



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
June 11, 2003

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Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley and Max Baucus Upon Passage of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003

Today the United States Senate is sending a powerful message to the ruling military junta in Burma: The world will neither tolerate nor forget their crimes against the rightfully elected leader of Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi, her followers, and the Burmese people.

We are particularly pleased that the bill we passed today guarantees ongoing congressional oversight. Over the past several days, we have worked closely with Senator McConnell to make this legislation as effective as possible. We appreciate Senator McConnell's strong leadership on this issue.

Unlike the prior bill, Congress now has the ability to renew the trade sanctions annually – but must cast a vote to do so. An annual vote will ensure Congressional debate and review over the changing situation in Burma. This process will help Congress make the right choices, so that we can be assured that we are doing everything we can to help the Burmese people. We should be forced annually to revisit how we can best aid those working for democratic change and freedom in that long-suffering country.

Other countries, including the European Union, are also considering sanctions against Burma. We urge the Administration to work with our allies, particularly those in the region, so that the junta faces a united front. We must continue to press our allies for support. In the meantime, we join our colleagues in condemning the military junta and hoping for the swift and safe release of Suu Kyi.

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