

Delegation's committee positions important for Montana

Question: *Members of Montana's Congressional delegation hold important positions on committees in Congress. What committee positions do you hold and how do they enable you to better serve the nation and Montana?*



By Representative Denny Rehberg

This is now my third term in Congress. Having begun by serving on the House Agriculture, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Resources committees, this year I was promoted to the powerful House Appropriations Committee upon recommendation by House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL).

The Appropriations Committee is an exclusive panel, meaning members may serve on no other committees. The committee controls one-third of the federal government's \$2.5 trillion budget, writes each of the annual spending bills, and has a major stake in nearly every issue that comes before Congress.

Landing this post is obviously good for Montana. I

asked to be on the House Appropriations Committee because the appointment gives me an ability to take care of important Montana priorities, and it allows me to help bring some added fiscal discipline and restraint to the federal budget.

Actually, it's not my first experience with appropriations. Twenty years ago, I served as an appropriator as a member of the Montana House of Representatives. A group of us on the committee fought to bring fiscal accountability to state government. It worked: We helped balance the budget while at the time resisting attempts to raise taxes.

With projects like Going-to-the-Sun road, maintaining Montana's essential air service, preserving Amtrak's Empire Builder across the state, implementing Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) and passing yet another energy bill, I'll have an even greater ability to weigh in on these important issues.



By Senator Max Baucus

As I represent the great state of Montana, my number one priority is and always has been to boost our state's economy by creating good-paying jobs and bringing new businesses to our state. I'm honored that I've had the great pleasure to represent the people of

Montana for 30 years in Congress. Now that I've spent some time in Congress, I've built up some seniority and that puts me in an even better position to serve my 900,000 bosses in Montana and to help achieve my goal of boosting our state's economy.

Recently, I was appointed to the top Democratic seat on the Senate panel that controls highway construction funding. I'm now the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, which means I'll be one of the members helping to write the new Senate highway bill. Montana is a highways state. Highways are our lifeblood. We rely on safe, efficient roads to travel around our state for business and to visit friends and family. They're also a large source of jobs for Montana. The last highway bill, which I helped write, brought a 60 percent increase in Montana's share of highway dollars, funds that

helped sustain more than 11,000 good-paying jobs in the state. While writing the new highway bill, I hope to bring even more highway dollars to our state.

And as the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, the panel that has jurisdiction over health care and trade issues, in addition to transportation funding, I'm working to provide access to quality, affordable health care for all Montanans and open up new markets for Montana's high quality agriculture products. I'm committed to working together with my colleagues in Congress to reduce the number of uninsured and prevent drastic cuts to Medicaid and other programs that provide health care for low-income or disabled people. On the trade front, last year, I helped our state complete an historical \$10 million ag deal. And this year, I helped us secure one for \$15 million. In addition to Cuba, I led trade delegations to Japan, Shanghai and Taiwan and had a trade delegation from Shanghai visit Montana. Once they saw how dedicated and hard working Montanans are, I knew they'd see what a great place Montana is to do business.

Last, but certainly not least, I'm a senior member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Agriculture is the backbone of our state's economy and my position on the Agriculture Committee enables me to help protect our agriculture

By Senator Max Baucus (cont'd)

industry. I'm in a good position to work together with the Administration on issues that are important to our producers – issues like ensuring that the decision to open our borders to Canadian beef and cattle is based on sound science and transparency, implementing country-of-origin labeling the way it was intended and to open new markets for Montana's

world class products.

Whatever I do in Congress, I do so measured with one yardstick – to do what's right for Montana. It's been an honor to serve the people of Montana for the past 30 years and I look forward to continue doing so during the 109th Congress.



By Senator Conrad Burns

Any law born in Congress, be it one that establishes a budget for the United States, or one that enacts healthy reform of the nation's Social Security system, begins in a committee. It's here that the rubber truly meets the road; where

experience with an industry, or in a field, is utilized to better the lives of the American people. For the 109th Congress, my two most important Committee assignments are my positions with the Senate Commerce Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The Commerce Committee is the body within the U.S. Senate that manages all aspects of interstate commerce, technology and transportation. In the upcoming session, my work as chairman of the committee's Subcommittee on Aviation will allow me to manage the policies for important programs such as Essential Air Service (EAS), which ensures continued operation and improvement of our nation's most rural, underserved airports. In a state like our own, where so few towns are spread throughout so many square miles, EAS allows Montana to maintain rapid access to larger aviation networks and medical facilities, along with trade and travel into and out of our borders. This assignment also puts me in a position to work with and improve the state of our nation's railways, e-commerce and emergency response systems like e-911.

The Constitution grants the "power of the purse" to Congress. The budget process is made up of a number of steps that take place separately, but are very much coordinated to create a fine tuned and balanced budget that allows the annual appropriations process to take place, which bring funding from the steps of the Capitol in Washington, DC, to the doorsteps of our cities, from Dillon to Sidney and everywhere in between. As a member of the Senate Appro-

priations Committee, I have the responsibility of representing Montana throughout this process on this side of the Hill, and every step has important implications for our state. During my time in the Senate, I have worked as a senior member of the committee and in my position as Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman to bring over \$1 billion to the state of Montana, appropriations that would not be possible without the coordination of the various stages that make up the budget process.

The appropriations bills that pass through Congress fund programs across every branch of government, and often allow for the continuation of projects from year to year, setting aside funding for programs that would not be able to succeed without it. This funding is overseen by the Full Appropriations Committee, which is divided into 13 subcommittees, each of which has jurisdiction over funding for their particular agencies. These subcommittees work within the guidelines set by the Congressional budget resolution to allocate federal funds to the numerous government agencies, departments and organizations on an annual basis. Once all 13 bills are completed at the subcommittee level, they are reviewed by the Full Appropriations Committee, voted on in the Senate and the House. Then, they move to the President to be signed into law.

Now is the time for you to be in touch with one of my offices concerning essential funds for the next fiscal year. Whether you're in Billings or Bearcreek, my staff can be of assistance during this time with questions or concerns regarding the budget and appropriations processes. In my role as United States Senator over the past 16 years, I have worked to make sure our state receives the same benefits that more urban states receive. This goal is no different in my roles on the Commerce and Appropriations Committees. As we move forward in the coming months, and our economy continues to improve, I will continue in this effort to bring the very best to our Big Sky State.