



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding the Free Trade Agreements and Trade Adjustment Assistance**

The Finance Committee will not be able to conduct a mark-up today. Committee rules require a quorum, which must include at least one Member of each party.

Senator Hatch informed me that no Republicans will attend today. And moments ago, Republicans objected to the committee meeting today.

I'm certainly disappointed that my colleagues have chosen not to join us to consider this legislation.

This choice is a strict departure from the years of bipartisan work of this committee.

Senate and Committee rules require 48-hour notice of official Committee business. We provided that notice at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, giving all Members sufficient notice of our meeting today. As always, we take our rules seriously.

But instead of participating in a fair and open forum to discuss these agreements, Members of this Committee chose to block the scheduled mark-up.

The bigger disappointment, however, is that this boycott means the opportunity to pass important job-creation legislation is now delayed.

Today's actions move us farther away from finalizing three trade agreements and a bipartisan Trade Adjustment Assistance package. These bills are so critical to our effort to open new markets, help displaced workers and improve our economy.

Not meeting our commitment today means someone who is without a job and struggling to pay the mortgage, the car payment or their child's tuition will have to wait.

It means workers who have been laid off will have to wait to get the training they need to get a new job, and the pride that comes with going to work every day.

These agreements, together with Trade Adjustment Assistance, will boost our economy by billions of dollars. They represent the opportunities that laid-off workers hope will come. They are the jobs that unemployed Americans need.

In fact, these agreements will create a remarkable 250,000 U.S. jobs and increase U.S. exports by \$13 billion.

That is just the growth and job creation we need in these tough economic times. So many Americans struggling with this economy need this package. They need these jobs.

Every day we delay, we lose ground to our competitors. Tomorrow, Korea's trade agreement with the European Union enters into force. In August, Colombia's agreement with Canada enters into force.

A majority of the Committee has committed to support the Korea/TAA legislation. That means it would have cleared this committee. It would have moved one step closer to ratification.

In these tough economic times, now is simply not the time to walk away. Instead, it is the time for members of both parties to come together to deliver real results for the American people.

American workers -- and our economy -- simply can't afford to wait any longer.

While I'm disappointed in today's boycott, my resolve to continue working to create the jobs Americans need is not diminished.

We will certainly continue that work in the weeks and months to come.

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