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Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley
on the House and Senate Conference on the *Trade Act of 2002*
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I'd like to thank Chairmen Thomas and Baucus for convening this meeting of the trade conferees this afternoon. It's high time we begin our work in resolving the differences between the House and Senate trade bills. It's been almost eight months since the House passed its version of Trade Promotion Authority. The Senate bill passed almost two months ago, so we need to get started.

I'm disappointed I couldn't be here in person on this historic day. However, the Senate is debating Medicare prescription drug proposals, including a tripartisan proposal I developed along with Senators Breaux, Jeffords, Snowe and Hatch. A vote is expected later in the day, precluding me from being present at today's meeting.

I want to make it clear that my priority is to produce a comprehensive trade bill as soon as possible. It's been over a decade since the United States has had Trade Promotion Authority. That's too long. During that time, our ability to penetrate foreign markets has eroded, as other nations have engaged in preferential trade agreements to our detriment. Progress in multilateral negotiations, including in the World Trade Organization, is also slowed due to our failure to provide the President with the credibility he needs at the negotiating table. I don't intend to stand aside and allow this to continue. So, today, I pledge to do everything in my power to see this conference completed successfully and quickly. The issue is too important to our economy to play games. It's time to get this done.