

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

January 31, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, District of Columbia 20500-003

Dear Mr. President:

I applaud you for highlighting in your State of the Union Address that “we need to promote homegrown, American energy.” As the United States faces this critical juncture in our energy economy, it is important that we work together on new ways to support a sustained path to steer our country toward energy independence. We also must work toward a long term plan for supporting energy jobs here at home. In Montana, the booming oilfields in the Bakken Formation are providing a multitude of opportunities as well as challenges.

The oil boom in the Bakken is fueling tens of thousands of jobs to the point where recent estimates show rural America is currently facing an actual labor shortage of around 18,000 jobs. At a time when the entire nation is asking leaders to help spur job creation, we must not lose this important opportunity to support one of the most dynamic areas for job growth in the country.

Our communities in Eastern Montana have a rich agriculture heritage that is now shifting to accommodate “man camps” that provide short term housing for oil field workers. The history of boom and bust can be rewritten, only if we provide the appropriate infrastructure to support long term jobs and the energy economy our nation both craves and needs for future security.

The communities of Eastern Montana desperately need clean water, power, roads, sewage treatment, medical services and law enforcement.

Businesses here need access to existing loan programs that will help them meet community and economic needs.

Individuals need information about federal services and programs to help them deal with a variety of issues. Residents are being crowded out of affordable housing, stuck in traffic jams, and exposed to increasing crime that comes with rapid population growth. Workers and their families need places to live, communities need to be safe and given the tools to meet infrastructure needs and businesses deserve to be given the tools to succeed while eliminating unnecessary federal process and regulation.

In many cases, there are existing federal programs that could potentially help address these needs but the nearest federal office or agency is hundreds of miles away. For example, Culbertson

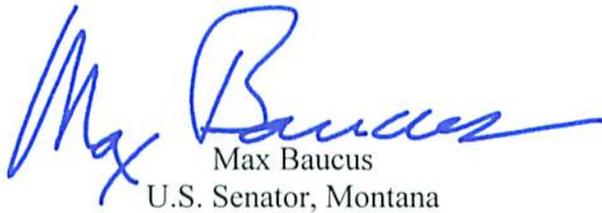
residents would have to drive five hours to the nearest USDA Rural Development office in Billings to access programs to assist with rural business and infrastructure. Those residents would also have to drive 8 hours to Helena to access the nearest Economic Development Agency office or Housing and Urban Development office. A temporary, multi-agency office in this area could go a long way towards providing timely assistance and information.

I encourage you to unleash every appropriate resource to maximize the opportunity to improve both the economics and security of America by responding to the urgent needs associated with the oil and gas boom in the region which includes Eastern Montana. The Bakken and Three Forks geologic formations hold tremendous potential to create jobs while improving both our national security and energy independence. You have the power to initiate a multi-agency approach that could reduce regulation, standardize federal program applications, leverage local resources and technical assistance and facilitate economic and job growth through streamlined oversight and access to existing programs.

This is a tremendous opportunity for the region and the country that requires a thoughtful, targeted and urgent response. Supporting economic growth in the Bakken region is not only a pressing issue for Montanans, but it is an urgent issue of national interest. Your Administration can help buttress this growth and ensure that its challenges don't undercut its blessings.

I ask you to find ways to meet the unique needs of this job-creating economic opportunity and hope you will finally respond to the chorus of voices asking for the federal government to make it easier for local businesses and communities thrive by making it easier for local folks to navigate and access existing federal programs to finance infrastructure and economic growth. I encourage you to consider mobilizing your newly created White House Rural Council to focus on policy initiatives to help address the infrastructure and economic development needs I outlined above. Furthermore, I ask you to find as many ways as possible to encourage and enable job creation in this region by decreasing regulation, streamlining applications and making assistance and information locally available. I look forward to working together toward a solution to support jobs and address these economic development challenges expeditiously.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus  
U.S. Senator, Montana