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Opening Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley
Senate Finance Committee Mark-up of Trade Adjustment Assistance
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Mr. Chairman, when this mark-up began last week, I stated that I support trade adjustment assistance. But not in the partisan way this legislation has been advanced. I am still dismayed that the bill we are marking up today contains provisions from the Democratic-passed stimulus package that make sweeping and permanent changes to our health care system. Just as my colleagues on the other side failed to work in a bipartisan fashion on economic stimulus, they have followed this same course again on TAA. This is very disappointing.

And I want to again say that we must not lose sight of the importance of renewing the President's trade promotion authority this year. I know that some Members of this Committee believe that we should act only after the House has acted on TPA. But this appears to be criteria that is selectively applied. Just look at what we're doing this morning: marking up trade adjustment assistance legislation before the House has acted. We also marked up fast track legislation in 1997 before the House acted, as well. And it was a strongly bipartisan bill that the Committee approved with only one dissenting vote. So making a Committee vote on renewing the President's trade negotiating authority contingent with House action is not in accord with the recent action of this Committee, including what we're doing here today.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, I believe, and many Members of this Committee believe, that trade adjustment assistance ought to be considered in tandem with legislation to renew the President's trade negotiating authority. This is just not my idea. When President Kennedy first designed the trade adjustment assistance program in the 1960s, he specifically stated that adjustment assistance was integrally linked to the Kennedy Administration's overall effort to reduce barriers to foreign trade. That linkage was explicitly stated in President Kennedy's message to Congress, when he announced the first TAA program as part of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962. Here's what President Kennedy said in his 1962 message to Congress: "I am also recommending as an essential part of the new trade [expansion] program that companies, farmers, and workers who suffer damage from increased foreign import competition be assisted in their efforts to adjust to that competition."

Ever since President Kennedy created the linkage between trade expansion and trade adjustment assistance, that linkage has been maintained, by Democrat and Republican Administrations. The linkage between trade and adjustment assistance makes sense. It made sense when President Kennedy designed the TAA program in 1962. It makes sense today. It ought to be preserved. I will oppose any effort to sever the historic linkage between trade expansion and trade adjustment assistance. Finally, Mr. Chairman, I again regret that we can't get a vote by a date certain on the President's most import trade policy initiative. As I said last week, we shouldn't call it trade promotion authority for the President. What we're really talking about is "trade promotion authority for America." That's because America will win if we can realize the promise of opening new markets for our farmers, ranchers, and workers. But America will also lose – our farmers, ranchers, and workers will lose – if our effort to renew the President's trade negotiating authority gets bogged down in partisan bickering. I urge my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to work with me on TPA for America. We can do this – we must do this – in a bipartisan way, in the great and enduring tradition of this Committee.

