

United States Senate

October 5, 2016

The Honorable James B. Comey
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
J. Edgar Hoover Building
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Director Comey:

I am writing to request a meeting with you to discuss the need to maintain a permanent Federal Bureau of Investigation presence in Sidney, Montana. It is my understanding that the current temporary duty station in Sidney is scheduled to terminate in July 2017.

Removal of the physical presence of FBI agents from the region is ill-advised and would be detrimental to the ongoing work of law enforcement in the region. Area law enforcement officials have conveyed their concerns over high rates of ongoing crime, despite the ebb and flow of commerce, and shared the critical need for federal law enforcement support in Eastern Montana. After conversations with them, it is clear to me that an FBI presence there is critical for our region's safety and growth. Accordingly, I strongly urge you to maintain your current presence in Sidney.

While the establishment of a permanent field office in Williston, ND, will certainly contribute to law enforcement efforts in the region, it is not well positioned to impact the crime in Sidney. The Williston office may be an hour's drive away in summer, but it serves a different federal judicial district – lacking relationships with the courts and federal prosecutors in the District of Montana. Additionally, it lacks the physical presence which bolsters local law enforcement efforts and increases the local community's trust. Williston-based agents will face numerous barriers to being the needed assets in Sidney, including the existing demands of crime in Williston, covering an extensive region, and facing often impassable winter roads.

Though crime spiked in 2012, crime continues to remain at a concerning high. According to the Montana Board of Crime Control's *Crime in Montana: 2012-2013* and *Crime in Montana: 2013-2014* reports, crime in the Bakken Region surrounding Sidney was 40% higher in 2014 than 2009. Richland County alone had 125 times the number of offenses in 2014 than it did in 2009, and Sidney sits at the heart of Richland County. Further, the prevalence of crime continues to cause calls for an added High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area task force in Eastern Montana, a request that I believe further corroborates the importance of maintaining the FBI agents in Sidney.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss the FBI maintaining its presence in Sidney. I appreciate your consideration of this request and I will have my staff reach out to schedule a meeting time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Daines". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" at the beginning.

STEVE DAINES
United States Senator