



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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Grassley, Baucus Work to End Loophole Potentially Affecting Iraqi Cultural Antiquities

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, today introduced legislation to close a legal loophole that could allow looted Iraqi antiquities to be brought into the United States. The *Emergency Protection for Iraqi Cultural Antiquities Act of 2003* (EPIC Antiquities Act) was introduced with Sen. Max Baucus, ranking member.

Until recently, the Iraqi Sanctions Regulations restricted trade with Iraq. But, in May 2003, the United Nations Security Council lifted most sanctions on Iraq. The resolution also said that members of the United Nations should establish a prohibition on trade in archaeological, cultural, historical, religious, and rare scientific items of Iraq that may have been illegally removed from the country. Grassley's legislation authorizes the President to impose immediate emergency import restrictions on the archaeological and ethnological materials of Iraq.

"I don't want to get rid of the established process for protecting cultural antiquities, but this bill permits an extra guarantee of protection for Iraq's cultural antiquities in the short term while Iraq completes its transition," Grassley said. "The last thing that we in Congress want to do is fail to act to prevent trade in looted Iraqi artifacts here in the United States."

Baucus said, "This common sense legislation will help to protect the history and heritage of Iraq and is a good step toward ensuring that Iraq's cultural artifacts will remain in Iraq for generations to come. It's important that the U.S. continue to help the Iraqi people rebuild their economy and we can do that by encouraging trade between our two countries -- while making sure that none of Iraq's historical and cultural artifacts are included in that trade illegally."

Current law – the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act – already authorizes the President to restrict imports of cultural antiquities, but there is a lengthy process that must be followed before the President may impose such restrictions, and the law doesn't address the unique conditions that prevail in Iraq at this time. Grassley's bill extends the President's authority under the Implementation Act to allow immediate emergency restrictions during an interim period. The bill also terminates the extension of the President's authority one year after relations with Iraq are normalized so that the next Iraqi government can determine for itself whether to seek a bilateral agreement with the United States.

“This is an important signal of our commitment to preserving Iraq’s resources for the benefit of the Iraqi people,” Grassley said.