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## State-Tribal Relations Committee

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### 60th Montana Legislature

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DAWN FIELD, Secretary

February 8, 2008

The Honorable Max Baucus  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510-2602

Dear Senator Baucus:

The State-Tribal Relations Committee of the 60th Montana Legislature supports action as soon as possible by Congress on the water compacts that the Montana Legislature has approved with the Crow Tribe and the Fort Belknap Tribe and anticipates approving with the Blackfeet Tribe.

Approval of these compacts and the associated federal funding requested as part of the compact settlements will help all our citizens and avoid costly litigation. The State of Montana already has put \$15 million into an escrow account, which is accruing interest, for the Crow Tribe. For the Fort Belknap tribe, Montana has set aside \$9.5 million in bonding authority for its share of the costs of the compact. The 60th Legislature approved \$15 million toward the Blackfeet Compact. The State-Tribal Relations Committee stresses the importance of Congressional action to approve the compacts and provide additional funding to help implement needed water projects on as well as near reservations.

The settlement that each of the tribes is requesting from Congress involves millions of dollars in one-time appropriations for drinking water, irrigation, and other water projects. They are in addition to projects already under way to improve infrastructure and water distribution and use in Montana. These projects, such as the Dry Prairie Project and the Rocky Boy North Central Project, need additional funding. All these projects have positive ripple effects throughout the economy of Montana, as was recently verified by a report in the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research money spent by tribes or on reservations.

It is time for Congress to act so that the Crow Nation, the Fort Belknap Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation can take action. The State-Tribal Relations Committee hopes that you and Montana's other members of Congress will work to get these Compacts on a fast track for approval. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Senator Frank Smith  
Presiding Officer, State Tribal Relations Committee

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