

Senator Max Baucus to take question of Prisoner Transfer Treaty with Qatar to President

By Edward Campbell

MISSOULA, MT Feb. 19 (Al-Masakin)—Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) agreed to ask President Obama to place the question of a Prisoner Exchange Treaty with the Kingdom of Qatar on the White House agenda at a round table discussion with business leaders at the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce this morning.

When reminded of the details of the case of John Downs, an American citizen imprisoned for life in Qatar, by Al-Masakin and asked as Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, who has access to the White House on account of that role, if he would take a question to the President: If the President would place a Prisoner Transfer Agreement on the agenda with Qatar Senator Baucus replied: “It’s asked. But to tell you the truth I’m more focused on jobs right now.”

The United States is set to release Al-Qaeda terrorist from Qatar Ali al Marri in less than two years.

As indeed the audience had unanimously agreed he should be. When Senator Baucus asked what the Missoula community felt was the number one problem he should address for the citizens of the State of Montana the congregation assented in unison: “Jobs!”

Addressing concerns for the woes of the local community banking establishment, who complained that while they, along with the small business community, are the financial backbone of America are being treated by federal regulators the same as the real offenders in the big banking establishment. And addressed the Wall Street financial meltdown, America’s national debt where, which he said will top 10 trillion by the end of the decade. The SEC and



said the financial community in general has been “without adult supervision.”

He went on to address local concerns about jobs and the closing of Smurfit-Stone Container Corp., in Frenchtown, which cost the Missoula area an estimated \$45 million in payroll. Senator Baucus suggested three options: (1) persuade the company to re-open, (2) try to find another buyer and (3) convert the plant into a biomass facility.

“My job is to find the best option,” he said. He went on to say that he favored the biomass facility option since it would create more jobs than Smurfit-Stone did. Smurfit-Stone Container Corp. was Missoula’s second largest employer.

The Senator went on to praise British Columbia’s recent decision to prohibit oil and gas leasing north of Montana’s Glacier National Park and said that he and Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) will be working together to grant a swap-out option for companies on this side of the border.

He addressed questions on Congressional partisanship this election year. “it’s bad, it’s not good...it’s a bit dysfunctional,” he remarked. “In life we have two choices: try or do nothing...so we keep trying,” Senator Baucus remarked.

He addressed the concerns of the Medical Marijuana business community, which employs 20 Missoula area residents and Health Care Reform. The Senator predicted that a health care reform bill will be passed in Congress in 3 to 6 weeks. He said that the proposed health Care reform bill proposed is not a government takeover of health care, but called it “government involvement,” which would limit what he termed “Cadillac health care plans”

which often exceed \$23,000 for unionized employees and sometimes over \$100,000 for corporate employees. The Senator said that his own health care plan, the standard Federal health care plan, is only up to \$13,000 of actual value. He said that there will be no employer mandate on health care, but that companies with over 50 employees would be penalized for having either no employee health care plan or a plan with less than 65% actual value of health care costs.

The Senator blamed, in part, China for America's financial problems whom he accused of manipulating currency by devaluing the Yuan.

He also expressed shock when he learned that trees being cut in the Helena national forest for pine beetle infestation are being burned instead of being sent to a mill. There are no longer any lumber mills in the area to process cut lumber.

Senator Baucus has been in the United States Senate representing the State of Montana since 1978. He grew up in the fine city of Helena and attended Missoula's Paxon Elementary school for a time.

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