

U.S. SENATOR HEIDI HEITKAMP'S

**STRONG
& SAFE**



COMMUNITIES REPORT

**Building a North Dakota for Today
and Tomorrow**

August 4, 2016

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I. Introduction

U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp launched her Strong & Safe Communities Initiative in September 2014 to help address some of the emerging challenges facing the state by bringing a greater focus to keeping North Dakota’s communities strong and families safe today and well into the future.

Building a strong and safe future for North Dakota means not just living in the present, but looking ahead to what the state will look like a few decades from now. To maintain the vibrancy of North Dakota’s communities, Senator Heitkamp aims to address the new law enforcement, infrastructure, and safety challenges the state faces head on. That means working as a community to solve community problems.

North Dakota has reaped major rewards from the state’s energy boom. For years, the state had the lowest unemployment rate in the country, thousands of open jobs, and innovation, research, and development taking place. Even as oil and commodity prices have dropped, the impacts from such rapid growth affects North Dakota, bringing with it new law enforcement, infrastructure, and safety challenges – many of which are now clearer as growth has slowed. Senator Heitkamp has already been working to address these issues, and through her Strong & Safe Communities Initiative she is bringing a focus to them and providing a tangible plan to address them moving forward to help build a strong, safe future for North Dakota.

Part of the initiative includes her Strong & Safe Communities Task Force that is comprised of North Dakotans from across the state who have solid understandings of many of the new challenges the

state faces. She also held her Strong & Safe Communities Summit in October 2015 which brought together about 150 community leaders from across North Dakota, including Task Force members, to discuss solutions to build a strong future for the state.



Sen. Heitkamp talks with Task Force members at the Strong & Safe Communities Summit in October 2015.

With this new Strong & Safe Communities Report, Senator Heitkamp is releasing a comprehensive summary of the economic and safety challenges North Dakota currently faces, the many ideas from Task Force members and those who participated in her Summit to address these issues, and actions she is currently taking at a federal level, as well as actions she will take in the future, to tackle North Dakota’s growth and safety challenges.

Senator Heitkamp recognizes the enormous potential throughout the state, while acknowledging the challenges, to seek real, workable solutions to build a stronger, safer North Dakota. This report aims to help pave the way.

II. State of Our Communities

We can't fix North Dakota's challenges if we don't acknowledge they exist. North Dakota has been the envy of the country, and Senator Heitkamp wants to make sure the state continues to prosper in the future. That means facing the realities, building a strong, diverse economy, and attacking the state's challenges head on to create bright futures for North Dakota's kids and grandkids. Here are the six critical areas where challenges exist:

Transportation of Crude Oil by Rail

Despite the current downturn in oil production, more than 30 percent of North Dakota crude oil is still being transported by rail, according to the North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources. On major freight railroads across the country, the number of railcars carrying crude oil [grew by more than 4,000 percent](#) between 2008 and 2013, with additional increases in 2014. From local fire departments to volunteer ambulance services, first responders need to be prepared to handle potential incidents on the rails and remain safe as they work to protect North Dakota's families and communities.



First responder looks on following train derailment near Casselton in December 2013. Photo credit: Dave Arntson

The oil train derailments in Casselton in 2013 and Heimdahl in 2015 were blunt reminders that first responders who work hard every day to make their communities stronger and safer must get the tools and support to do their jobs. Across North Dakota, 96 percent of first fighters are volunteers.

Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence

Children as young as 12 and 13 years old – sometimes younger – are being forced into sex trafficking. Around the world, it is estimated that more than [20 million individuals](#) are trafficked for sex or labor and the U.S. State Department estimates that 600,000-800,000 people are trafficked in the United States annually.

The U.S. State Department estimates that 600,000 - 800,000 people are trafficked in the U.S. annually, including in North Dakota.

Unfortunately, this scourge has come to North Dakota and too often there are news articles about cases of human trafficking in the state. North Dakota's communities are organizing to fight back. After Senator Heitkamp helped bring this issue to light, the North Dakota legislature has taken several important steps to combat human trafficking in the state.

In addition to human trafficking, domestic violence is another blight that threatens thousands of North Dakotans daily. On the federal level, the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has played a critical role in addressing domestic violence. Largely due to VAWA, according to the U.S. Justice Department, the annual incidences of domestic violence has [fallen more than 60 percent](#) since 1993. However, there is still work to do to make sure every North Dakotan feels safe in their homes.

Indian Country Challenges

As the challenges throughout North Dakota have grown, they have been exacerbated in Indian Country with increases in human trafficking, crime, drugs, and gang violence. Across the country, the Native communities have seen an [almost 250 percent increase](#) since 2010 in deaths from heroin overdose. These challenges have particularly impacted Native children who experience levels of [post-traumatic stress](#) similar to newly returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Native children also face dramatically [increased risks of suicide, lower high school graduation rates](#) than any racial

or ethnic demographic in the country, staggering unemployment, child abuse, domestic violence, crime, substance abuse, and dire economic opportunities. Our First People carry a proud tradition and lifestyle that is being eroded by a culture of despair fed by poverty, crime, unemployment, substance abuse, and tragic household violence. They deserve better and part of the government's trust responsibility for future generations is to empower them to change outcomes.

