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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4104

May 13, 2005

The Honorable Anthony Principi
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
521 South Clark Street
Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

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Dear Mr. Secretary:

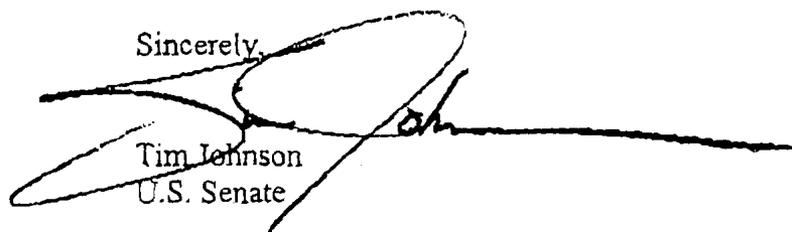
This morning Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld released his recommendations detailing which domestic military bases should be closed. I am extremely disappointed that he has failed to recognize the invaluable contribution Ellsworth Air Force Base makes to our national security and has recommended that it be closed. As the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission begins their important work of evaluating Secretary Rumsfeld's recommendations, I am confident they will see how critical the base is to our national defense.

Strategically located, Ellsworth has excellent access to B-1 Bomber training ranges and is not threatened by urban encroachment or congested air space. In addition, during the past decade the facilities at the base have been completely upgraded making Ellsworth a world-class military installation. Improvements include a new base operations building, a B-1 training facility, and military housing that ranks amongst the best in the country. Given its ideal location, as well as the long-term investment in the base's infrastructure, Ellsworth is capable of expanding and accepting new missions.

Furthermore, Ellsworth is home to the B-1 bomber – the backbone of our bomber fleet. B-1 crews stationed at Ellsworth have flown missions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. In fact, in Operation Iraqi Freedom, B-1s dropped more than half the satellite guided munitions. They showed great flexibility and were assigned a broad range of targets in Iraq, including command and control facilities, bunkers, tanks, armored personnel carriers, and surface-to-air missile sites.

I am eager to work with the Commission to demonstrate that Ellsworth is a sound investment in our national defense and closing it would adversely affect our ability to defend this nation from threats both at home and abroad. I encourage you to contact me if I can be of any assistance as you begin to carefully review and consider the Secretary's recommendations and invite you and the Commission to personally visit Ellsworth. As the Commission will discover, Ellsworth is a premier installation that has proven it can be a competitive military base for decades to come.

Sincerely,



Tim Johnson
U.S. Senate