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## Montana Meth Funding Advances

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A \$500,000 grant for the Montana Meth Project has been included in the 2008 Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Bill that awaits passage in the U.S. Senate.

Montana Sens. Max Baucus and Jon Tester asked that the funds be included in the bill, which has cleared the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Billionaire and part-time Montana resident Tom Siebel founded the Meth Project in September 2005 and has contributed more than \$15 million to the effort. He recently challenged state and federal officials to help fund the program. The Montana Legislature recently approved a \$1 million grant for the project requested by Montana Attorney General Mike McGrath.

Meth Project Chairman Mike Gullede said the federal funding shows a commitment to the fight against methamphetamine.

"Our meth problem is not going to go away overnight, but we are already seeing solid results due to the Montana Meth Project's innovative campaigns," said Gullede, publisher of The Billings Gazette. "These dollars show a federal commitment to keeping meth out of our schools and communities. We take our hats off to Max and Jon for securing these needed dollars."

Siebel has also announced a \$5 million challenge grant that will match contributions from private entities. He praised the Montana senators for working to secure federal funds.

Peg Shea, the project's executive director, said the graphic campaign has been highly successful in Montana, noting the federal funding is critical to keeping the program going.

"This secures our future. It's critical," Shea said. "These dollars will help us continue the program into next year. We have taken meth out of the closet. Now it's time to keep up the fight and that takes a collaborative approach."

"The Meth Project has shined a new light on this terrible addiction," Baucus said. "But now it's time for the federal government to embrace this new, innovative strategy to fight meth. These first-time dollars will serve as a down payment."

Tester applauded the project and said a private-state-federal partnership "is the only real solution."

Gullede said the project has produced more than 13 television spots, about 10 newspaper ads and more than 15 radio spots detailing the dangers of meth use. The project also sponsored the Paint the State art contest featuring more than 600 submissions and also has an intensive community outreach effort.

The Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday also approved \$16 million in funding for two Montana water projects.

The panel approved \$10 million for the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation and Dry Prairie Rural Water System. It also included an additional \$6 million for the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority.

The measures now go before the full Senate.