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**SENATE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES BILL
TO AID U.S. CITIZENS RETURNING FROM HAITI**

*Baucus, Grassley, Nelson, Menendez, Lemieux Champion Bill
To Provide Much-Needed Funding for U.S. Repatriation Program*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), along with Senators Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) and George LeMieux (R-Fla.), hailed the Senate passage of legislation to provide \$25 million in additional funding for the U.S. Repatriation Program, which currently provides support for thousands of Americans returning from Haiti following the devastating earthquake on January 12. The bipartisan group of Senators introduced S. 2949, the Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act, Monday and the bill, which passed the Senate by unanimous consent Monday evening, has now been sent to the House of Representatives for consideration.

“This legislation will help the tens of thousands of U.S. citizens in Haiti at the time of the earthquake return home safely,” Baucus said. **“Increasing funding for the Repatriation Program is a common-sense solution to ensure we meet our obligations to Americans in need. We thank our colleagues for working with us to pass this legislation swiftly and look forward to passage by the House to ensure these vital services are not delayed.”**

“This will help Americans living in Haiti return to the United States, getting them home if they need to be and clearing the way for aid workers,” Grassley said. **“Separately, it’s important to continue the Qualifying Individual Program for the people who depend on it.”**

“This will go a long way toward helping Americans who survived the devastating earthquake in Haiti get back on their feet,” Nelson said.

Menendez said, **“Many American citizens in Haiti saw the life they knew crumble in the earthquake. These loans will provide a bridge until they can get back on their feet here in the U.S. Many of these Americans will return through New Jersey, and they deserve a hand in covering the basic necessities.”**

“This will go a long way in helping the Americans living in Haiti that have lost everything. It will help them with the transition of returning to the US to begin rebuilding their lives,” LeMieux said. **“We need to continue helping those that have been affected by this terrible disaster.”**

Along with additional funding for the Repatriation Program, this bill also provides \$65 million in additional funding for the Qualifying Individual Program, which helps to pay Medicare Part B premium costs for low-income seniors. Without this additional funding, the program would be unable to meet its obligations to America's seniors in 2010.

Additional funding for both programs is fully paid for through the Medicaid Improvement Fund.

More information on the Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act is available on the Finance Committee website at:

<http://finance.senate.gov/press/Bpress/2010press/prb012510.pdf>.

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