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Billings Downtown Exchange Club Monthly Lunch (2)

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Remarks before the Billings Downtown Exchange Club Monthly Lunch
Tuesday, August 10, 2010

***You will be introduced by Tyler Nose, president of the Downtown Exchange Club.

- Thank you Tyler and thank you all for having me here today. It's so good to be home. And thank you for making some time in your schedule to include me in your meeting.
- You've all done great work in this community to support law enforcement and student achievement. I know that as partners with the Billings police department, you're helping their efforts to help stop underage drinking and make our kids safer, and more responsible.
- One of the things I've worked hard on in the Senate is something called the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program, or HIDTA ("Hide-uh"). I fought to restore funding for this program, which has shown to be very innovative and efficient in battling illegal drugs on Montana streets.
- HIDTA ("Hide-uh") partners state, local, tribal and federal law enforcement and criminal justice agencies to crackdown on drug-trafficking and money laundering organizations.
- HIDTA programs in Montana have been successful in leading the fight against methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs. And actually, my work on HIDTA ("Hide-uh") started right here in Billings, years ago.
- Here in Billings, your Police Chief, Rich St. John, has also agreed that HIDTA is doing good things for the community. In the last five years, HIDTA initiatives have seized \$2.6 billion in cash and \$1.2 billion in other assets.
- It's a big win for community safety so we can continue to make Montana an even better place to live, work and raise a family.
- And a very important part of that is making sure we are growing Montana's economy and creating good-paying jobs so folks can continue to live and work here.
- Montana has weathered this recession better than a lot of places, but we still feel it here, particularly mining, lumber and construction industries. We've stopped taking for granted the abundant jobs and prosperity we had gotten so used to.
- And in this time of economic recovery, that's when it's my job to work even harder to help working Montana families. To make sure folks have the opportunities they deserve. To make sure Montanans have good jobs with decent benefits – because everyone deserves the opportunity to work hard and take care of their family.

- That's why I have been fighting to pass billions of dollars in tax cuts for middle-class families and small businesses and create a tax credit for businesses who hire new workers – because the best way to grow our economy is to let hard-working Montanans keep more of their hard earned money.
- And I'll keep fighting hard for Montana families and small businesses because in Montana, we want our kids have the same or better opportunities we had as children living under the big sky.
- Montana, particularly rural Montana, has a great opportunity to lead the way in reducing America's dependence on foreign oil.
- From wind, oil and gas to solar, biomass, biodiesel and clean coal, Montana has it all.
- With new clean energy technologies we can create good-paying jobs while protecting our outdoor heritage.
- I am using my position as Chairman of the Finance Committee, which writes tax policy, to make sure Montana takes advantage of this opportunity.
- I've created numerous tax incentives designed to spark investment in the newest and cleanest energy technologies.
- As part of the most recent Farm Bill, I passed the first ever tax credit for cellulosic ethanol made from wheat stalks and other feed stocks.
- My energy tax package would also create incentives for the capture and sequestration of carbon from coal-fired power plants, and an extension of the production tax credit that helped get the wind farms near Judith Gap, Shelby and Baker off the ground.
- And it's that same spirit of leadership that is at the heart of the fine work you folks do through the Exchange Club.
- I toured MetraPark back in June when I met with local families and business owners in the wake of the devastating tornado. I saw first-hand the damage that had been done and the challenge it presented for this community.
- I also saw the spirit of folks in Billings and was nothing short of inspired by the determination to rebuild this community.
- Your organization has been a critical part of that effort already. And you will be instrumental in helping MetraPark rebound by celebrating MontanaFair and helping the community rebuild.

- Thank you all for the tremendous work you do for the Billings community and all of Montana.
- It is folks like you, and organizations like the Exchange Club, that ensure our Montana values of family, community and service will live on in the next generation and continue to make our state the best place on earth to live, work and raise a family.
- Thank you all very much for having me, and thank you for your hard work.