

STEVE DAINES
MONTANA

320 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-2651

United States Senate

COMMITTEES
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND
FORESTRY
APPROPRIATIONS
ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
INDIAN AFFAIRS

February 27, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

Congratulations on your confirmation to be the next Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce. As you take on this important role, I would like to extend a formal invitation to visit Montana and see our innovative and thriving business community.

As we have discussed, agricultural and manufactured exports are critical to Montana's jobs and economy. Annually in Montana, agriculture supports over \$5 billion in economic activity, over \$1.5 billion from exports, and over 27,000 Montana farms and ranches. Similarly, manufacturing supports over \$3 billion in economic activity, over \$1 billion from exports, and more than 18,000 jobs. Improving our competitiveness through reduction of regulatory burdens and expanding access to foreign markets for our Nation's agricultural and manufactured goods is a top priority.

While the unemployment rate in Montana is lower than the national average, we are well below the national average at 48th in annual wages per employee, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. We need to focus on creating good-paying jobs. According to the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER), manufacturing jobs in Montana pay an average of 17% higher wages than non-manufacturing jobs. Regulatory reform will play a critical role in reducing the cost of manufacturing and be a catalyst for job creation.

Additionally, over the past generation, harvests on federal forests in Montana are down over 70%, the number of Montana mills has fallen from 30 to eight, and we have seen a 40% reduction in the wood products workforce. While excessive regulations and chronic litigation from fringe groups are largely responsible for this decline, unfairly subsidized Canadian softwood lumber imports have also had a significant impact on Montana jobs. I urge you to work to establish a fair and effective softwood lumber agreement with Canada. If that does not occur and as the related U.S. industry trade case moves forward, please utilize appropriate trade remedies to the greatest extent possible.

I look forward to working closely with you to reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses, increase their global competitiveness, be prudent stewards of tax payer's resources, and develop sustained economic and job growth, as well as hosting you in Montana.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator