public servant, that is the greatest reward there is. Bar none.

### **I-55**

However, we're not done yet. Last November, Montanans overwhelmingly approved Initiative 55, the healthy kids initiative. I voted for it, too, because once I-55 is fully implemented and funded, we will cut the number of uninsured Montanans by 90 percent.

To state it another way, we'll make sure that 30,000 more kids get health insurance.

I want to thank Representative Hunter for his great work on this. Chuck is working to fund the I-55 expansion. Thank you, Chuck.

While we have made good progress covering our children, we're not done yet. One of my top priorities is making sure that every American has access to quality affordable health care. It is a noble goal that many of us share.

It is a goal deeply rooted in America: bring us your tired, bring us your poor. As Montanans, we must strive to make sure that everyone has the ability to receive the care they need and deserve.

Like the old proverb says, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. And expanding CHIP and initiative 55 are good first steps in the journey of providing health care coverage to every American.

But no journey can be completed alone. I cannot do it alone, you cannot do it alone. But together, we can.

**In closing,** I want to leave you with a quote from President Kennedy.

On a cold January morning in 1961, a young president bound up to a podium on the Capitol steps with a youthful vigor, and as millions tuned in with hopes of a better tomorrow, he told them all that "In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course."

And I say to you all, the same thing today, in your hands, more than mine, rests the future of our state. Be wise. Be prudent. Serve those who have entrusted you. And as we come together, we can make Montana an even better place than it already is.

Thank you.