

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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April 29, 2005

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Hon. Anthony Principi
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
Polk Building
2521 South Clark St., Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Secretary Principi:

I am writing to thank you for your commitment and dedication to oversee the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in a fair and transparent fashion, as this serves to transform and modernize our warfighting capabilities to meet the emerging threats of this and future generations. I also appreciated the opportunity to share with you the tremendous military value of Ellsworth Air Force Base during your March 15, 2005, appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee regarding your nomination to be Chairman of the BRAC Commission.

I believe very strongly in the role that Ellsworth will continue to play to advance the overall effectiveness of our armed services during this transformation. Ellsworth and the 29 B-1 bombers of its 28th Bomb Wing have a long and proud history. The men and women who maintain and operate the B-1 bombers at Ellsworth have distinguished themselves in their ability to adapt to the new kind of warfare in the Global War on Terror and have been repeatedly deployed on important missions in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The B-1's ability to "loiter" for hours above a battlefield and deliver precision-guided munitions onto targets of opportunity with pin-point accuracy make it one of the best weapons systems in our arsenal.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I believe Ellsworth will continue to be an indispensable asset within the Department of Defense's plans to restructure the military. Ellsworth's modern facilities, its capability to expand into other Air Force or joint-service missions, its access to the Powder River training area and the lack of urban encroachment make it a superb prospect as an expansion base following BRAC. Furthermore, the Air Force community at Ellsworth has a tremendous relationship with the community of Rapid City. I urge you to give Ellsworth's many advantages your full consideration as you make the difficult decisions that lay ahead.

Kindest regards,



JOHN THUNE
United States Senator

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