Crime and Drug Crime

The heroin and opioid abuse crisis has swept the nation, taken a foothold in North Dakota communities, and brought with it tremendous challenges, including increased crime and a growing strain on an already-stretched behavioral and mental health system.

Heroin & methamphetamine use **grew by 400 and 438%**, respectively from November 2014 to November 2015 in the Minot region alone.

Across North Dakota, heroin and opioid abuse have skyrocketed, with heroin and methamphetamine use growing by [400 and 438 percent, respectively](#) from November 2014 to November 2015 in the Minot region alone. Since 2014, [more than a dozen deaths](#) in Grand Forks have been tied to the opioid fentanyl. In July 2013, just 17 people were being treated for heroin abuse, but by last December that number jumped to 198 people. In North Dakota, heroin treatment cases skyrocketed from 17 people in July 2013 to 198 people in December 2015. According to the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, reports of heroin use have [increased every single month](#) from mid-2013 through 2015. And [opioid-induced fatalities in North Dakota increased by 125 percent](#) from 2013 to 2014 alone.

It's increasingly clear that North Dakota cannot arrest its way out of this epidemic, but rather, must bring together stakeholders from across communities to fight this challenge head on.

21st Century Security

In the wake of North Dakota's energy boom, the state has seen a surge of new families, and new businesses – big and small – who count on online services every day. Our lives are more connected online than ever before. Just as families and businesses face the threat of cyberattacks, such intrusions also pose serious national security risks for our financial systems, electric grid, and first responder networks. Top national security experts, including former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, have said cyber threats are the biggest national security threats our country faces.

With growing technology innovation across the state and key leaders with unparalleled expertise in cybersecurity, the state of North Dakota is well positioned to be a leader in developing the measures and protocols that will provide security and peace of mind online.

While this technology growth is happening in many communities, too often rural and tribal communities are left behind. According to the Federal Communications Commission, [nearly 40 percent](#) of rural residents in North Dakota lack access to the newer standard for high-speed internet – a figure that doubles on tribal lands in the state, where [80 percent](#) of North Dakotans still lack access.

In addition to the challenges of security online, the physical border with Canada must not be ignored. The Northern Border has 120 border crossings, many of which are small and in rural areas. Approximately 300,000 people and \$910 million in trade cross the Northern Border every day, representing the largest bilateral flow of goods and people in the world. The United States and Canada have a strong bond, and it's critical to both countries' security that we understand how best to protect the Northern Border.

Economic Development and Community Impact

North Dakota faces tremendous opportunities and challenges economically. The state's energy and agricultural sectors have driven the economy to great heights, but – as with all commodity-based economies – it has also come with volatility. While continuing to support the agricultural and energy economies, North Dakota also has to grow and

diversify its economy, and has become a hub of technological and entrepreneurial enterprise. In 2015, North Dakota had the [third-highest startup activity](#) in the country, but too often, startups can't access the small amount of funds that are frequently necessary to get their businesses off the ground. Undoubtedly, the burgeoning unmanned aerial systems (UAS), technology, small business, and cybersecurity will be critical parts of building more legs for the state's economic development stool.

Growth in activity in the cities is a welcome addition to the state's economy, but rural communities are still the heart of North Dakota. While regional strategies have helped North Dakota address key challenges in rural communities, there continues to be a persistent lack of affordable housing for the new jobs cropping up across rural North Dakota.

North Dakota's transportation infrastructure has struggled to keep up with the growth in the state. In 2013, [16.4 percent of bridges](#) in North Dakota were structurally deficient. According to an NDSU-Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute study, 54 percent of roads in western North Dakota needed improvements like resurfacing, widening, reconstruction, and other maintenance in 2015, reinforcing the need for long-term solutions to upgrade roads and bridges.

III. Challenges & Ideas from Strong and Safe Communities Summit

Given the tremendous challenges and opportunities facing North Dakota, in October 2015, Senator Heitkamp held her first Strong & Safe Communities Summit which brought together about 150 community leaders from across North Dakota, including many members of her Task Force, to discuss solutions to build a strong future for the state. The Summit offered a productive and collaborative way for North Dakotans in various fields – including law enforcement, social workers, advocates, and government officials – to discuss challenges they face, talk about what is and is not working to combat issues in their communities, and brainstorm new ideas to address these challenges. Senator Heitkamp wanted to hear directly from

leaders across the state about what North Dakotans could do together to succeed in the future.

At the Summit, each breakout group was asked to identify three key challenges and brainstorm bold ideas to address each one. The conversations at the Summit sparked a wide array of ideas and included action from every level of government and the private sector. It was the type of broad, solution-based thinking that is needed to overcome the difficult challenges facing North Dakota's communities.



Community leaders discuss issues facing North Dakota at Sen. Heitkamp's Strong & Safe Communities Summit in October 2015.

Below is a list of each group's identified challenges and ideas to address each challenge. It is not an exhaustive listing of all notes from the Summit.

