

United States Senate

December 3, 2019

Commissioner Robert Manfred
The Office of the Commissioner of Baseball
245 Park Avenue, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10167

Dear Commissioner Manfred:

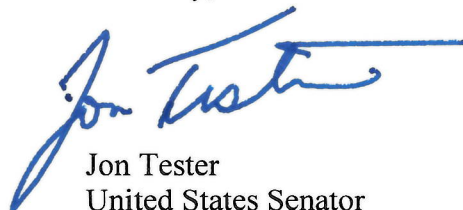
I write to express concerns about recent reports that Major League Baseball (MLB) is considering severing its traditional affiliation with dozens of Minor League Baseball (MiLB) teams, including the Pioneer League baseball clubs in Billings, Great Falls and Missoula. Montana is one of only two states that does not have a single major league professional sports team or border a state that has a major league professional sports team. As such, our communities are deeply invested in our minor league teams. These teams keep Montanans connected to MLB, provide affordable family entertainment, and spur economic development and job growth across many business sectors. I urge you to reverse course on this proposal.

As MLB examines ways to grow the sport and deal with the decline in younger viewers, I believe it is vital for MLB to invest in rural communities by maintaining MiLB affiliates. When a young person in Montana can attend a local Pioneer League game and see future stars like Paul Goldschmidt play for the Missoula Osprey or Joey Votto play for the Billings Mustangs, it inspires a connection to the game that will last a lifetime. These are the kids that will eventually purchase MLB TV packages and take road trips to see their favorite players at the MLB parks. MLB's rural footprint is critical to growing the sport into the 21st century.

Montana communities know how important these teams are to the state. That's why they are quick to invest in modern facilities that create a fun atmosphere for the fans and a high-quality experience for the players. For example, a little over a decade ago, voters in Billings approved a \$12.5 million local bond to help pay for a new stadium to host the Mustangs. The City of Great Falls pays for the operations and maintenance of Centene Stadium, the home of the Great Falls Voyagers. Dozens of small businesses invest in marketing with Montana's teams to support the franchises and grow their customer base.

I strongly believe that now is not the time for MLB to reduce its role in baseball in rural America. I stand ready to work with you on strengthening MLB's footprint in Montana and maintaining MLB's affiliation with the Pioneer League. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator