



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Oct. 20, 2015

Dear Missoula Citizens,

Yesterday, Oct. 19, I had bariatric surgery. I am recuperating at home and expect to be back to full speed in less than a month. I also expect to be much lighter and to feel much better. I expect this surgery to give me a healthier life.

I'm 50 years old, and I've struggled to keep my weight down all my life. Since I was 20, I've likely lost and gained at least 600 pounds. Each time I've lost weight, I've gained it all back and then some. I've entered a medical category of people who have been clinically proven to benefit permanently from bariatric surgery.

Here's what we know: Most bariatric surgery patients maintain successful weight loss long-term. The risks of death from the conditions and diseases that often accompany severe obesity – cancer, diabetes, hypertension and more – are reduced by as much as 90 percent. People afflicted with severe obesity are physiologically unable to keep weight off because of biological factors such as metabolism and hormones. The disease of obesity is progressive.

I am surprisingly healthy. My blood pressure is good, and I do not have diabetes. My cholesterol is well within acceptable range. People in my family live a long time. I've joked about my weight all my life, but it's not very funny. It's a chore to carry it around, and I don't get to do things I want to do, like climb to the top of Mount Jumbo, ride my bike, travel comfortably in an airplane or simply walk my dogs.

I'm lucky to live in Missoula, where my doctor is a great man and a friend, as are my surgeon and my bariatric nurse. The medical expertise here is abundant, and so is the dedication to innovations that help people.

My health insurance will pay for much of this surgery. I'll pay about \$3,200. My surgery will not add to anyone's tax bill (I'm a taxpayer, too, by the way), nor will it increase anyone's premium. And it should help prevent medical costs down the road.

I would rather not tell you about any of this, but because I chose a very public profession and because my appearance will be changing very quickly and because the potential for me having

this surgery has already been in the news, I don't want to be in the position of simply saying "no comment" when someone inevitably asks if I've had surgery.

I won't be making further comment to the news media regarding the procedure or its outcome, but I did want my constituents to hear about this directly from me.

Taking this step is a big deal for me. It is expensive, it has risks, it's painful and it's life-changing. But I want to be healthy because I love Missoula, my job, my family and friends and my life. I want to make that climb to the top of Mount Jumbo, along with all the other fun activities we're so lucky to have around us.

I so look forward to continuing to serve you with energy that matches my resolve to make Missoula the best community in the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Engen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'J' at the beginning.

John Engen
Mayor