

《美参议院批准鲍卡斯出任驻华大使》

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The Senate easily confirmed longtime Sen. Max Baucus on Thursday to become ambassador to China, handing the job to a lawmaker well-versed in U.S. trade policy but with little expertise about military and other issues that have raised tensions with Beijing.

Senators gave final approval to the nomination of the moderate Baucus, D-Mont., by 96-0. Trim and youthful looking for his 72 years, Baucus accepted colleagues' congratulations before and during the roll call and voted "present" for his own nomination.

Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Baucus has worked with Republicans during his 35 years in the Senate on issues ranging from taxes to health care reform — an independent streak that has vexed Democratic colleagues.

Baucus supported GOP President George W. Bush's sweeping 2001 tax cuts and his 2003 creation of Medicare prescription drug benefits, despite opposition by most Democrats.

He also helped write President Barack Obama's 2010 health care overhaul. Congress approved that measure solely with Democratic votes after Baucus spent months trying to craft a bipartisan version with Republicans.

"I'm proud to stand up for it, because it is helping millions of Americans," Baucus said in farewell remarks on the Senate floor after Thursday's vote, defending a law that Republicans are making a top issue this election year.

Most recently, he'd been working with Republicans to craft bills revamping the income tax system and streamlining congressional votes on trade treaties Obama is seeking with Asia and Europe.

"His passion is well-known to all of us, his decades of experience here in Congress. He's an excellent choice that President Obama made to represent America's interests in China," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, a long-time Finance panel colleague, lauded the Montanan for "his willingness to put partisan differences aside for the greater good of all."

In 2001, Baucus championed China's inclusion in the World Trade Organization, which has helped Beijing conduct business with other countries. He has sponsored legislation — not enacted — punishing China for undervaluing its currency and has criticized Beijing for blocking U.S. imports of beef, a big business in his rural state.

Baucus had already announced he would not seek re-election this fall when Obama tapped him last December for the ambassadorship.

