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Farm Bill Listening Session

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Talking Points
Farm Bill Listening Session-

I want to thank everyone for being here today. I know this is a busy time of year.

I want to thank (John Malia/Liz help!) for helping to set up this meeting.

It's refreshing to visit producers when commodity prices are strong and the outlook for agriculture is promising.

I don't need to tell anyone in this room that agriculture is the heart and soul our economy. It is an essential part of who we are. In Montana agriculture is not simply a livelihood – it's a way of life.

Fifty percent of our economy is tied to ranching and farming. And one in five Montana jobs is tied in some way to agriculture.

I often find that people outside of agriculture think because prices are strong that producers are taking on less risk or for some reason the markets are less volatile.

The fact of the matter is this is the time when producers are taking on the most risk.

Even with that risk, it is an exciting time in agriculture, but it is not an easy time.

Wheat prices are in the \$7.00 per bushel range, and the cattle market is strong. However, for many producers, especially ranchers', increased expenses are eating up profits.

Last week I spoke on the Senate floor about the benefits that our ranchers and farmers bring to our state, nation, and world in celebration of National Ag Week.

Because of those of you in this room we are blessed with a safe, affordable and abundant food supply.

Our farmers and ranchers put food on the tables of families around the world and they help create good-paying jobs here at home.

In 1960 the average American farmer fed 25 people every year. Today, every producer feeds 155 people throughout the world.

Our world population is growing by an estimated nine million people every year. By 2050, we will reach over nine billion people.

Ensuring that growing population has food on their table is a task that Montana farmers and ranchers stand ready to fill.

I did not come here today to talk – I came to listen. Listen about what in the Farm Bill is working and more importantly what is not.

While timing of the Farm Bill is still a bit unclear, I wanted to take this opportunity to get out in Montana's country side and hear from the boots on the ground – not the bureaucrats in Washington.

With high commodity prices it's an exciting time in agriculture. However, it's never been riskier or more difficult to begin farming than it is today.

I appreciate everybody coming out to visit and I look forward to hearing everyone's thoughts.