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"Education"

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: **BAUCUS**

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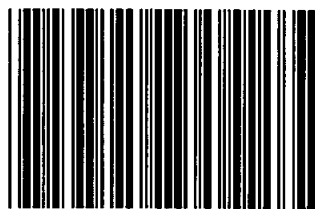
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(2) Subject* **Education Statement**

DOCUMENT DATE*: **03/20/2007**

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* "required information"



BAUCUS

**Statement of Chairman Max Baucus
March 20, 2007**

I recently read a story in *Time Magazine* that I wanted to share. It's a story that puts this hearing in perspective.

The story goes something like this. Rip Van Winkle wakes up in the 21st century after sleeping for over 100 years. He's very confused. He doesn't know what is going on in the world. He sees people running around on the street with devices attached to their ears. He sees moving pictures everywhere. He sees people moving fast in strange machines. He's bewildered.

But then he walks into a building. He knows exactly where he is.

"This is a school," he says. "They're just like what we had in 1906. Only now the blackboards are green."

I share this story with you because this sheds some light on where we are today. We've been sleeping for years. Now it's time to wake up.

We must wake up soon before the world around us changes. We must wake up now before 100 years go by and we wake up bewildered. Then it will be too late.

America faces a world more integrated, interdependent, and competitive environment than ever in our history. It is our challenge to succeed in this new environment. It is our challenge to leave our children and grandchildren with an economy that is better than the one we inherited.

Our challenge is to create an economy in which investment in our youth is our greatest asset -- not our heaviest burden. We must rise to this challenge.

And this begins with addressing education.

We must change the way we look at education. As policymakers, we tend to look at our education challenge like a multiple choice test. We want to choose between a few simple options. But the answers are not as simple as choice a, b or c.

We must look at our challenge as if it were a math proof. We must think through every step to reach the end result. The process is as important as the outcome. That outcome must be appropriate not just for today's needs but also for those in the future.

100 years from now, even 10 years from now, our society will be very different than what we see today. If we think through the proof, our society will be one where the United States remains a leader. Where our students excel in school and are ready to enter the workforce. If we look for simple options, we may never reach a solution.

Our students today must be ready for today's challenges. They must also be ready for future challenges. And it is our duty to make sure they are ready. To make sure they can succeed. Our economic competitiveness depends on it.

I have spent much of the past year and a half planning a comprehensive competitiveness agenda. I introduced bills on trade, energy, savings, research and education.

My education bill embraces education at all stages, from early education through higher education, continuing education and worker training.

In this Congress, I will work toward solutions that promote our economic competitiveness. I want to work with Republicans and Democrats to move legislation that addresses our challenges and points us in a direction for success.

I will use my position as Chairman of the Finance Committee to hold hearings that go beyond simple multiple choice answers and address the big picture.

Today's hearing is a step in the proof to help solve our education challenge - to make sure we remain competitive. This first step is to identify our needs. It is to identify resources. It is to identify partnerships.

We have invited witnesses who will do just that.

We will hear about the needs of our teachers and the shape of our schools.

We will hear about our community colleges and how they are fostering economic development.

We will identify what resources we have and what we resources we still need.

We will learn about unique partnerships to promote innovation and 21st century skills.

And we will learn how the business community is getting involved in developing their future workforce.

We will begin the process of solving our proof.

This is no time to rest. This is no time to be complacent. Failure to do so will leave us just like Rip Van Winkel. We must wake up to meet this education challenge.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.