



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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BAUCUS URGES SWIFT SENATE APPROVAL OF VIETNAM PNTR

Senate Finance Committee approved permanent normal trade relations legislation today

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, hailed Committee passage this morning of his legislation to grant Vietnam Permanent Normal Trade Relations status (“PNTR”), and urged the bill’s quick approval by the full Senate as soon as possible. Baucus introduced the Vietnam PNTR legislation in June of this year, along with U.S. Senators Gordon Smith (R-Ore.), John McCain (R-Ariz.), John Kerry (D-Mass.), Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), and Tom Carper (D-Del.). Representatives Jim Ramstad (R-Minn.), Mike Thompson (D-Calif.), and forty-three other House members are sponsoring a companion bill in the House to afford PNTR to Vietnam, making permanent what was formerly called “most-favored nation” trade status. That legislation is still pending in the House.

“We should be leaping at the chance to fully engage the U.S. with Vietnam’s emerging economy and its 83 million new customers. We should work hard and work fast to approve Vietnam PNTR as soon as possible,” Baucus said. **“The Finance Committee took an important step today, and now Congress needs to bring this 15-year process of reconciliation with Vietnam to its long-sought conclusion. I’ll keep pushing to move this legislation forward.”**

On May 31, Vietnam and the United States signed their bilateral WTO accession agreement, which paves the way for Vietnam to join the WTO. Vietnam hopes to become a WTO member before it hosts the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Hanoi in November, which President Bush and other APEC leaders are planning to attend. Baucus says the U.S. should grant Vietnam PNTR status before that event.

PNTR is a pledge of non-discrimination. A grant of PNTR is a promise not to treat imports from one country more harshly than those from another country. Vietnam is currently ineligible for PNTR because it is subject to the Jackson-Vanik provisions of U.S. law, which withhold PNTR from certain Communist or formerly Communist countries. The United States typically terminates a country’s Jackson-Vanik status and grants that country PNTR as part of its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Baucus-Smith legislation takes this action with regard to Vietnam.

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