

July 6, 2010

Honorable Senator Kent Conrad and Members of the Committee,

My name is J R Gibbens. I am the past Mayor of Cando with 24 years experience on the City Governing Board, the past President of Towner County Economic Development Board and on the Board of Directors, and the past President of the North Dakota Pork Council and on the Board of Directors. I am the owner operator of a 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation family farm that has seeded its' 128<sup>th</sup> consecutive crop. I am a stock holder in Sky Can Ltd, a company that is a 6000 head sow (farrow to finish) swine production loop. I also do the Human Resource work for our fifty plus employees within the six agricultural entities I am involved.

The Towner County EDC was organized 30 plus years ago to create jobs, retain existing businesses, recruit new businesses and residents, and support community development projects that make Towner County a good place to live, work, and play. We have partnered with regional, state, and federal entities to leverage limited resources to fulfill our mission to *"interdependently promote the stable growth of population and jobs in the region."*

Most of the first few months of the organization's life centered around assisting Leonard Gasparre in locating a pasta milling and processing plant in Cando. That plant still operates today, and relies as extensively on good transportation now as it did back then. Noodles by Leonardo has been joined by Sky Can Ltd and many other small businesses and farms in our community who also rely heavily on a good transportation network to get supplies and commodities in and out of the community.

Cando is located at the junction of US Highway 281 and ND Highway 17. Hwy 281 is the major north/south highway in east central North Dakota. Hwy 281, like many other roads, has been plagued by the relentless 17 year 28 foot plus rise in Devils Lake. It is very important to keep this road open without any lower than normal load restrictions. The relocation of Hwy 281 west of Minnewaukan should keep that section open. A grade raise north of the junction of US Hwy 2 and 281 should be given the highest priority. Hwy 281 shares a common road bed with US 52 from Jamestown to Carrington and this should be four lanes the entire way. The feeder highways such as Hwy 17 west of Cando should have the weight loads increased to the same as Highway 281 and 2 so we can legally get loads in and out of our trade area.

In order to maintain and grow our economy here in central North Dakota two things need to be dealt with: 1. We need to maintain and build a good modern road system and 2. Devils Lake needs to be stabilized at a maximum elevation of 1448' MSL or less.

There is a growing resentment in the Devils Lake Basin that not enough is being done to develop an east end outlet. Continuing to build up the roads and dike in the City of Devils Lake and a few selective areas while flooding the rest of the community is dividing neighbors against neighbors.

This is all being done to protect the Sheyenne River and Fargo? We need some type of one time controlled release then maintain the level at 1448' MSL or less.

That concludes my testimony. Thank you for this opportunity and I would be happy to answer any questions.