



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2011

Contact: Scott Mulhauser/Erin Shields

(202) 224-4515

BAUCUS PRESSES KIRK FOR ACTION ON COLOMBIA, PANAMA TRADE AGREEMENTS

At Hearing, Finance Chairman Urges Trade Rep to Resolve Korea Beef Issue, Move Forward on Colombia and Panama FTAs, Hold China Accountable

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) urged Ambassador Ron Kirk, the United States Trade Representative (USTR), at a hearing today to quickly resolve the outstanding issues in our pending free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and Korea so Congress can approve all three agreements this year.

"If we want to meet our shared goal of doubling U.S. exports by the end of 2014, it is time to resolve the outstanding issues with the Colombia, Panama and Korea Free Trade Agreements and send these agreements to Congress," said Baucus. **"For two years, the Administration has said it is working to resolve the outstanding issues with the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, while ranchers, farmers and manufacturers in Montana and across the U.S. have steadily lost market share in this large and growing market. It is time to identify the specific steps Colombia and Panama must take to move forward so we can finally approve our free trade agreements with these countries, increase U.S. exports and create jobs here at home. It is time to hold Korea to its agreement to continue working to ensure full access for U.S. beef to the Korean market, consistent with sound science. And it is our duty to hold our trading partners, including China, accountable, so workers and exporters in Montana and across the country have a fair shot at competing."**

Baucus pressed Kirk to provide a specific action plan and timetable to move the Colombia and Panama FTAs. As requested in [a February 14 letter from Baucus](#) and Finance Committee Ranking Member Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Baucus asked Kirk to identify the additional steps Panama and Colombia should take and to provide an expeditious timetable for moving the agreements through Congress. Baucus traveled to Colombia last month to [meet with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos](#) and other [senior government officials](#) to discuss the loss of U.S. market share in this key market and to examine ways to continue to improve labor rights there.

Baucus also asked Kirk for an update on the progress the President promised on access to the Korean beef market for U.S. exporters. He pressed Kirk to hold Korea accountable and continue working to secure an agreement from Korea to consult with the U.S. on a path to full market access in the future, consistent with international scientific guidelines.

Baucus sought answers from Kirk on the best steps the U.S. can take to hold China accountable and how best to develop a stable and dynamic economic relationship with China. Baucus said more progress is needed from China to allow its currency to appreciate, protect and enforce U.S. intellectual property rights, eliminate its policies favoring home-grown, or indigenous innovation that discriminate against American companies and remove its unjustified restrictions on beef and other U.S. agricultural products. He said the U.S. should exert leverage on China by restricting access to the U.S. market to achieve this progress, consistent with World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments.

Baucus also urged Kirk to continue working with him to extend Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) to keep American workers and businesses globally competitive. Baucus has been a long-time champion of the TAA programs, 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.

###