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BAUCUS BLASTS FAILURE TO RESOLVE BEEF BAN IN KOREA FTA
Finance Chairman vows trade agreement will not move in Senate until issue is resolved

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) condemned the failure of trade negotiators to lift Korea's unscientific ban on U.S. beef before concluding the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations last night. Negotiators instead made vague promises to resolve this issue at some point in the future. Baucus said the trade agreement will not move forward in the U.S. Senate until they do.

"This is an entirely unacceptable outcome," said Baucus. **"I will oppose the Korea Free Trade Agreement, and in fact I will not allow it to move through the Senate, unless and until Korea completely lifts its ban on U.S. beef. I have made it clear – to the administration and to the Korean government – from the start of these talks that there can be no trade agreement without full access to the Korean market for all of Montana's beef exports, boneless and bone-in, and regardless of age."**

In December 2003, Korea banned the importation of U.S. beef following reports of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE, in cattle that originated from Canada. Before the ban, Korea was the third largest U.S. beef export market in the world. In September 2006, Korea partially opened its market to U.S. imports of boneless beef from cattle less than 30 months old. Since then, however, Korea has rejected three large shipments after very lengthy inspections found tiny bone fragments. Korea's rejection of these shipments – and its refusal to lift the ban for other U.S. beef products – is not supported by sound science. International scientific standards fully support the safety of boneless and bone-in U.S. beef, regardless of the age of the cattle.

Senator Baucus has long supported negotiations for a free trade agreement with Korea. He has warned Korean and U.S. negotiators, however, that he would not support an agreement that did not lead to the opening of Korea's market to Montana's beef exports.

Baucus continued, **"The world's scientists have made it clear that our beef is safe. If Korea ever wants the U.S. Congress to approve a free trade agreement between our countries, Korea must accept the scientific facts and open its market to U.S. beef now. Both the administration and the Korean government are about to learn just how serious I am about opening Korea's market to U.S. beef as part of this agreement."**

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