Transportation of Crude by Rail Challenges

- Training for first responders continues to be a need as North Dakota still transports large amounts of crude oil by rail.
- The funding for training programs and safety infrastructure needs to be increased.
- There should be more attention placed on developing community resiliency.

Transportation of Crude by Rail Ideas

- The State of North Dakota should consider mandatory state minimum training requirements for first responders.
- Regional training facilities across the state could focus on a different challenge so first responders can get needed training.

- Media training for first responders would help them better communicate to and educate the public about incidents and trainings.

“Shining a light on domestic violence means truly defining crimes for what they are, and empowering victims to escape this vicious cycle and protect their families.”

-U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp

Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence Challenges

- Funding and resources continue to be challenges in combating both issues.
- Education and prevention will always be ongoing challenges.
- The social systems built to help victims of human trafficking and domestic violence may not always be as effective as they could be.

Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence Ideas

- Advocates need to come together with a common message to help educate North Dakotans about human trafficking and help find victims – make sure churches, coaches, etc. are all unified in their message.
- A local client-centered approach will help reduce the number of times survivors have to repeat their traumatic stories.
- Diversified funding sources that provide stability, including public-private partnerships, should be explored.

Crime and Drug Crime Challenges

- There has been an increase in heroin and meth because of prescription drug use, and corresponding property crimes in communities across North Dakota.
- There needs to be more collaboration between medical community, law enforcement, social services, schools, and treatment centers to address substance abuse and mental health issues.
- While addressing all of the issues affecting those using drugs, there also needs to be an effort to understand and address the impact on children.

- Isolation and lack of resources in many areas of the state have created enormous challenges to addressing these issues, especially Indian Country.

Crime and Drug Crime Ideas

- With the barrage of new drugs and related crime in our communities, this group really wrestled with the best way out of the problem. However, at the end, they came to a consensus that we cannot arrest our way out this problem. Ultimately, the day served to get more communication and collaboration across all stakeholders. In particular, health care providers and law enforcement need to be able to effectively communicate on this topic to make sure they are properly addressing the underlying mental and behavioral health issues that are driving this epidemic.



Sen. Heitkamp talks with Native youth on the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation in June 2014.

Indian Country Challenges

- Across Indian Country, there is a lack of adequate and affordable housing.
- There are constant struggles with alcohol and drugs. With these struggles come the related concerns about crime, safety, and health.
- Schools struggle for the resources they need and economic opportunities are minimal.

Indian Country Ideas

Lack of adequate and affordable housing

- The Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA) is a start, but it is not doing enough. Could we

sell older existing housing stock to help fund new construction and encourage home ownership? Also, seek policy changes within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

- The federal government could give each state a certain amount of incentives that they can compete for to help build new houses.
- Native American housing leaders could work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help empower tribes to do home loans on their own.

Crime, safety, alcohol, drugs, and health

- Quarterly meetings with all North Dakota tribes on training about services and business training for tribal leaders should be held.
- Communities need culturally relevant treatment for drug and alcohol addiction, and proper after care and support groups when people leave treatment. If people go back to a broken home, they are unlikely to succeed.
- Build healthy homes starting with building a strong family structure.

Communities need culturally relevant treatment for drug & alcohol addiction, and proper after care and support groups when people leave treatment.

Education and economic development

- With the support of the state legislature, mandate that all schools teach accurate Native American history and law in all schools (not just Native American schools).
- There should be a bridge between colleges and tribal colleges.
- Communities need to instill a dream in Native children starting at a young age.

Economic Development and Community Impact Challenges

- Affordable housing continues to stunt economic development in many communities across North Dakota.

- The availability and high cost of childcare continues to stifle many working families in North Dakota.
- Workforce shortages are present all across the state and thousands of jobs remain unfilled.
- Physical and social infrastructure deficits keep North Dakota from reaching its economic potential.

Economic Development and Community Impact Ideas

Affordable housing

- Regulatory reform is necessary to allow for innovation.
- Redevelopment should be made easier for the purpose of using current infrastructure.
- City, county, and state contractors should build and develop infrastructure for housing (lower the costs of building/construction).
- A state-wide risk mitigation program would spur more affordable housing construction.
- New housing types that address local codes are needed.
- Tenant rental assistance programs defined by state rule targeted to essential workers would help ease the housing cost burden for many North Dakotans.
- Federal income limits on housing finance assistance should be modified to reflect local income levels.

Availability and cost of childcare

- Non-profit model paired with funders and donors would work to help improve flexibility and affordability.
- Public-private partnerships help provide more affordable options.



Sen. Heitkamp reads with young North Dakotans at Minot Head Start in May 2016.

Workforce shortages and training

- To get more providers in mental health, incentives could be offered for individuals entering the field.
- Bonuses or income tax incentives may help entice talented people who have left North Dakota to return.
- Increase support for regional planning councils so funding goes directly to the local level.
- There are three potential solutions to help with student debt:
 - Community colleges could be offered for free
 - Private company training programs
 - Tax incentives

Infrastructure

- Physical:
 - Increase funding opportunities to develop:
 - Comprehensive plans.
 - Money to implement the plans.
 - Grant money to make upgrades affordable.
 - Build out natural gas infrastructure.

