

Floor Remarks
U.S. Senator Jon Tester
December 13, 2011

PREPARED FOR DELIVERY.

Madame President, I rise today to talk about jobs and politics. There are a lot folks in Washington paying lip service to jobs and a lot of people playing politics. But it sure doesn't seem like many folks are interested in doing the hard work of creating jobs.

Folks all over Montana have been asking for good paying, living wage jobs. The kind of jobs that can't be outsourced.

Jobs that put people to work in our forests. Jobs that build the energy infrastructure that this country needs.

Right now there are two proposals that will do just that.

First, I'd like to talk about my *Forest Jobs and Recreation Act*. This bill will stabilize the wood products industry in Montana by ensuring a dependable timber supply. That will give certainty to the loggers in the woods and the workers in the mills.

This bill will allow for the restoration of 100,000 acres of National Forest lands in Montana, reducing the chances out-of-control forest fires that could devastate our communities, our watersheds, and our way of life.

Recent data released by the Forest Service shows wildfires that burned where trees were thinned, were less expensive to fight, easier to control, and did less structural damage to neighboring buildings.

This bill also puts people to work rolling up roads, improving our water quality, and protecting big game habitat. And it protects nearly a million acres for our children and grandchildren in wilderness and recreation areas.

This is a bipartisan solution, supported by industry and conservationists. It is the product of people who were on polar opposites of the issue who came together to find solutions for how we can better manage our forests. We could take a lesson from their example.

They brought those solutions to me, to Congress, to be put into law. This is a bill that will move the country in the right direction with a responsible, balanced solution. And it will create jobs.

But rather than getting this bill passed, it has become a political football in the appropriations process. Some House Republicans seem to be more concerned with their own jobs rather than creating Montana jobs by passing my Forest Jobs bill.

That isn't fair to Montanans who are anxious to get back to work. To reclaim a way of life that has been disappearing at a rapid rate. We lost over 1,700 jobs in the timber industry in 2009. And more last year. And still more this year.

I would ask the folks who are negotiating this final deal right now to think about the folks who are counting on us to set politics aside and do what's right for our country and for Montana.

That same logic applies to Keystone XL Pipeline.

Right now the President has the power to create jobs by approving this pipeline. He could make the decision to approve this pipeline in the very near future.

Now, let me be clear – he should do it right. Doing it right means approving this pipeline while respecting private property rights.

I support this pipeline. But I will never support giving any corporation - much less a foreign corporation - the right to take property from Montanans or any other Americans without a fair deal that is negotiated in good faith. Doing it right also means ensuring the highest possible safety standards are followed throughout Montana and rural America.

I do not believe we should have to wait until January of 2013 for a decision that can create American jobs right now. In Montana, we need the jobs. We need the ability to provide incentives to boost production in places where it makes the most sense—like the Bakken Formation in eastern Montana.

Many folks don't know that the Keystone Pipeline will actually include an on-ramp in Baker, Montana. That on-ramp will tap into the booming Bakken Formation. And it will ensure that we are getting the most out of an American energy resource.

That matters to our economy. And it matters to our energy and national security. The Keystone XL Pipeline will transport North American oil and help move this country away from spending a billion dollars per day in middle eastern countries who don't like us very much.

At the same time, Madame President, I am concerned about the way folks on both sides of this issue are handling things right now.

We do not need to tangle this issue up with the payroll tax in a House bill that would add more than \$25 billion more to our debt, that would cut Medicare benefits.

Folks, it is time to quit playing politics and start doing what's right.

Whether it is the Forest Jobs Act or the Keystone Pipeline, it's time to move forward, working together, to create jobs in this country.

But instead, politicians on both sides are using both these important items as political footballs. That's too bad.

We should be acting responsibly to create jobs with this pipeline and put people back to work in the woods with my bill. Instead, we're watching political maneuvering designed to score points rather than create jobs.

And we all know that when this is how Washington acts, the people who lose are hard working Americans and Montanans who just want to go back to work. They want to build and maintain the infrastructure that powers and protects America.

I am proud to again offer my support for the Keystone XL pipeline and the jobs it will create.

We need a quicker decision, based on the merits of this project.

After setting aside their differences and working together to protect our forests Montanans also deserve the passage of the *Forest Jobs and Recreation Act*. Instead of irresponsible partisan fights, it is time that Congress finally take a page from those who constructed the Forest Jobs Bill.

They set aside nearly 30 years of partisan bickering to find solutions where everyone gives and little and gains a lot.

It's the right thing to do.

I yield the floor.

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