



For Immediate Release  
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**Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)  
Regarding the Haiti Assistance Income Tax Incentive Act**

Mr. President, I rise to share a few remarks involving the overwhelming disaster that has hit Haiti. Words do not begin to describe the extent of the disaster. Thousands are dead. More than one million people are homeless. Just imagine.

Families continue to search and mourn for lost mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and sons and daughters. This earthquake may be the most lethal disaster to ever have occurred in the Western Hemisphere. This is not a disaster on some distant shore. Haiti is closer to Florida than the distance from one end of Montana to the other.

I am encouraged by the outpouring of help from around the world. Many have flown to volunteer. Others have helped through in-kind contributions or cash.

Americans have shown remarkable generosity. These are tough economic times but millions still want to give. This is the American spirit. It is who we are as Americans.

Amidst this destruction and great sorrow there are stories that offer incredible hope. Maxine Fallon, a 23 year-old student, was buried for six days without food or water in the rubble that was once her university. She sent text messages pleading for help. A search-and-rescue team rescued her from the ruins of her cratered school.

Since arriving, rescue teams from the United States and other countries have saved more than 75 victims from the rubble.

As Americans, we rise to aid our friends and neighbors who are in need. And there are no people in greater need right now than the people of Haiti. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

Fifty four percent of the population lives on less than a dollar per day. With so many struggling to survive, the earthquake's swift destruction must be met with a response equally forceful and rapid.

I propose that we pass legislation as soon as possible called the Haiti Assistance Income Tax Incentive Act, or simply the HAITI Act. The HAITI Act will allow U.S. taxpayers to make charitable contributions to Haiti relief programs until March 1, 2010 and claim those contributions on their 2009 income tax return.

The proposal is similar to legislation that passed unanimously in 2005 following the tsunami disaster along the Indian Ocean. The HAITI Act is a bipartisan bill that I am introducing with Senator Grassley and several other senators, and the same language passed the House of Representatives earlier today.

This is simple legislation that would make a big impact. It will make it a little easier for Americans to contribute to the victims of the Haiti disaster.

Frankly, most Americans want to contribute anyway. The American Red Cross and UNICEF's United States Fund raised about \$7.3 million in donations over a four-hour period while a "Larry King Live" special on Haiti aired.

But the relief and rebuilding effort in Haiti will require billions. And this legislation is an additional incentive for Americans to contribute to that effort. As search and rescue efforts give way to rebuilding, these donations will ensure that our efforts have a lasting impact in Haiti.

And while we must do what we can to provide relief now, the people of Haiti will need our help for many years to come. Trade programs like the HOPE and HOPE II Acts provide an opportunity to create new jobs in Haiti's export sector. As the people of Haiti work to rebuild what was destroyed, I will continue to work to provide generous access to the U.S. market for products produced in Haiti.

The suffering in Haiti is heartbreaking. And the generosity in response to the Haitian earthquake is a reflection of the American spirit. Today I stand with the people of Haiti, and I ask my colleagues in the Senate to stand with me. Let's pass the HAITI Act. And let's do everything we can to help those who have lost so much in this terrible disaster.

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