



Pennington County
Commissioners
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July 6, 2005

Honorable Samuel K. Skinner
Honorable James H. Bilbray
Honorable Philip E. Coyle, III

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Gentlemen:

The Pennington County Commissioners takes this opportunity to personally Thank You for your recent fact finding tour at Ellsworth Air Force Base and later taking testimony at the BRAC regional hearing in relation to the Department of Defense recommendation to close Ellsworth AFB.

The 7,000 residents who rose, as one, to welcome you to the hearing at the Rapid City Civic Center did so because in their hearts they truly appreciate the tough decisions you must make in the next few months. That recognition in addition to the reception you received along the motorcade route is only a small token of our feelings about keeping Ellsworth AFB in the asset column for the future needs of our Homeland.

South Dakota has always played a major role in sending our young men and women to the military defense of our nation. We have always believed in a strong military to defend our freedoms and have backed those beliefs with action.

It is unfortunate that we now find ourselves put in a position to defend one of the very best backbones of our military, namely Ellsworth AFB.

As you heard from Air Force General John Loh, Retired and Lieutenant General Thad Wolfe, Retired, Ellsworth AFB should remain an active, viable base for military reasons. We believed their points were well presented and unbiased. We are confident that when you review and consider all the facts presented at the hearing you will agree with us that the closing will do harm to our Nations military future.

We again Thank You for your attendance and close attention to what we believe is over whelming evidence that the recommended closing of Ellsworth AFB is not in this Nations best interest.

Sincerely,

James Kjerstad, Chairperson
Mark Kirkeby, Vice Chairperson
Delores Coffing, Commissioner
Ken Davis, Commissioner
Gale Holbrook, Commissioner