

From the Desk of Jon Tester...

Dear Cattle Producer,

As someone who makes his living in agriculture, I understand the vital role the cattle industry plays in our state and national economy. I firmly believe that support of Montana's and America's family cattle producers should be taken very seriously at all levels of government, including the United States Senate.

I believe my background and record demonstrates my commitment to independent family cattle producers like you. Having raised cattle and operated a custom butcher shop, I understand the problems and challenges family producers like you face each and every day.

As a member of the Montana State Senate, I worked hard to protect the interests of cattle and beef producers in this state. During the 2001 legislative session, I introduced a bill requiring Country of Origin placarding on meat and produce sold in Montana. While the bill did not survive, under my leadership as Senate President in 2005 we were able to pass COOL legislation. I was also instrumental in passing several measures to help protect the Montana beef industry from the devastating effects of BSE.

As your next United States Senator, you have my word that I will continue to be an outspoken advocate for the issues of importance to our nation's independent beef producers.

We need leaders in Washington who will help American family agriculture, including our cattle producers. In 2003 alone, captive cattle supplies cost family farmers more than \$1.4 billion. We need to work to ensure increased competition in the cattle market. As your voice in Washington, I will support measures like The Captive Supply Reform Act, which would be a good first step to ensure fair competition by requiring that contracts and agreements have fixed base prices.

Those of us who work in agriculture know we live in an era of global markets. But there's a heck of a lot of difference between so-called "free" trade and fair trade. For family producers like me, there has to be a level playing field. Our business is tough and unpredictable enough without having to run further and further uphill every time Congress passes a new trade agreement.

The recent passage of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) is but the latest example of how multi-lateral trade agreements can hurt the American cattle industry and Montana producers. CAFTA disallows special safeguards for U.S. cattle while allowing Costa Rica and Nicaragua to use special safeguards to prevent the importation of U.S. beef and live cattle. And, by encouraging foreign investment, our new trading partners will upgrade both herd size and slaughter capacity, allowing them to increase beef exports to the U.S. CAFTA also allows established beef exporting nations like Brazil and Argentina to ship finished cattle to Central America to be slaughtered and shipped to the United States.

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It is way past time Montana's and America's independent cattle producers had a real advocate in the United States Senate. I believe my commitment to your industry speaks for itself. And while my opponent Senator Burns talks about his commitment to your industry, I believe his record illustrates something very different. Take Country of Origin labeling: While Sen. Burns voted for federal COOL labeling in 2002, he has worked hard to delay implementation for over three years!

As a third-generation farmer from Big Sandy, and as someone who understands the struggles you face to make a living, I am respectfully asking for your vote on November 7th.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jon Tester

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