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Contact: Communications Office

(202) 224-4515

## **BAUCUS TOUTS \$2.5 BILLION BOOST TO U.S. ECONOMY, MAJOR LABOR IMPROVEMENTS AT COLOMBIA FTA HEARING**

*Finance Chairman Begins Senate Work to Advance Trade Agreement, Says Trade Adjustment Assistance Must Pass with FTAs*

**Washington, DC** – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) kicked off Senate consideration of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) today, touting the \$2.5 billion boost to the U.S. economy the implementation of the agreement will bring and the significant progress on labor rights made by Colombia. Baucus, who led the fight urging the Administration to send the job-creating agreement to Congress, urged Congress to pass Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) together with the Colombia, Korea and Panama FTAs at today's hearing as well.

**"This trade agreement will increase exports by one billion dollars for ranchers, farmers and manufacturers in Montana and across the country, helping to create jobs here at home. Implementation of the Colombia agreement will bring new opportunities for American workers and businesses, allowing our workers to compete on a level playing field and regain lost ground in this crucial market. Colombia has made impressive progress addressing labor rights concerns and the free trade agreement and Labor Action Plan will continue to enhance this progress,"** said Baucus. **"As we move forward with these trade agreements, we also need to help American workers meet the challenge of global competition by enacting a robust, long-term extension of Trade Adjustment Assistance in tandem with the free trade agreements."**

Witnesses at today's hearing today testified about the United States' loss of critical market share in Colombia due to the delay in approving the Colombia FTA. Historically, Colombia has been a top export market for U.S. wheat producers, but despite its advantages, the U.S. has lost its share of the Colombian wheat market to Argentina and Canada, who both have signed FTAs with Colombia. China has increased its market share in Colombia by six-fold in the last decade and has become Colombia's second-largest trading partner.

[Baucus has been an important leader in Senate efforts to pass the Colombia FTA](#) to expand access to the Colombian market for ranchers, farmers and businesses in the United States. In February, he traveled to Colombia [to meet with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos](#) and [other senior government officials](#) to promote the FTA and [examine ways to continue to improve labor rights](#) there.

Senator Baucus has urged Colombia to address concerns related to worker rights, which have delayed approval of the FTA in the United States. Baucus has called on Colombia to strengthen the enforcement of core labor rights, including the right to organize and bargain collectively, improve protection of labor activists from violence, and step up prosecutions of those who perpetrate violence.

Last month, the U.S. and Colombia agreed to the Colombian Action Plan Related to Labor Rights, which commits Colombia to achieve these objectives. The Action Plan includes a series of concrete steps Colombia must take in order for the FTA to move forward and enter into force. Like the FTA, the Action Plan is enforceable. The plan is divided into three stages to ensure that Colombia meets each of its core commitments. Last week, the Administration notified Congress that Colombia has met the first stage of commitments. As a result, Congress and the Administration are now working on the bill to implement the FTA.

Baucus has been a longtime champion of the TAA program, which expired on February 13, 2011. Baucus is working with his colleagues in the House and Senate to extend TAA for all eligible groups. In 2009, Baucus led the effort in Congress to pass the most significant expansion and reform of the TAA program, including new performance measures, since it was created in 1962. TAA provides extended income support and job training to workers, firms, ranchers, farmers and communities that experience job loss because of increased imports or factory shifts abroad and also helps prevent layoffs entirely by assisting trade-distressed companies retool and become more competitive.

After receiving [a commitment last week from the Administration to expand access for U.S. beef in Korea, Baucus pledged his support for the Korea FTA](#) as it moves through the Senate and stated he will work with the Administration on a package of trade measures including the pending FTAs with Korea, Colombia and Panama, as well as renewal of Trade Adjustment Assistance and key trade preference programs.

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