



For Immediate Release
Thursday, October 2, 2008

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**Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding H. R. 7222, The Andean Trade Preferences Extension
(As entered into the Congressional Record)**

President John F. Kennedy said that “if a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”

This week, Congress has worked hard on the American economy. No matter how grave our problems today, America remains the world’s richest nation. Our domestic challenges are great. But ours remains a land of opportunity and prosperity.

With our own economy in hard times, it is easy to forget the world’s poorest. It is easy to forget that more than a billion people around the world live on a dollar a day or less. Concerned about maintaining our own standard of living, we can forget that the wealth of too many consists of little more than the clothes on their backs and the few coins in their pockets.

The legislation that we consider today proves we are not an island — economically or morally. Today’s legislation accomplishes four key objectives. It extends the Generalized System of Preferences for one year, extends the Andean Trade Preferences Act for six months to one year, with safeguards to ensure that Bolivia and Ecuador comply with that program’s rules, affords the Dominican Republic enhanced access to the U.S. market in a way that benefits U.S. producers, and allows our trade preference program with Africa — known as AGOA — to work better.

I am proud that, by considering and passing this legislation, America again proves that we are still capable of thinking of others. By acting on this bill, Americans underscore that those who do not share our wealth must not be denied hope for a better life. By extending our trade preference programs, Americans reaffirm the fundamental belief that the world’s poor are no less human than we are, and they deserve a fair shake for a hard day’s work.

America has crafted trade preference programs for those hundreds of millions of poor around the world, not with a handout, but with a leg up. These preference programs offer more than 130 countries a way out of extreme poverty — poverty that is not just morally repugnant, but politically destabilizing. Our GSP and ATPA programs give developing country workers a living, rewards productive investment, and grants better access to America’s market.

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The benefits of these programs are mutual and create jobs that earn good wages in Montana and the rest of the country. Retail and transportation jobs in America depend on flower exports from Ecuador and Colombia. We sell America cotton to Andean and Dominican textile buyers who turn it into fabric and apparel. American manufacturers rely on imports from GSP beneficiaries to lower input costs on electrical parts and building materials. And American consumers benefit from lower priced products from diamond rings to tires.

Our preference programs are not perfect. My colleagues and I are concerned that our preference programs may help those who do not need or deserve our help. We are concerned that certain beneficiary countries boast globally competitive industries and wealthy owners. We are concerned that certain beneficiary countries show disdain for America's foreign policies and do not provide adequate protections for the American companies operating in those countries.

Yet I recognize that the good and prosperity of the many cannot be sacrificed to punish the few. The inappropriate actions of a few cannot lead us to inaction that hurts the many and throws entire economies into a spiral of insecurity and poverty.

This legislation on our preference programs is no blank check. Our preference programs require beneficiary countries to protect U.S. investment and intellectual property and to provide workers with internationally recognized worker rights. Our programs provide the administration with the flexibility to work within the program in order to determine whether or not to designate a country a beneficiary country. And when beneficiary countries do not abide by these eligibility criteria, they must be held responsible. I commend the administration for launching an ATPA review of Bolivia to ensure that it continues to abide by the eligibility criteria.

Our preference programs also contain measures to make sure that developing countries that become globally competitive graduate to operate under the same terms as the rest of America's trading partners.

These policies are not perfect. No policy this body passes is static. Every policy requires review and reevaluation to make sure it works how it should, for whom it should. As Chairman of the Finance Committee, I am committed with my Colleagues to reviewing and reevaluating our trade preference programs to make them work better for Americans and our trading partners.

Let us do things the right way, the America way, and extend our preference programs.

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