Communities need access to resources that enhance social infrastructure and highlight, engage, & encourage local leadership.

- Social:
 - Communities need access to resources that enhance social infrastructure.
 - Highlight and engage local leadership opportunities to build a bench of community leaders for the next generation.
 - Redefine/rethink leadership examples so that more people would want to take on leadership roles.

21st Century Security Challenges

- Infrastructure and collaboration across entities makes a coherent response to cyber threats especially difficult.

- Communities, business, and government agencies need more training on cybersecurity risks.
- State and federal laws have not kept up with the growing cyber threat.

21st Century Security Ideas

- A statewide curriculum to train students from pre-K through college on cyber issues in the world today to make sure they are safe and smart online would be a great first step.
- Sharing information on best practices between public and private organizations should be encouraged and incentivized.
- International laws to compel a global approach to cyber-crime are needed in the 21st Century.

IV. Senator Heitkamp's Work in the U.S. Senate to Keep North Dakota's Communities Strong & Safe

In the U.S. Senate, Senator Heitkamp has been working to address the emerging challenges North Dakota faces by introducing and supporting legislation, pressing federal agencies, holding Congressional hearings, working with local and national advocates, holding events in North Dakota, and much more. She is committed to continuing to fight for a strong and safe future for North Dakota.

Transportation of Crude Oil by Rail

Since the derailment of a crude oil train in Casselton in December 2013, and following the derailment in Heimdal in 2015, Senator Heitkamp has pushed for improvements to rail safety to protect North Dakota's families, communities, and first responders.

- Working closely with federal agencies following derailment in Casselton
Immediately following the derailment, Senator Heitkamp worked closely with federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, and Federal Railroad Administration, as well as other federal, state, and local officials, and BNSF Railway to understand what

happened and push for improvements to rail safety. In April 2014, Senator Heitkamp brought U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx to Casselton and West Fargo to work on a rail safety plan. Since then, federal agencies have updated rules to help prevent future derailments and improve safety of the transportation of oil on the rails.

- Holding a U.S. Senate hearing on the derailment in Casselton

Senator Heitkamp brought Casselton Fire Chief Tim McClean to Washington, D.C. where he testified at a hearing that Senator Heitkamp chaired in the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs to discuss his department's experience responding to the Casselton derailment.



Sen. Heitkamp speaks at U.S. Senate hearing on the train derailment near Casselton in March 2014.

- Introducing the RESPONSE Act to support first responders

To improve safety for North Dakota's communities, Senator Heitkamp introduced her RESPONSE Act to make sure first responders have the training and resources they need to handle potential hazardous incidents, such as derailments of trains carrying crude oil. The bill passed unanimously in the U.S. Senate in May 2016.

- Supporting a one-of-a-kind training facility for first responders

Senator Heitkamp helped secure \$5 million in federal funds for a one-of-a-kind rail safety training facility in Pueblo, Colorado. Nearly 290 North Dakota first responders

received training at the facility between 2007 and May 2016.



In March 2015, Sen. Heitkamp and the second in command at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security met with volunteer firefighters in Larimore.

- Bringing the second in command at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to North Dakota

Senator Heitkamp has worked closely with federal, state, and local officials to address the needs of first responders, including bringing the second in command at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to North Dakota to meet with volunteer firefighters about finding solutions for training and recruitment issues related to volunteer firefighters.

- Coordinating with the North Dakota Petroleum Council (NDPC) and North Dakota Safety Council

Strong and Safe Communities Initiative partner and NDPC Vice President Kari Cutting worked with Senator Heitkamp to organize a seminar on Bakken crude and rail safety as part of the North Dakota Safety Council's annual conference.

Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence

Since the fall of 2013, Senator Heitkamp has been a leader in Congress working to combat human trafficking – a growing problem in North Dakota – by holding Senate hearings, introducing legislation, setting up training sessions for North Dakotans on identifying human trafficking, and coordinating with lead advocacy organizations to raise awareness about this problem. Since she began raising awareness about human trafficking in the state and seeking ways to address these problems, North

Dakota has gone from a state with some of the weakest anti-human trafficking laws to a state with some of the strongest laws. In 2015, the North Dakota legislature passed some of the toughest anti-trafficking laws in the country.

- Holding a U.S. Senate hearing on human trafficking

In September 2013, Senator Heitkamp led a U.S. Senate hearing on efforts underway at the federal, state, and local levels to combat human trafficking. She specifically asked leaders of two Native American organizations to testify at the hearing to spotlight issues with human trafficking in Indian Country – especially in the upper Great Plains.

Nearly one-third of women trafficked in America saw a health care professional while in captivity.

