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Montana State University Commencement (1)

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: **BAUCUS**

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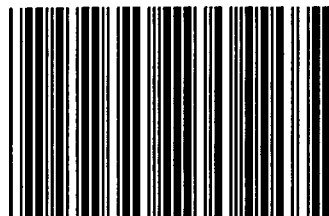
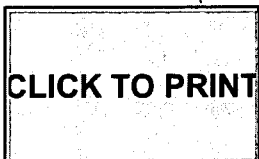
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BAUCUS

**Remarks by Senator Max Baucus
Montana State University Commencement**

Thank you President Malone for that kind introduction. Day in and day out, you are not only writing the history of Montana, you are helping to shape it. And, thank you to your fine faculty for all you do to help mold our students' future.

I would also like to say congratulations to Doctor Hughes, Doctor Donohue, and Doctor Feaver. Each of you - in your own way - represents the finest traditions of service to the nation and our community. And we thank you for all you have done.

Above all else I want to congratulate the class of 1999. I know that getting here wasn't always easy. There were those doubters along the way who said they couldn't imagine you'd be graduating any time this century. Well, you just made it.

Actually - not that anybody here could have possibly over slept - but let's make sure you all really did make it. Is the College of Agriculture here?

A few of you made it.

Anybody here from the College of Arts and Architecture?

How about the College of Business?

The College of Education, Health and Human
Development?

Let's try the College of Engineering.

How about the College of Letters and Science?

And I saved the best for last. How about the
College of Nursing?

Just wanted to make sure. . . even though I know
you all went to bed very early last night.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I've been asked to deliver the charge to the graduates. For the parents who are with us today, I'm sure you don't feel left out. I know that – over the last few years – you've already received your charge from MSU.

But I would like to speak directly to the graduates today – because today is your day. You've come so far and accomplished so much. And after all these years of school, I know the last thing you want is another lecture. So please put away your pens and paper, you can stop taking notes.

I do have one piece of advice for you – and no, its not "wear sun screen." But it does come from the words of another song. The old Dickey Betts classic "Keep On Keepin' On." My charge to you today is to continue to act in the ways that have brought you - and those who care about you so much - to this special day.

What does that mean? First of all, it means you must continue to pursue your education. Once there was a time when an MSU graduate could walk out of commencement with a quality education and never have to look back. Those days are gone.

The world has changed, and now lifelong learning is no longer an elective - it's mandatory for all those who want to succeed. A look at the story of MSU and the Bozeman area tells the tale.

When this school was established, it was named the "Agricultural College of the State of Montana." Because it so exclusively emphasized farming, people called it the Cow College. Some still do today. In 1913, as the Industrial Revolution was sweeping though the nation, the name was changed to the "State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts." Today, the world around us is transforming once again.

Here, in what the Native Americans called the Valley of Flowers, the Information Age has started to bloom.

Fifteen years ago there were about a dozen high-tech companies in Gallatin County. Four years ago, there were 45. Today, there are 85.

And much of this new energy is anchored here at Montana State University. Working with NASA, MSU is researching advanced optoelectric material. And because this is such a fine institution of learning, I hope that later on somebody will explain to me what that means.

MSU holds 28 patents, with 62 more pending – a clear sign of the explosion of innovation that makes this Silicon Valley the home to both Mountains and Minds. And it's no accident that Bozeman is home to the American Computer Museum.

But all this change means that today can't be the end of your learning - it must be only the beginning. For you will need to constantly learn new skills and gain new insights into the ever- expanding world of knowledge. If you stop learning, you will be letting a whole world of opportunities pass you by. You'll be hibernating. And we all know that only Grizzlies do that.

And I believe that you should have a government that helps you do the right thing. Once, we had visionary leaders who knew that a college education would bring a chance for success to everyone who was willing to work for it. Through the land grant college initiative, they built schools for those who needed them – including Montana State University. I think we need to apply that same spirit to today's challenges. That's why the "Corps of Discovery" education agenda, which I announced earlier this year, includes extending the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit to include employer contributions - making it easier for you to continue the great start you already have.

"Keep on Keepin' On" also means that I hope you'll continue the tradition of community service that so many of you have started through your volunteer activities in the Gallatin Valley community. Breaks Away service trips, Into the Streets, the Simple Meals program, or working with the Humane Society, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, or Head Start. You have shown commitment -- a commitment to the ideal that we all owe a helping hand to one another and have obligations that come with our opportunities. I know that in the years to come you will continue and strengthen your service to family, service to church, and service to community.

A few years back, a Bozeman resident named Frank Cooper went to Hollywood, changed his first name to Gary, and starred in a movie called "High Noon." Today, as all of you are in the high noon of your lives, I hope you won't forget to share some of that bright sunlight with those at the dawn and dusk of theirs. They need your help – and we all know it's the right thing to do.

And lastly, "Keep on Keepin' On" means you should never lose the spirit of excitement and optimism that you can feel rippling through this crowd today.

The writer, historian, and conservationist Wallace Stegner – in whose honor a Chair in Western Studies has been established at MSU – once wrote that "Youth hasn't got anything to do with chronological age. It's times of hope and happiness." Setting out onto your adult lives doesn't mean leaving those times behind – in fact, it means holding onto them tighter than ever before.

In 1893, this school had 8 students. Today, it has over 11,000. You come from all 50 states and over 60 foreign countries. And you come not just because of Bozeman's altitude, but because of MSU's attitude - a can-do spirit that exemplifies the best of the West.

It's that spirit that you must never lose. You may have spent a lot of time in the last few years ^{headed downhill} ~~up~~ at Bridger, but with that spirit, I'm sure you will be climbing to even greater heights.

This can-do spirit is what led a young man by the name of John Bozeman - not much older than you - to leave the comfort of his native home and blaze the trail that bears his name. Almost 60 years earlier, it was through what we now call the Bozeman Pass that Lewis and Clark's men emerged from the mountains on the way back from their historic journey.

Two hundred years later, we commemorate the journey of Merriwether Lewis and William Clark. We talk about their discoveries and their legacy, their scientific contributions and their geopolitical significance. But today let's remember them as two young people with a dream and a determination to make it into a reality.

Today, for you and your parents, the dream of a college education becomes a reality. And you leave MSU with more than a diploma. You leave with memories of friends, activities, and yes, even your classes.

Years from now you'll remember buying cookies from the Sweet Shop in the SUB, the afternoons spent skiing, life's lessons you learned the hard way.

You'll remember heading to Joe's Parkway on Friday night to start off the weekend by picking up a keg -- of root beer.

You'll wish you still had the "Ask us desk" to call when you're in a tight spot. And you'll bolt up in the middle of the night, finally remembering where you left your "One Card."

You'll wonder whether you should take it personally that they started all the construction when you got here and finished now that you're leaving. And you'll wonder where those benches on the mall went for the winter.

But what I hope you'll remember most of all is that you set a goal and met it. If you "Keep On Keepin' On" with that routine, there is literally nothing you can't do.

In a few moments the choir will lead us in "Hail Montana State." As the song says:

When years have drawn us far away,
Memories shall keep today,
We'll gladly owe to MSU,
What we are and hope to be.

I hope that your memories do keep you returning to today and all your days at MSU. And on behalf of your parents, teachers, loved ones, and friends, I congratulate you for what you are and what we all hope you will be. Continue to make us proud.