



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
on the Mock Mark Up of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement
Senate Finance Committee**

We are here to consider draft implementing legislation for the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement. This mock mark-up is the single most important event under fast-track procedures.

It is the only time when Senators can consider amendments to the draft implementing legislation. And it is the only time when this legislation will receive formal, public scrutiny prior to its introduction.

This agreement has much in its favor. On the first day of enactment, 100 percent of bilateral trade in industrial and consumer products will become free of duties. Oman's agriculture market will also open to American exports like beef and chicken parts.

In this agreement, Oman will open its services market beyond its WTO commitments. Oman has also pledged to protect innovation through vigorous intellectual property laws.

Those laws will include copyrights for sound and audiovisual records, protection of satellite programming, and control of the transmission of proprietary information over the internet.

Thanks to this agreement, Oman has also worked hard to strengthen its labor laws. I commend Oman for its work so far. And I applaud its close cooperation with the United States and the International Labor Organization to continue its reforms.

I hope that the Omanis will not view labor market reforms as a burden. Rather, I hope that they will see these reforms as an opportunity to serve as an example to their neighbors, to prove their critics wrong, and to offer all of their workers a share in Oman's prosperity.

Oman still has a way to go. Given reports of possible labor abuses in Jordan, another FTA partner country, we will be paying especially close attention to the additional reforms that Oman has pledged to make in the coming months.

I hope that all outstanding issues will be resolved before we are asked to vote on final passage of this agreement.

Mr. Chairman, I would also like to once again reiterate my support for Mr. Basham's nomination to become Commissioner of Customs.

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