- Introducing and helping pass many bills to combat human trafficking

Senator Heitkamp helped introduce and pass a bipartisan bill, which the President signed into law in 2015, to provide greater assistance to victims of human trafficking, offer increased resources to law enforcement and victims' services organizations, and secure greater punishments for perpetrators of these crimes. The bill included her bipartisan safe harbor legislation with U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) to make sure human trafficking victims who are minors aren't treated as criminals, as well as her legislation providing stricter punishments against traffickers who transport victims across state lines. Senator Heitkamp is continuing to push for bipartisan legislation that would provide necessary services to prevent runaway and homeless youth from getting caught in human trafficking rings. She also introduced her bipartisan SOAR Act with U.S. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) to give health care providers – including doctors, nurses, and

social workers – training to help identify and protect victims of human trafficking. Recent studies suggest that nearly one-third of women trafficked in America saw a health care professional while they were still captive to these crimes.

- Holding Backpage.com accountable

Senator Heitkamp has been pressing to hold the website, Backpage.com, accountable for its role in enabling online sex trafficking, including in North Dakota. She voted in the U.S. Senate to launch civil contempt proceedings against the website as Backpage.com has refused to comply with subpoenas from a U.S. Senate subcommittee as part of a bipartisan investigation into online sex trafficking.

- Working with anti-trafficking leaders

For several years, Senator Heitkamp has worked closely with Cindy McCain – a national and global leader in the fight against human trafficking – and brought her on a three-day tour of western North Dakota and MHA Nation to discuss with local leaders best practices to help eradicate human trafficking from the state. She also brought the head of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Blue Campaign – DHS' national effort dedicated solely to combating human trafficking – to North Dakota, as well as leaders of the organization, Truckers Against Trafficking.



Sen. Heitkamp, national and global anti-trafficking leader Cindy McCain, and local leaders discuss best practices to combat human trafficking in Bismarck in June 2015.

- Holding training sessions around North Dakota

Senator Heitkamp helped lead multiple training sessions across North Dakota over the past few years with DHS officials to

train North Dakotans, women leaders in the state, and law enforcement and victims service providers on how to identify, report, and investigate incidents of human trafficking.

- Supporting and implementing the Violence Against Women Act

Senator Heitkamp's efforts to stop human trafficking build on her work as North Dakota's Attorney General in the 1990s to combat domestic violence. As Attorney General, she implemented the initial Violence Against Women Act at a state level. She helped pass the reauthorization of the law right when she joined the U.S. Senate and it was one of the first bills she cosponsored as a U.S. senator.

Crime and Drug Crime

It's hard to pick up a North Dakota newspaper these days and not read about another case of opioid abuse. Senator Heitkamp has been pushing for strong action to help reduce the rise of crime – particularly drug crime – in North Dakota, while also working to address increased levels of illicit and prescription drug use including the increase of opioid abuse.

opened, to combat the increase in crime, drugs, gangs, and trafficking. It's the first new FBI resident agency created in more than 30 years. In December 2013, Senators Heitkamp and John Hoeven (R-ND) called on the FBI to build a permanent location for FBI agents in Williston, stressing the dramatic spike in criminal activity in western North Dakota.



Sen. Heitkamp joins White House Drug Czar Michael Botticelli and local leaders to unveil new national strategy to fight drug crimes in the Bakken region and Northern Border in August 2014.



Sen. Heitkamp, FBI Director Comey, and local, state, and federal officials at the ribbon cutting of new FBI facility in Williston in June 2016.

- Pressing for a new FBI facility in Williston

Senator Heitkamp successfully pressed Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director James Comey to build a permanent FBI space in Williston, which recently

- Bringing the past and current White House drug czars to North Dakota

Senator Heitkamp brought then-White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Director Gil Kerlikowski to the state in 2013 during which he pledged to dedicate federal resources to address 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. Senator Heitkamp then brought current ONDCP Director Michael Botticelli to North Dakota in 2014 where he committed to continuing to address the growing drug problems in the state, with a particular focus on stopping drug crime and reducing drug abuse in the Bakken.

- Passing legislation in the U.S. Senate to combat opioid abuse

Senator Heitkamp helped pass a bipartisan bill, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, which became law in July

2016, to tackle the nation's heroin and opioid abuse crisis, including in North Dakota communities, by expanding the tools available for law enforcement and first responders, as well as state prescription drug monitoring programs. Additionally, another piece of bipartisan legislation Senator Heitkamp helped introduce to combat drug trafficking also passed in Congress and became law in May 2016. The law will prosecute foreign drug traffickers who attempt to hide behind loopholes in the country's drug crime laws. Their products have often ended up in North Dakota.

- Meeting with local leaders about opioid abuse and introducing a bill to provide resources

In May 2016, Senator Heitkamp helped introduce the LifeBOAT Act to provide needed federal funds for opioid intervention and treatment resources, which would help North Dakota communities fight opioid abuse. She unveiled the bill during a discussion in Bismarck with area leaders to talk about the needs of the Bismarck community to build a coordinated effort against opioid abuse.



With community leaders in Bismarck, Sen. Heitkamp discusses a community approach to combat opioid and heroin abuse in May 2016.

- Expanding drug take-back sites
Senator Heitkamp also sought to expand access to drug take-back sites to stop 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 challenges and Senator Heitkamp has been working to address them and improve safety in Indian Country.

