



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Chairman

NEWS RELEASE

<http://finance.senate.gov>

For Immediate Release
March 8, 2007

Contact: Carol Guthrie
202-224-4515

Hearing Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.) Regarding Perspectives on the 2007 Trade Agenda

Welcome to our second Finance Committee hearing on the 2007 trade agenda. On February 15, we heard from the U.S. Trade Representative on the administration's trade agenda. Today, we welcome six key stakeholders to share their perspectives.

Former Majority Leader Mike Mansfield once said:

“[K]nowledge is essential for acceptance and understanding. By examining the political heritage, the economic experience and even the national myths that tie people together . . . we can begin to better understand each other and contribute to the knowledge and understanding that will . . . lead to a better world.”

As a Montanan, Mike Mansfield long enjoyed hearing from diverse voices, from our 11 Native American tribes to the tens of thousands of immigrants who came to Montana from every corner of the world. Montanans recognize that we are best served by listening to as many different voices as we can. It makes us better thinkers. It may even lead to a better world.

Today we have invited witnesses to examine the trade agenda from many angles. We have witnesses who see the trade agenda from the point of view of academia, agriculture, labor, textiles, big business, and small manufacturers.

I welcome our witnesses here today. And I especially welcome Steve Holland, who traveled from Bozeman, Montana, to be here this morning.

Our witnesses bring diverse voices to the debate. But all share a common goal. We all want a trade policy that advances our national interest. We all want America's farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, workers, and innovators to succeed on the world stage. We all want to create and maintain good high-paying jobs, here in America. And we all want to do these things in a way that preserves our environment.

--1 more--

Trade policy is at a critical juncture. The forces of globalization are marching forward. Our trading partners, especially China, are locking up key export markets abroad. And America's fast track negotiating authority expires in less than 4 months.

Article 1, section 8, of the Constitution gives Congress the responsibility "To regulate commerce with foreign nations." We will decide what comes next.

How can we best shape the future of trade policy? How can we best use trade policy to create jobs, here in America? And how can we best use trade policy to maintain America's economic leadership for the next generation?

Before Congress answers these questions, we need to hear from the many voices that care about trade policy.

Some voices, including my own, believe that we best advance these goals through a vigorous trade policy. By lowering trade barriers abroad, we develop new export opportunities. We can create jobs and further economic growth here at home.

We cannot sit on the sidelines while our trading partners open critical export markets without us. We cannot trail behind the forces of globalization. We must get out ahead of them. Our workers, farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers deserve nothing less.

But, understandably, many Americans have deep reservations about trade. Outsourcing and falling wages frustrate our workers. Lax enforcement of our trade laws and agreements frustrates our small businesses. And non-tariff barriers abroad frustrate our farmers and ranchers.

We need to listen to all of these voices. We need to create a new consensus. We need to develop a trade policy that commands broader support among Americans. I will work toward those goals.

Senator Mansfield said: "One of the best ways to bring about better understanding is through exchanges of all kinds."

Today's exchange will bring diverse voices to the trade debate. Today's exchange can help us to better understand what has and has not worked in trade policy. And today's exchange may just help us to build a new consensus on trade policy.

We look forward to listening to all of your voices. We look forward to hearing the exchange. We look forward to our getting a better understanding of each other. And we look forward to our making the decisions that will help America's workers, farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers.

Who knows? Today's exchange may even lead to a better world.

###