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## SENATORS URGE PRESIDENT TO RESOLVE BEEF WITH JAPAN DURING PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT NEXT WEEK

*State visit offers opportunity to end Japan's unscientific ban on U.S. beef imports*

**Washington, DC** – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) led 24 colleagues today in calling on President Bush to resolve Japan's ban on U.S. beef during the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's state visit next week. In 2003, Japan banned U.S. beef after a cow in Washington state tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE. In December 2005, Japan lifted its two-year old ban on U.S. beef from cattle 20 months of age or younger, but suspended imports again in January after a Japan-bound veal shipment was found to contain a backbone that posed no risk to human health. Japan resumed shipments of U.S. beef from cattle 20 months of age or younger in July 2006. International health standards certify the safety of all U.S. beef, bone-in and boneless, regardless of age – which makes Japan's continuing ban unscientific and unfair.

**“Japan's failure to fairly accept imports of perfectly safe beef is a real stumbling block for our nations' relationship. This state visit is a perfect opportunity to resolve America's beef with Japan,”** said Baucus. **“The President should tell Prime Minister Abe in no uncertain terms that it's time for Japan to stop playing games with trade rules, and to start accepting delicious, safe U.S. beef into its market now. The President and the Prime Minister should sit down over a couple of big Montana steaks and solve this problem once and for all.”**

The Finance Committee oversees U.S. trade policy. Baucus has been at the forefront of efforts to urge Japan to lift its beef ban. Baucus has traveled to Japan to meet with Japan's trade and agriculture ministers to argue for lifting the ban, and brought senior officials from Japan to eat Montana beef on a Montana ranch to encourage them to lift the ban as well. The text of the Senators' letter follows here:

April 20, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge you to finally achieve full access to the Japanese beef market during your April 2007 summit with Prime Minister Abe.

As you know, American ranchers and meat processors produce the healthiest and safest beef in the world. Nevertheless, current Japanese import standards severely restrict U.S. beef imports contrary to international scientific standards. These restrictions cost the U.S. cattle and meat processing industries over a billion dollars every year.

For the nearly four years since Japan first banned American beef, we have worked tirelessly to open the Japanese market, but progress has been incremental and frustrating. As you know, Japan banned U.S. beef after a dairy cow in Washington State tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE, in 2003. In October 2004, the United States and Japan signed an agreement to resume imports. Only in December 2005 did shipments to Japan finally resume, but restricted to U.S. beef from cattle 20 months and younger.

International trade depends on transparent, rules-based guidelines to facilitate the fair exchange of goods. World Trade Organization rules require sanitary restrictions be science-based, and the world's scientists agree that U.S. beef is safe, whether boneless, bone-in, or offals, regardless of the age of the cattle. The health and safety of our beef was again confirmed by an expert panel of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) earlier this year, and we anticipate that our status as a 'controlled risk' country will be recognized by the OIE late next month. In our view, all trading partners, including Japan, should bring their import requirements for U.S. beef into line with the OIE standards and allow trade in beef from animals over 30 months.

Mr. President, we urge you to tell Prime Minister Abe that America's ranchers and beef processors have been patient and flexible for four years. Yet today, our patience has run out. Sound science, international trade rules, and the Japanese consumer all demand U.S. beef and beef products achieve full access to the Japanese market without delay.

Thank you for your efforts on this important issue. We look forward to working with you to resolve this problem.

Sincerely,

Max Baucus  
Barack Obama  
Larry Craig  
Kent Conrad  
Mike Enzi  
Orrin Hatch  
Ben Nelson  
Pat Roberts  
Mark Pryor  
Jon Tester  
Chuck Hagel  
Norm Coleman

Craig Thomas  
Patty Murray  
Maria Cantwell  
Ken Salazar  
Blanche Lincoln  
Sam Brownback  
Wayne Allard  
James Inhofe  
Saxby Chambliss  
Mike Crapo  
Amy Klobuchar  
John Thune

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