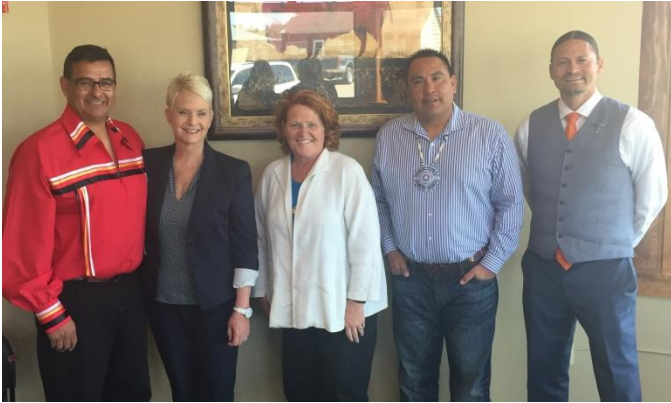
- Bringing the FBI Director to North Dakota's Indian Country

Since 2013, Senator Heitkamp has been pushing for a federal law enforcement presence in Indian Country, and particularly on MHA Nation, to combat drug and human trafficking crimes, addiction, and exploitation. In June 2016, FBI Director Comey visited Fort Berthold at Senator Heitkamp's request to discuss the need for an improved federal response on the ground in Indian Country, particularly on MHA Nation, to combat the serious problems with crime. Director Comey's visit in June 2016 included a personal tour of the reservation with tribal chairman Mark Fox as well as frank discussions on the need for an improved federal response on the ground in Indian Country. Senator Heitkamp invited Director Comey to Indian Country in North Dakota during a U.S. Senate hearing in 2015 during which she forcefully pressed him about how the FBI has a responsibility in Indian Country.

- Pressing federal officials about the challenges in Indian Country

Through multiple conversations, Senator Heitkamp has pressed the current and former U.S. Attorneys General about the need for a federal law enforcement presence in Indian Country. In April 2015, she joined U.S. Marshals in North Dakota as they did sex offender compliance checks on MHA Nation to reinforce the importance of federal law enforcement in Indian Country. Senator Heitkamp also brought the former White House drug czar to North Dakota in 2013 and during the visit they met with the state's tribal chairman and top tribal law enforcement. Senator Heitkamp has also convened multiple law enforcement discussions on several reservations that have

brought together federal, tribal, state, and local law enforcement; prosecutors; and judges to address the crime issues on the reservations and foster better collaboration. These efforts continued her work since she served as North Dakota's Attorney General.



National and global anti-trafficking leader Cindy McCain, MHA tribal leaders, and Sen. Heitkamp discuss need to combat human trafficking in Indian Country in June 2015.

- Combating human trafficking in Indian Country

Senator Heitkamp is also focused on 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, she brought leaders of two Native American organizations to testify at a U.S. Senate hearing she called for to spotlight these issues in Indian Country – especially in the upper Great Plains. She also brought Cindy McCain to MHA Nation where they met with tribal leaders about the unique challenges tribal communities face in the fight against human trafficking.

- Pushing for improvements to Indian housing

After bringing U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Julian Castro to Turtle Mountain in 2014 to show him the housing challenges in Indian Country, he came back to North Dakota to host an in-depth summit on improving tribal housing issues, which Senator Heitkamp encouraged HUD to do. Senator Heitkamp served as the keynote speaker. Top federal housing, regional banking, and tribal officials discussed current roadblocks to home ownership in tribal communities, and

ways the federal government can work with tribal communities and local financial institutions to enable tribal communities to access safe, permanent housing.

- Addressing mental health challenges in Indian Country

To help address some of the mental health challenges in Native communities, Senator Heitkamp launched a new effort to educate lawmakers on the long-term impact exposure to trauma can have on young people, particularly those living in areas with minimal access to adequate health resources, like rural areas including Indian Country. In the fall of 2014, Senator Heitkamp brought together national experts and policymakers, as well as federal agency representatives to identify ways to reduce the effects of traumatic stress that Native children experience.

- Supporting economic development

To help promote economic development in Indian Country, Senator Heitkamp brought the head of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Maria Contreras-Sweet, to Standing Rock where they announced new training, resources, and support for Native American small businesses and entrepreneurs.



SBA Administrator, Sen. Heitkamp, and tribal leaders discuss new programs to support training and resources for Native American small businesses and entrepreneurs in July 2015.

- Promoting Native health care

Senator Heitkamp has also been pressing the Indian Health Service (IHS) to guarantee

quality health care for North Dakota's tribal communities as the agency works to turn around the substandard quality of Indian health care and other severe problems at some IHS facilities in the Great Plains.

Economic Development and Community Impact

As North Dakota's population rapidly grows and the economy changes, Senator Heitkamp has pushed for the development of a strong, diverse economy that includes energy and agriculture, but also expands to other fields to help North Dakota thrive well into the future.

