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Grassley Urges Trade Promotion Authority This Year

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, a leader of the Committee on Finance, today pushed hard for trade promotion authority for the President during committee consideration of trade agreements with Vietnam and Jordan.

“The United States has been out of the trade game,” Grassley said. “Bilateral trade agreements will get us back in the ballpark. But we won’t score a home run until we give the President trade promotion authority. The President needs that broad authority to negotiate credibly and effectively with other trading powers.”

Grassley’s comments came after the Finance Committee approved the U.S.-Vietnam bilateral agreement and opened debate on legislation to implement the U.S.-Jordan free trade agreement. Grassley said the Vietnam agreement will open new markets for U.S. products and give American consumers access to more products from Vietnam. Grassley expressed concern about the way the Jordan agreement could enforce labor and environmental provisions via trade sanctions. “I hope we can fix this problem as the legislation moves forward,” Grassley said.

U.S. consumers and manufacturers could reap a tremendous number of benefits if the President had trade promotion authority, Grassley said. Several senators, including Grassley, urged Chairman Max Baucus to schedule consideration of a trade promotion authority bill this year. Grassley and Baucus have been discussing the issue for months, beginning when Grassley was committee chairman.

Grassley said he remains hopeful that the committee will take up trade promotion authority legislation this year, noting that Baucus called it his intention to do so. Grassley said the issue is too important to delay until next year. Under a delay, the United States would fall further behind in its participation in trade agreements, Grassley said.

“Just a few years ago, the Finance Committee passed a trade promotion authority bill by a wide bipartisan margin,” Grassley said. “I hope we can regain a strong bipartisan consensus on trade this year.”

