



# Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)  
Breaking the Methamphetamine Supply Chain: Law Enforcement Challenges  
Hearing before the Senate Finance Committee**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing.

Meth is a personal fight for me. I've seen firsthand how it can ruin lives. I've seen what it does to young people. I've gone to high schools in Montana and talked with kids about meth.

More than four out of ten Montana teens report that meth is easy to get. That's second only to marijuana.

And Montana police officers tell me that meth is their number one law enforcement problem.

The National Association of Counties found that methamphetamine is the number one illegal drug problem for nearly half of the counties in the United States. Nationwide, nearly four in ten local law enforcement agencies have identified meth as the drug that poses the greatest threat to their area.

In April, the Finance Committee held a hearing on the effects of meth on the child welfare system and how it is hurting kids and parents alike.

And in July, the Senate passed the Improving Outcomes for Children Affected by Meth Act of 2006, which includes provisions to enhance the safety of children affected by meth abuse and addiction.

We reauthorized the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, which is the largest source of child welfare funding dedicated to services for children and families, and targets an available \$40 million dollar increase in mandatory funding for meth-related services that include family treatment.

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We are working to help protect children and families from the dangers of meth abuse. Today, we will focus on a new angle: how to break the meth supply chain through law enforcement.

We're working on the problem. We now have improved law enforcement techniques and measures to monitor the chemicals that are used to make meth. The Combat Meth Act of 2005, which I am proud to have co-sponsored, was a major step forward in preventing diversion of medicines containing pseudoephedrine, an ingredient found in many over-the-counter common cold and allergy medicines, into meth.

The Combat Meth Act requires that medicines containing pseudoephedrine be relocated behind the counter on or after September 30, 2006, and establishes a pharmacy logbook registry for purchasers of these cold products. Putting the meth precursor chemicals "behind the counter" is meant to disrupt supply.

In Montana, we placed these medicines behind the counter by passing a similar law in July 2005. The Yellowstone County Task Force told me that this is a step in the right direction. Because now it is very difficult for the small, 'mom and pop' meth producers to obtain the chemicals that can be used to produce meth.

And as a result, meth production in Montana and elsewhere — by both small and large-scale laboratories — appears to be decreasing.

Even though meth production for both small and large-scale laboratories is decreasing in the United States, production of meth in Mexico, largely in "superlabs" controlled by drug trafficking organizations, has picked up.

The biggest "link" in the meth supply chain is at the southwest border. It is now estimated that 80 percent of meth consumed in the United States originates in Mexico and is smuggled into the country.

What Benjamin Franklin once said is true of meth as well: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." In order to make our prevention efforts more effective, we need to know where to put our resources to break the meth supply chain.

Today we will hear from Lt. Dan Springer, Commander of the Missouri River Drug Task Force, headquartered in Bozeman, Montana.

I am proud of the work that the Task Force is doing. The investigations in Bozeman are critical to stem the tide of national and international drug organizations that are preying on Montanans.

And the Missouri River Task Force and other task forces around the country need the dollars to fight meth — to locate and clean up meth labs and put criminals making and dealing meth behind bars where they belong.

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I am eager to hear from Lt. Springer about the changing meth “hot spots” and the challenges that law enforcement officers now face as a result of the shift in meth production.

Carl Venne, the Crow Tribal Chairman and an Advisory Council Member of the Montana Meth Project, will also be testifying here today. Meth abuse is particularly devastating on the reservations, which are experiencing an increase in drug trafficking. I look forward to hearing Chairman Venne’s perspective on Tribal efforts and strategies to combat meth, as well as meth law enforcement resources for reservations.

Education, prevention and treatment are vital in the fight against this growing threat to the welfare of our kids. Our law enforcement officers are stepping up to meet this challenge. And I am working to help them in their efforts.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. We must do everything that we can to support our law enforcement officers. We must break the meth supply chain. We must do so the health and safety of Montanans and all Americans. And we must do so for our children.

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