



SENATOR HEITKAMP'S WORK TO KEEP NORTH DAKOTA'S COMMUNITIES STRONG AND SAFE

Over the past year and a half, Heitkamp has already taken a comprehensive approach to address the new challenges North Dakota faces as the state experiences rapid population growth and development. With her Strong & Safe Communities Initiative, she will work to draw a stronger focus to these areas and offer recommendations to help make sure North Dakota's communities remain safe and can support the growth they are seeing for decades to come. Below are some of the challenges the state faces which Heitkamp has already been working to address:

Transportation of Crude Oil by Rail

Since the train derailment in Casselton, North Dakota in December 2013, Heitkamp has worked tirelessly to push for improvements to rail safety, and make sure North Dakotans and their communities are safe from potential rail incidents. Because of the energy boom in North Dakota and the heavy reliance on rail as a mode of transportation, small communities are seeing up to nine trains come through per day with more than 100 linked crude oil cars per train. In June, Heitkamp introduced her RESPONSE Act to better prepare emergency personnel in North Dakota and across the country tasked with responding to potential incidents, such as derailments of trains carrying materials like crude oil. Since the derailment, Heitkamp also consistently pressured the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to release updated rules to help prevent future derailments and to provide regulatory certainty to producers, shippers, and the railroads. Many of these rules were finally released in July.

Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence

Since the fall of 2013, Heitkamp has been a leader in Congress working to combat human trafficking by holding Senate hearings, introducing legislation to crack down on human trafficking and support victims, setting up training sessions for North Dakotans on identifying human trafficking, and coordinating with lead advocacy organizations to raise awareness about this problem. Human trafficking is a growing problem in North Dakota, especially in the western part of the state. Around the world, it is estimated that more than 20 million individuals are trafficked for sex or labor – including an estimated 100,000 children in the sex trade alone in the United States. Heitkamp's efforts to combat human trafficking builds on her work as North Dakota's Attorney General to combat domestic violence as she implemented the initial Violence Against Women Act at a state level, and helped pass the reauthorization of the law right when she joined the Senate.

Crime and Drug Crime

Heitkamp has pushed for strong action to help reduce the rise of crime and drug crime in North Dakota, particularly in the oil patch. She brought the previous White House Drug Czar to the state in July 2013 during which he pledged to dedicate federal resources to address crime and drug crime in western North Dakota. He followed up with more support for the area – including making Williams County eligible for more federal funds to help rein in drug abuse and crime. In August, Heitkamp brought the current Drug Czar to North Dakota where he committed to continuing to address the growing drug problems in the state. Heitkamp also sought to expand access to drug take-back sites to accommodate the growing problem of prescription drug abuse in North Dakota.

Indian Country Challenges

With the tremendous growth throughout North Dakota, many of the state's Indian reservations -- particularly MHA Nation which sits over part of the oil patch -- have faced unique issues and Heitkamp has been working to improve safety on reservations, particularly for Native American children. Heitkamp has worked to bring together law enforcement from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and local police forces, including at Turtle Mountain in March, to discuss jurisdictional issues as drugs and crime have increased in the state and on reservations. She has brought a needed focus to the problem of Native American women and children getting caught in human trafficking rings and has sought more resources to help them get out of these terrible situations. In September 2013, Heitkamp brought witnesses to a Senate hearing she called for to testify specifically about these problems, and she continues to meet with Native American advocacy groups about how to stop human trafficking in Indian Country.

Economic Development and Community Impact

As North Dakota's population rapidly grows, the state has experienced serious strains on much of its housing, transportation, and water infrastructure. Heitkamp is working to help the state's communities handle many of these new challenges so they remain strong. She has advocated for the expansion of roads to handle the massive increase in traffic -- particularly in the western part of the state on US-85. Heitkamp has fought to expand water systems to keep up with the state's population increase so they continue to provide clean water. She has also sought more access to mental health services across the state. And Heitkamp has pushed for more affordable housing in North Dakota to help alleviate the state's housing crisis. Additionally, through her leadership on the Senate Agriculture Committee, Heitkamp has pushed for initiatives to strengthen rural economies in communities across North Dakota.

Border Security

In her role as a member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Heitkamp is working to improve border conditions and security, particularly at the northern border. North Dakota has 17 border crossings, many of which are small. The state is experiencing many challenges with border crossings, including for human trafficking, illegal trade, illegal immigration, and national security threats. In June, Heitkamp held a meeting with Border Patrol agents, local sheriffs, police chiefs, Bureau of Indian Affairs Law Enforcement, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Agents to talk about these border challenges. Heitkamp also helped the White House Drug Czar announce his new national drug control strategy, which aims to provide stronger coordination between the U.S. and Canada to prevent the flow of drugs and criminals between our borders.