- Boosting North Dakota's entrepreneurs and startups

To support North Dakota's quickly growing startup community and entrepreneurs, in March 2016, Senator Heitkamp introduced her SEED Act to address challenges facing startups in North Dakota, as well as other rural states and small cities, by helping them get the early stage funding they need to grow their businesses. In July 2014, Senator Heitkamp brought the head of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to Fargo where Senator Heitkamp held the first U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship field hearing in North Dakota. The hearing focused on the roadblocks local entrepreneurs often face in obtaining the small funding they need to start or grow their businesses, which paved the way for the SEED Act.



Sen. Heitkamp holds U.S. Senate Field Hearing about supporting rural startups in Fargo with the head of the U.S. SBA in July 2014.

- Supporting North Dakota's small businesses
Senator Heitkamp has also worked to support small businesses across North Dakota – which represent 95 percent of all employers in the state. During the head of the SBA's visit to North Dakota, Senator Heitkamp also held a meeting with women small business owners to talk about how the SBA can support them and programs already available. She also cosponsored the FAMILY Act which would create a federal paid family and medical leave policy. The goal is to make sure working families have the flexibility they need to care for their loved ones while strengthening the ability of small businesses to support and retain employees.



To better support working families, Sen. Heitkamp and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) meet with local leaders and parents in Jamestown to discuss the FAMILY Act in April 2016.

- Improving North Dakota's infrastructure
With such rapid growth, North Dakota has experienced serious strains on much of its transportation, housing, and infrastructure which Senator Heitkamp is working to address so communities remain strong. Senator Heitkamp voted to pass a long-term transportation bill, which became law in December 2015, to help North Dakota build and expand roads and bridges across the state to improve safety and keep up with the increase of traffic on the roads. She has also fought to expand water systems to provide clean water and pushed for more affordable housing to help alleviate the state's housing crisis.

- Improving mental health resources
Senator Heitkamp has also sought more access to mental health services across the state and helped introduce legislation to address the increase in mental health challenges in North Dakota by bolstering state and local programs.

21st Century Security Challenges

Senator Heitkamp is working to address increases in online security threats that the state's growing number of families and businesses face. Cyber-attacks have already impacted businesses and universities in the state, and Senator Heitkamp wants to make sure the increasing number of businesses, individuals, and families who do much of their work online are effectively protected from cyber threats.

Additionally, as more North Dakotans rely on the internet for daily tasks, the need for increased connectivity and speeds is also evident. This is particularly apparent on in rural communities and on tribal lands.

- Addressing online challenges facing North Dakota families, businesses, and tribal communities

In June 2015, Senator Heitkamp held a discussion in Grand Forks about ways to address increases in online security threats that the state's growing number of families and businesses – large and small – face across North Dakota. They also talked about how at the same time, insufficient high-speed internet and lack of reliable cellular service still impacts many rural communities, especially in Indian Country.

- Supporting legislation to improve cybersecurity and support first responders

Senator Heitkamp also voted for comprehensive legislation the U.S. Senate passed to improve cybersecurity and better protect national security and American businesses. The bill, which became law in December 2015, includes an amendment Senator Heitkamp wrote to make sure states that want assistance securing their emergency response networks from

cyberattacks will receive help from the federal government.

- Bringing an FCC Commissioner to North Dakota to discuss internet access

In May 2016, Senator Heitkamp brought Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel to North Dakota to discuss the E-Rate program, which helps provide high-speed internet in schools and libraries, and the need to expand internet and cellular service on Indian reservations. Senator Heitkamp has also pressed other top federal officials about the need to fill these gaps.



Sen. Heitkamp and second in command at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security talk with Border Patrol officers at the Pembina Area Port in April 2015.

- Bringing the second in command at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to the Northern Border

In April 2015, Senator Heitkamp brought U.S. Department of Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to North Dakota's Northern Border in Pembina to see firsthand the challenges border security personnel there face and discuss ways to improve the safety of North Dakota communities. Senator Heitkamp has held discussions with law enforcement and other officials in Pembina, Grand Forks, and Minot about the need to prioritize cooperation and communication when tackling the challenges at the border.

- Introduced a bill to strengthen security at the Northern Border

In the U.S. Senate, Senator Heitkamp introduced a bipartisan bill, which was passed unanimously by the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, to make sure the federal government correctly assesses threats along the Northern Border.

- Pushing for a stronger federal Northern Border drug strategy

In August 2014, Senator Heitkamp helped the White House drug czar announce his new national strategy to fight drug crimes in the Bakken and at the Northern Border, which she specifically pushed for.



In September 2014, Sen. Heitkamp brought then-head of U.S. Office of Personnel Management to Minot Air Force Base to discuss needed changes to better recruit and retain federal workers.

