November 23, 2015

The Honorable R. Gil Kerlikowske
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Commissioner Kerlikowske:

We write to express our opposition to the Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) decision to reduce the operating hours at the Port of Raymond in Northeast Montana. Terminating the Port of Raymond's 24-hour status would create costly route diversions and impair the flow of goods in an important economic corridor. We therefore stand with local elected leaders, including Montana State Senator John Brenden and Sheridan County Commissioners Bill Nyby, Keith Clawson, and Bob Nikolaisen, in urging CBP to reverse this shortsighted decision.

We understand that CBP plans to eliminate the midnight to 8:00 a.m. shift as early as next month. This is particularly concerning considering that the Port of Raymond is one of three major border crossings that are part of the commercial "Ports-to-Plains" trade corridor and the only port in the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway, a congressionally delegated high priority corridor. Further, reducing the hours at the Port of Raymond would create significant hurdles for local businesses, because the closest port with 24 hour entry is more than 90 miles away. The looming decision would also leave a gap of more than 500 miles between 24-hour ports on the U.S.-Canada border, which would likewise create costly impediments to commerce and slow economic activity.

As voices for Montana in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives we are strongly concerned that reducing hours at the Port of Raymond will have adverse impacts on both the rural community and on the broader economy. Accordingly, we urge CBP to suspend any final decisions on this proposal until more options can be considered. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

STEVE DAINES
United States Senator

RYAN ZINKE
United States Representative