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Montana Rural Water Conference

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: **BAUCUS**

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Statement of Senator Max Baucus
Montana Rural Water Conference
Thursday, February, 19th, 2009
12:00 PM

Thank you for that very kind introduction. I'd also like to thank the Montana Rural Water Systems Board and its members for inviting me to speak today. It's great to be here.

At the height of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said "We think of our land and water and human resources not as static and sterile possessions but as life giving assets to be directed by wise provisions for future days." Much like when President Roosevelt spoke, Montana and the country are facing difficult economic times.

Unemployment in Montana climbed by almost 4000 jobs over the last year. Construction unemployment alone rose by over 2000 jobs. These job losses are devastating to families and communities.

We can learn a great deal from the words and actions of President Roosevelt. When the country faced even more dire economic circumstances in the 1930s and 1940s, President Roosevelt pulled our country out of depression by investing in this country's infrastructure. He built roads, bridges, and dams like Ft. Peck that continue to be a source of economic growth to this day.

Following on the example of President Roosevelt, Congress recently passed the Jobs Bill, which will invest \$789 billion in infrastructure and tax cuts. One of the best infrastructure investments we can make is in water infrastructure.

Investing in our water infrastructure creates good paying jobs, provides clean drinking water for our families, and helps us use our water resources more wisely. That's why I worked to include nearly \$13 billion dollars for water infrastructure in the recently passed Jobs Bill.

This money will go to good programs that many of you use to help fund your drinking and wastewater systems. Specifically, the Jobs Bill included \$1.38 billion dollars for USDA's Rural Water and Waste Water Grants and Loans Program, \$6 billion dollars for the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act State Revolving Loan Funds, and \$1 billion dollars for the Bureau of Reclamation for water projects.

So what does this mean for you? Under the Jobs Bill Montana will get an additional \$39 million for both its Clean Water State Revolving Fund and its Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. This funding will help better capitalize these funds enabling the Montana Department of Environmental Quality to make more loans to invest in Montana's water infrastructure. This is real money to create good paying jobs.

I'll also be fighting to make sure Montana gets its fair share of the grant money available through both USDA and the Bureau of Reclamation. And it's important to note that the money from the Jobs Bill is additional money, above and beyond what each of these programs will receive under the 2009 and 2010 appropriations bills.

It is obvious that all of you care very much about water. You are working hard to protect your water resources and to provide clean fresh water to people, but you need both technical and financial assistance to reach your goals. The Montana Rural Water Systems can help provide the technical assistance, but much of the financial assistance must come from the federal government. I have been working hard back in Washington to get you the money you need in the Jobs Bill.

Thank you again for inviting me to speak today. And thank you for all that you do to make Montana a better place to live, work, and raise a family. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year.