- Recruiting and retaining quality federal workers

Senator Heitkamp has also pressed for solutions on how best to recruit and retain quality federal workers, particularly in regions such as the Bakken and the Northern Border where high cost of living and remote locations pose unique challenges. In September 2014, Senator Heitkamp brought the then-head of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management Katherine Archuleta – who oversaw workforce issues – to North Dakota to hear firsthand about the challenges federal agencies face in maintaining a workforce in the face of North

Dakota’s economic growth. Since Director Archuleta’s visit, three pay rate increases that Senator Heitkamp pushed for have been approved, improving pay for nearly 500 employees across western North Dakota and civilian workers at Minot Air Force Base. Senator Heitkamp led a U.S. Senate hearing on this issue in October 2015. To respond to the challenges she heard, she introduced the Flexible HIRE Act to help the federal government hire and retain the effective federal workforce needed to support local communities and businesses across North Dakota and the nation – particularly in areas where remoteness or unique economic circumstances create hiring challenges, such as along the Northern Border and in the Bakken region.

V. What’s Next?

As part of Senator Heitkamp’s ongoing effort to make North Dakota strong and safe, she has an aggressive schedule planned for the rest of 2016 to continue to bring a focus to these issues and seek solutions. Her work will also continue in the coming years. Highlighted below is a selection of her upcoming events and legislative priorities.

In addition to the events noted below, Senator Heitkamp’s staff is coordinating with leaders across the state in each of the issue areas to build off the success of the Strong & Safe Communities Summit in October 2015 and continue to foster open dialogue and exchange of ideas and best practices across the state.

Transportation of Crude by Rail

- Railroad Emergency Services Preparedness, Operational Needs, and Safety Evaluation (RESPONSE) Act

Senator Heitkamp’s RESPONSE Act was the direct result of the input from first responders like Casselton Fire Chief Tim McLean following the train derailment in Casselton in 2013. The bill passed in the U.S. Senate in May 2016, and Senator Heitkamp is continuing to push for it to pass in the U.S. House of Representatives, where

it was introduced in February 2015 by U.S. Representative Ron Kind (D-WI).



Sen. Heitkamp at Fargo Fire Department in June 2014 to unveil her RESPONSE Act.

After an informative meeting with law enforcement and professionals in Bismarck in May 2016, Senator Heitkamp plans to hold additional discussions around North Dakota to continue to share information and best practices across different regions within the state to respond collectively to one of the major challenges facing our communities.

Indian Country

- U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs field hearing on trauma and mental health challenges

Senator Heitkamp will hold the first U.S. Senate Indian Affairs Committee field hearing in North Dakota. It will focus on the long-term impact of trauma on tribal communities, and promote a better understanding of what trauma is, how it is inflicted, and what the long-term behavioral and physical health impacts of it are.

- Native Veterans Summit
Senator Heitkamp will hold her third Summit with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs officials, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs officials, and tribal representatives to continue to identify the needs of Native veterans in North Dakota.



Sen. Heitkamp talks with folks at her first Native American Veterans Summit in June 2014.

Trafficking and Domestic Violence

- Training for educators on human trafficking
Senator Heitkamp is currently working with North Dakota FUSE, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, and the North Dakota Council of Educational leaders to offer training sessions for professionals in the education community at events this fall.
- USDA/HHS listening sessions on human trafficking

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture will hold two listening sessions in North Dakota to better understand the issue of human trafficking and determine appropriate responses within their agencies to address the issue in rural America.

- Stop, Observe, Ask and Respond (SOAR) to Health and Wellness Act
Senator Heitkamp will continue to work with U.S. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and House members to move their bipartisan SOAR Act forward. It would give health care providers – including doctors, nurses, and social workers – training to help identify and protect victims of human trafficking.

Crime and Drug Crime

- Additional discussions on combating opioid abuse

- The Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children

After passing unanimously in the U.S. Senate in 2015, Senator Heitkamp's

bipartisan bill to improve the lives of Native American children passed in a committee in the U.S. House of Representatives – the final step before a full vote in the House. Senator Heitkamp testified at a congressional hearing in the House on in May 2016 in support of this important effort.



Sen. Heitkamp testifies on behalf of her bill that would create a Commission on Native Children at a U.S. House of Representatives Committee hearing in May 2016.

conversation in the state so North Dakotans speak up and work together to tackle these challenges and truly make changes. It isn't enough to create economic opportunity. North Dakota also has to maintain the core of who we are as North Dakotans – neighbors and friends. And North Dakotans need to do everything possible to maintain that sense of community that makes the state unique. By working together, as North Dakotans do so well, families and communities can build a strong and safe future for North Dakota one idea at a time, and this report is a stepping stone to get there.

Economic Development and Community Impact

- Meeting with the Postmaster General
Following up on her Fix My Mail initiative, Senator Heitkamp is bringing Postmaster General Megan Brennan to North Dakota to address mail delivery and service challenges that individuals and businesses have been experiencing over the past few years across North Dakota.
- Farm Bill tour
There are few pieces of legislation as important to the North Dakota economy as the Farm Bill. Senator Heitkamp helped write, negotiate, and pass the 2014 Farm Bill, which will remain in effect until late-2018. Already looking ahead to the 2018 Farm Bill, Senator Heitkamp will gather information on the current state of agricultural affairs through a series of visits with producers and organizations across North Dakota.

VI. Conclusion

Senator Heitkamp's Strong & Safe Communities Initiative is about starting and continuing a needed