

TOGETHER, FAMILIES IN MONTANA CAN DO BETTER

Today, American families are struggling because the Bush White House and the most corrupt Congress in history have failed to focus on America's priorities. The basic American values we all share are not being honored: honesty and integrity in our government, economic prosperity, a strong national defense, a health care system that works for everyone, fiscal responsibility, and a strong public education system. Democrats are united, focused and totally committed to taking the bold steps necessary so that American families can rebuild the communities that are the heart of our democracy. Together we can stand for honesty, hard work, respect, and opportunity for all Americans. Together, families in Montana can do better.

American Jobs That Will Stay in America. Over 2800 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Montana, with 18385 looking for work. [BLS, 1/06] Family income has dropped by \$1,966 since 2000. [CPS, 10/05] But Republicans have missed every opportunity to jump-start our economy, instead insisting that our economy has turned the corner. Democrats would promote prosperity by creating new jobs, enacting middle class tax relief, and rewarding companies that create jobs here at home.

Lowering Energy Costs and Our Dependence on Foreign Oil. Home heating oil prices are expected to increase by 63 percent in Montana's region of the country as compared to prices in 2000, and gas prices have increased by 36 cents in Montana since May of 2004, an increase of 17 percent. [EIA, 1/06; AAA Fuel Gauge Report, 1/06 and 5/04] Republicans have failed to address high energy costs, passing an energy bill with billions of dollars in subsidies for big oil and gas companies. Democrats are fighting to lower energy costs and decrease dependence on foreign oil.

Balancing the Budget. The national debt has increased to \$8 trillion, but instead of returning to fiscal sanity, Republicans are preparing to force through an extension of the capital gains and dividends tax break that would provide the wealthiest one percent of the families in Montana with a tax cut worth \$8,345 in 2010, while the middle 20 percent of taxpayers, with an average income of \$39,600, would get \$137. [CTJ, 11/18/05] Democrats will demand accountability from Congress by restoring fiscal responsibility.

Strong National Defense. Over 1,571 brave men and women from Montana are serving their country in Afghanistan and Iraq. [DOD Legal Residence/ Home of Record for Service Members Deployed, 1/06] But Republicans failed to provide members of our military with the resources and equipment they need to complete their mission successfully and come home safe. They have shut 5,257 veterans in Montana out of the VA health care system completely. [VHA Policy & Forecasting 2/24/03, Projected to FY2005] And they refused to end the Disabled Veterans Tax, passing a false promise of a plan that undermines a secure retirement for 1786 veterans in Montana. [Veterans Administration / Democratic Leader's Office, 6/05] Democrats would enhance our national security with a strong military, sound diplomatic alliances, new resources for our first responders, and tighter security at our ports.

Health Care System That Works for Everyone. There are 174,000 people without health insurance in Montana, a 24,000 increase since 2000. [CPS, 10/05] During that time, the cost of health insurance has increased by \$838 – a 49 percent increase. [KFF 2005; MEPS 2005] But Republicans have refused to take action to lower health care costs. Democrats would create a health care system that works for everyone by lowering the cost of health care and eliminating tax loopholes so everyone pays their fair share.

Strong Public Education. Because Republicans have failed to provide promised funding for education reforms, 10,270 children in Montana have gone without help in reading and math and 8,881 have gone without after-school programs that boost academic achievement and keep kids safe. [CRS, 1/2006] If we want American jobs to stay in America, we have to have more American children succeeding in sciences, math and literacy. Democrats would provide opportunity through high quality early childhood education, strong public schools, and affordable college education.

Retirement Security. Social Security provides financial security and peace of mind to 161,580 people in Montana. [NWLC 2/05] President Bush and Republicans in Congress tried to undermine the guarantee of Social Security for people in Montana, but Democrats fought back to protect Social Security for everyone.

