



# Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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## **Remarks of Senator Max Baucus on the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Coalition** (as prepared)

Let me first say thanks to Ambassador Zoellick, Chairman Thomas, Chairman Grassley, and Congressman Dooley. We all worked hard last year to pass a bipartisan trade bill – and it was because of that bipartisan effort, and the hard work that we all put in – that we were able to pass landmark legislation.

I am pleased to be here today to help kick off the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Coalition. I have long been a supporter of trade with Chile. In 1999, I took a group of Montana business people to Chile to press the case directly. And before we passed the broad fast track bill last year, I introduced legislation to grant fast track specifically for a U.S.-Chile Agreement.

Open trade with Chile means opportunities for American farmers, workers, and companies and I know they are eager to compete. Given a level playing field, we can compete with anyone in the world.

But this agreement is important for many other reasons. It sets important precedent on a host of trade issues – from intellectual property and agriculture to labor and environmental standards. And while I think there is room to do more on labor and environment, this agreement is certainly a step in the right direction.

It is a precedent that will affect other agreements we are looking to negotiate – including the Free Trade Area of the Americas and possibly an agreement with several Central American countries. But it will also set precedent on how well we work together to promote trade. We need to work hard to ensure that agreements pass with wide, bipartisan majorities. We need to work together to draft legislation that accurately reflects the agreement. That's the only way to ensure a successful trade strategy for the long term.

So I welcome the launch of this coalition – and more than that, I welcome your message. Bipartisanship is important. And it's critical if we're going to keep moving forward on trade.