

## Delegation answers 'What now?'

**Question:** With the elections over, Montanans, indeed all Americans, are wondering, "What now?" How do you expect the results of the Presidential and Congressional elections to affect the country as a whole and Montana in particular?



### By Representative Denny Rehberg

**M**ontanans have a lot to look forward to over the next four years, including continued economic growth, a new highway bill, and sweeping energy legislation.

Thanks to the policies of the past several years, Montana enjoys the fourth largest job

growth of any state so far this year. In fact, Montana has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, just 4.4 percent compared to the national average of 5.6 percent.

A couple of the bills in the works show tremendous promise to Montana. The energy bill, which we approved in the House this last session, has so much to offer future generations of Americans. As I often say, every day the United States goes without a long-term, comprehensive energy policy, we contribute to an energy debt the next

generation will have to pay unless we act now. Passing this vital plan will help our country prepare for new energy alternatives while lowering our heavy dependence on foreign oil. The bill, which I helped craft, encourages the development of alternative and renewable energy sources, such as ethanol and wind power. Passing the energy bill, once and for all, will be good for the country and great for energy-rich Montana.

Another bill that holds promise for Montanans is the Transportation Equity Act, (H.R. 3550), commonly known as the highway bill. As a member of the House-Senate Conference Committee charged with hammering out the six-year reauthorization plan, I can't begin to tell you how important this bill is to Montana. With \$1 billion that will fund Montana's transportation needs to the end of the decade, plus funding to pave Highway 323 and build the Kalispell western bypass, I'm committed to seeing this bill approved by both houses of Congress and signed into law.



### By Senator Max Baucus

**A** lot has happened this fall that Montanans and Americans alike will benefit from. In Congress, we were successful in passing legislation that will help make Montanans and Montana companies better.

As the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, the panel with jurisdiction over taxes, I worked together with Chairman Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) to write and pass the JOBS bill, legislation designed to provide tax relief for Montana's small businesses.

One provision I included in the bill was specifically for the rural electric co-ops. The so-called 85/15 provision will allow rural electric cooperatives to participate in today's markets without having to lose their tax exempt status. This is good news for Montana's electric co-ops.

In addition to getting the JOBS bill passed and signed by

the President, I also helped write and pass agriculture disaster assistance for Montana's farmers and ranchers. Our producers have suffered consecutive years of drought and I wanted to help ensure they received the assistance they deserved.

There have been a lot of successes, but there's still work to be done. As we look toward the next Congress and President Bush's second term, I'm committed to working together with my colleagues in Congress and the Administration. Some of my top priorities will be to work on and help pass a transportation bill to create more good-paying jobs to boost our state's economy, help pass a common-sense energy bill, fully fund our vital education programs and work to cleanup Libby and the mess that W.R. Grace left behind.

As Montana's senior senator, I'm committed to working together with Conrad, Denny and Governor-elect Brian Schweitzer to make Montana an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

*Senator Conrad Burns did not reply this month.*