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**BAUCUS DISCUSSES BEEF, TRADE PREFERENCES,
EDUCATION WITH VIETNAM'S PRIME MINISTER,
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LEADERS**

*Finance Chairman and Vietnamese officials meet to strengthen economic, trade ties:
Baucus says Vietnam should further open market to U.S. beef,
meet labor criteria for preferences*

Hanoi, Vietnam – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) held cordial meetings on Tuesday evening and on Wednesday with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and Uong Chu Luu the Vice-Chairman of the Vietnam's National Assembly, as well as with Vietnamese trade and education ministers. Baucus, who was instrumental in the granting of Permanent Normal Trade Relations to Vietnam, lauded the growth of the economic relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam, applauded Vietnam's implementation of the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), and congratulated the Prime Minister and the Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly on Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization. Baucus then outlined additional steps that can strengthen the U.S.-Vietnam relationship, particularly the full opening of the Vietnamese market to all U.S. beef - a point Baucus stressed to Industry and Trade Minister Vu Huy Hoang - and compliance with labor rights criteria necessary for consideration of U.S. trade preferences for Vietnam.

"Our two countries have a remarkable history together. We truly are the model of how two former enemies can get over a painful past and become close friends and partners," said Baucus. **"I was pleased to be able to congratulate Prime Minister Dung and Vice-Chairman Luu on the great strides Vietnam has made in the global marketplace, particularly with their accession to the WTO this year. I also felt it was important to outline ways that the U.S. – Vietnam relationship can and should be strengthened, particularly the full opening of Vietnam's markets to beef from U.S. cattle more than 30 months of age, and compliance with labor rights criteria that will allow the U.S. to grant Vietnam trade preferences. I am convinced that the positive economic relationship between our countries will be long and beneficial."**

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While Vietnam – at Baucus's urging – has largely opened its market to imports of American beef, Vietnam does not yet accept U.S. beef from cattle over 30 months. Vietnam is conducting a risk assessment to determine whether to open its market. Baucus emphasized to Vietnamese Minister of Industry and Trade Vu Huy Huong the need for a positive result to the assessment, and raised the issue of too-high tariffs on U.S. pulse crops – peas and lentils – as they are imported to Vietnam.

Vietnam is currently under consideration by the office of the United States Trade Representative for inclusion in the Generalized System of Preferences, the program through which America provides certain trade preferences to developing economies. Baucus said that he favors Vietnam's inclusion in GSP, but that Vietnam must first meet criteria requiring GSP countries to provide internationally recognized worker rights, particularly the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively.

Also in Hanoi today, Baucus met with Vietnamese Vice Minister of Education and Training Dr. Banh Tien Long education officials to discuss the implementation of a recent educational exchange agreement between the University of Montana and Vietnam. He also spoke to members of the American Chamber of Commerce, and gave a major address at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (*note: text and details of speech, as well as photos, to come in separate release*).

Attached please find photographs from Senator Baucus's meetings today with Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and Minister of Trade and Industry Vu Huy Huong. Photos should be credited to the Senate Finance Committee/Carol Guthrie.

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