



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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**Statement of U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Senate Finance Committee Hearing
“The Social and Economic Effects of the Methamphetamine Epidemic
On Americas’ Child Welfare System”**

A medieval poet once wrote that: “When the orphan sets a crying, the throne of the Almighty is rocked from side to side.” Today, we will hear that our nation is being rocked from side to side. We will hear of the weeping that methamphetamine is bringing to American children.

Every year, here in America, 900,000 children fall victim to abuse or neglect. 900,000 children — that’s as many people as live in the entire state of Montana.

A child who suffers abuse is more likely to grow up to inflict abuse on others. And about a quarter of children who suffer abuse will end up engaging in delinquent behavior.

We have good reason to believe that meth exacerbates child abuse and neglect. Look at the homes where the children of meth abusers live: Their evening meals share the stove with the cooking of a harmful drug. Their toys share space with dangerous chemicals. Their forks and spoons share the sink with pots used to cook meth.

Today we’ll hear real-life stories of what these kids face. We’ll hear from victims of meth abuse. And we’ll hear from people trying to protect their children.

Meth abuse has increased dramatically in recent years. It has reached all corners of America. Meth has become the scourge of many rural American communities.

Last week, I was in Montana talking to students about meth. For several months now, Montana kids have seen graphic and sometimes frightening accounts of meth abuse, through a series of ads run by businessman Tom Siebel. I greatly appreciate Mr. Siebel’s work. He is fighting meth with his own money. And based on what I hear from Montana kids, the ads are having an effect.

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Montana kids tell me that one of the most powerful motivators for kids NOT to use meth is testimony from those who have been affected by it. We can look forward to exactly that kind of testimony here today. We will hear from people who will share their stories of struggle and ultimate victory over meth addiction.

We will also hear the devastating effect that meth is having on the child welfare system. Meth abuse has thrown thousands of children into the safety net of child protective services. Montana's child protective service agencies are struggling to keep up. Kevin Frank from the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services will tell us what Montana case workers face every day, as they try to provide for children from meth-abusing homes.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. I look forward to the work that we will do together to combat the evil of meth. And I look forward to the day when meth will no longer bring children to cry, here in America.

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