

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 7, 2006

The Honorable Michael W. Wynne
Secretary of the Air Force
Department of Defense
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As the Air Force continues gathering information to determine which site is best suited for the Air Force Financial Services Center (AFFSC), we would like to take this opportunity to elaborate on the Rapid City area's ability to provide qualified personnel for the AFFSC.

At times there is a misperception that rural states are unable to meet civilian labor needs required by larger operations, such as the AFFSC. To the contrary, the state of South Dakota and, in particular, Rapid City is known for its robust labor force and is fully capable of providing all the qualified personnel necessary to staff the AFFSC now, and into the future. In fact, the South Dakota Career Center approximates that there are currently almost 1,800 registered individuals seeking call center related employment within commuting distance of Ellsworth. According to the state's most recent official estimate of the labor supply in the Rapid City area, there are over 17,000 individuals currently looking for employment or willing to change employers.

In addition to an abundant labor pool, the Rapid City area has vast experience supporting call centers that perform many of the same functions that would be required of the AFFSC. At least a dozen customer financial service or telemarketing companies prosper in Rapid City and the surrounding region. Several of these call centers currently house several hundred employees each. These companies have discovered that the Black Hills region is quite adept at providing highly qualified and skilled employees.

In fact, the state of South Dakota is considered by many large financial corporations as the preferred location for their service call centers, both because of the large potential employee base and a multitude of favorable business incentives. The state boasts an established track record of hosting some of the biggest financial service operations in the country, names like Citigroup, Mutual of Omaha, Capital Card, Wells Fargo, Premier Bankcard, Morgan Stanley, HSBC Financial Services, and Midcontinent Communications to mention just a few. Many current employees, or former employees, of these large centers would be more than eager to work at Ellsworth while enjoying the security that comes with a federal government job.

The Rapid City community is eager, willing, and capable to play a central role to assist with this process. Over the past six years, the South Dakota Career Center in Rapid City has typically fielded six applicants for every available job opening. The Center stands ready to provide the AFFSC commander necessary interview rooms, applicant screenings, and any other support services needed during initial phases of the interview process.

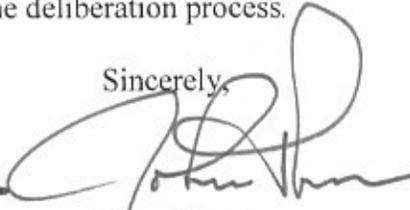
South Dakota takes great pride in Ellsworth, and its Congressional delegation remains committed to demonstrating the tremendous value of the base. We believe it is the ideal candidate for the AFFSC mission and, if selected, we are each committed to providing the Air Force whatever assistance it may need to ensure the AFFSC becomes a successful and model operation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please feel free to contact us if we can be of further assistance during the deliberation process.

Sincerely,



Tim Johnson
U.S. Senator



John Thune
U.S. Senator



Stephanie Herseth
U.S. Representative