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Under the Big Sky Greening Conference

Max S. Baucus

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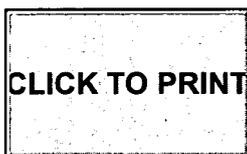
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Under the Big Sky Greening Conference Speech

Hello Everyone. Max here. Sorry I can't be with you today, Senate business has kept me in Washington.

This is a great event that you're all at today. Promoting renewable fuels and finding new ways to prevent an energy crisis from arising in the future is very important work. I commend each and everyone of you for your work.

I especially want to thank Shirley Ball. I've known Shirley for a long time. Shirley, thanks for all of your hard work and dedication in putting this conference together. You're aces!

Promoting the use of renewable fuels is very important. It's important to find home-grown solutions to lessen our nation's dependence on foreign oil. We have many fuel alternatives right in our backyard here in Montana.

I've been a proponent of renewable fuels, especially of ethanol for many years. Last year in the Farm Bill, I pushed for a measure to promote the use of ethanol. It's called the Bioenergy Program. This program will provide funding to expand the production of biodiesel and fuel grade ethanol.

I'm following the implementation of the Bioenergy Program closely and will do everything I can to make sure that program is adequately funded by Congress.

This year I've continued to work hard at promoting the use of ethanol. I worked with Senate Majority Leader Frist and Minority Leader Daschle on the renewable fuels compromise. I co-sponsored their amendment to add this important measure to the Senate Energy Bill.

I'm pleased to report the Senate approved the renewable fuels compromise for a second time late last week. This historic agreement is important to Montana as it will open new markets for our farmers. I hope the President will sign this renewable fuels compromise this year.

This compromise will stimulate the production of renewable fuels like ethanol and biodiesel across the country. And especially in Montana. This means more markets to export Montana's world-class agricultural products.

The Renewable Fuels Standard is the most important part of the compromise for ethanol. This Standard requires the nation's fuels supply to contain at least 5 billion gallons of renewable fuels, including ethanol, by 2012.

The Renewable Fuels Standard and the broader compromise, will stimulate the production of renewable fuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel, across the country. And especially in Montana. This means more markets to export Montana's world-class agricultural products.

The renewable fuels compromise is balanced. It's fair. It will strengthen our rural communities by creating more good-paying jobs. It will decrease our dependency on foreign oil. And, it will improve our environment.

As top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, I teamed up with Chairman Grassley to write the Energy Tax Incentives Act of 2003. This legislation passed out of the Finance Committee and is being debated on the Senate Floor. It contains important provisions to stimulate the production of ethanol and other renewable fuels.

For example, the small ethanol producer tax credit was extended to farmer owned cooperatives.

Also significant tax incentives were included to:

- Promote alternative fueled vehicles.**
- Encourage the construction of alternative fuel refueling stations.**
- Promote retail sale of alternative fuels.**

All of these tax incentives will help promote the use and production of ethanol.

Ensuring necessary and affordable energy supplies, including ethanol-blended motor fuels and other initiatives, is important to the quality of life and economic prosperity of all Americans.

I need your help as I continue to work on this in the Senate. I need to hear from you. Please stay in contact with me and my staff. We're happy to help in any way that we can. Remember, you are our bosses. We need to hear our marching orders.

Good luck with your conference. Get some good work done and the next time you're in Washington, please stop by my office.

All the best.