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**BAUCUS TO LEAD TRADE MISSION TO COLOMBIA, BRAZIL TO STRENGTHEN
TRADE RELATIONS, PROMOTE U.S. EXPORTS**

Finance Chairman to Meet with Top Colombian and Brazilian Officials

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) announced today that he is headed to Colombia and Brazil the week of February 20 to meet with senior government officials in both countries to discuss key economic and trade issues, including the pending U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Doha Round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. Baucus will be accompanied by agricultural and business leaders from Montana, who will explore new business partnerships and export opportunities.

“Colombia and Brazil are strategically important trading partners for the United States,” said Baucus. **“Finalizing our free trade agreement with Colombia and working with Brazil to conclude the Doha Round of trade negotiations will level the playing field for American exporters and create huge opportunities for U.S. agriculture, manufacturing and services. We have delayed action on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement for too long – now is the time to resolve outstanding issues and approve the Free Trade Agreement so American ranchers, farmers and workers can have a chance to compete. This trip will help promote Montana’s world-class agriculture and other products to these vital markets and strengthen our trade relationships with Colombia and Brazil.”**

Baucus will meet with senior government officials in Colombia to discuss the pending FTA and work to address related issues, including labor issues. Baucus has been a leading advocate of the U.S.-Colombia FTA. U.S. farmers and other exporters are steadily losing market share in Colombia to other countries that have free trade agreements with Colombia. Colombian exporters already enjoy duty-free access to the U.S. market under trade preference programs, including the Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA). The U.S.-Colombia FTA would grant American exporters reciprocal duty-free access to Colombia’s market.

Baucus will also tour some of Colombia’s flood-affected areas and discuss the importance of the ATPA, which is set to expire on February 12. In Brazil, Baucus will meet with key leaders to discuss the WTO Doha negotiations and ways to strengthen bilateral trade relations, including by extension of the Generalized System of Preferences, which expired at the end of 2010. The trade mission also will allow Montanan agricultural groups and businesses to learn more about these crucial markets, form partnerships and meet with relevant government agencies.

Baucus has long fought for a robust trade agenda that supports American jobs through strong enforcement of our current agreements and an aggressive pursuit of new markets. The Finance Committee has jurisdiction over international trade.

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