



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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U.S. Senate Finance Committee Hearing: “U.S. Borders: Safe or Sieve?”

Baucus Urges Immediate Action to Strengthen Border Security and increase Homeland Defense. Today, U.S. Senator Max Baucus, ranking member of Senate Finance Committee, joined Chairman Charles Grassley in holding a hearing to determine the safety of America's borders and to examine ways to strengthen homeland security.

In order to obtain a full picture of border security, Senators Baucus and Grassley requested last summer that the General Accounting Office (GAO) complete a thorough investigation into the security of America's ports of entry.

“Today's hearing is not about closing our borders, but rather protecting our borders against those who mean us harm,” Baucus said. “My state of Montana has the longest international border in the country: 550 miles.” Border security has been a concern of mine for many years prior to the events of September 11. Last year, I held a series of meetings with individuals living along Montana's border. They are concerned that the government is not doing enough to secure the borders or their safety. “That is why I, along with Senator Grassley, requested the General Accounting Office to investigate the security of our borders and our ports of entry. GAO's findings will raise serious questions about whether the government is doing enough,” Baucus added.

As part of the GAO investigation, agents from the Office of Special Investigation (OSI), attempted to enter the United States at air, land, and sea ports of entry using fictitious identities and counterfeit documents. From October 2002 through January 2003, the agents entered various points of entry across the U.S. without ever having the authenticity of their counterfeit documents questions. In addition, on two occasions, no identification documents were requested upon entry.

"Americans depend upon border security personnel to ensure their safety and protect their freedoms," Baucus said. "Today's hearing illustrates some extremely concerning information about the shortcomings of our border security. I'm committed to working together with Chairman Grassley, Congress and the Administration to eliminate these breaches and keep our country safe."