COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
NEWS RELEASE
Max Baucus, Chairman
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For Immediate Release
September 18, 2007

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Hearing Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding Breaking the Methamphetamine Supply Chain

Abraham Lincoln said: "Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing."

Lincoln's words apply, among so many things, to the fight to get rid of meth.

In my home state of Montana, I've seen meth ruin lives and destroy families. Montana state law enforcement and child protective agencies are struggling to keep up with the influx of drug-endangered children. The majority of Montana foster care placements are meth-related.

In the fight against meth, our resolution to succeed is so important.

It is one year after enactment of the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act. And there is evidence that we are making progress.

The Combat Meth Act imposed limits on the sale of medicines containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. Those are the most common chemicals that can be converted into meth. And the Act required that purchasers provide identification and sign a sales log.

Starting last year, retail sellers have been required to keep these products behind the counter or in a locked case. And retailers have had to register online.

And partly as a result, last year, meth lab seizures declined 42 percent nationwide. The Combat Meth Act is disrupting supply. I am proud to have co-sponsored the law.

But we must do more.

Meth is still the number one law enforcement problem. The National Association of Counties found that meth is the number one illegal drug problem for 47 percent of the counties in the country. Twenty-one percent said cocaine. Twenty-two percent said marijuana. More counties cited meth than cocaine and marijuana combined.

Four out of five county sheriffs report that local meth production is down. But meth abuse is not. Half of the nation's sheriffs report abuse of the drug has stayed the same. And nearly a third say that it has increased.

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Meth users are changing. Three-fifths of the nation's sheriffs report increased meth use by women. And half of the nation's sheriffs report increased use by teens.

According to a Methamphetamine in Montana 2007 report, half of the adults in Montana prisons are there because of a meth-related crime.

Meth is still far too readily available.

Last September, this Committee heard testimony on the significant reduction in the number of local, mom-and-pop meth labs. That was because of restrictions on the sale of products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.

Today, we will continue our conversation about meth education, meth prevention, and compliance with requirements to keep meth behind the counter.

But now an estimated 80 percent of meth consumed in the United States originates in Mexico. It's smuggled in.

And so today we will hear how Federal, state, and local law enforcement are collaborating to shut down meth smuggling at the border. And we'll hear of efforts to control the legally-produced chemicals that are used for meth production.

The fight against meth is not over.

We need to continue meth education, prevention, and treatment. And we need to redouble our resolve to break the meth supply chain at the border.

In the battle against meth, we must maintain our resolution to succeed. That resolution remains vitally important. And with that resolution, let us bring to an end the problem of meth.

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