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PRESIDENT SIGNS BAUCUS, GRASSLEY, NELSON, MENENDEZ, LEMIEUX LEGISLATION TO AID AMERICANS RETURNING FROM HAITI

Law Will Provide Critical 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.), today lauded President Obama for his signature of legislation to help Americans in Haiti at the time of the January 12 earthquake. The bipartisan group of Senators introduced the Emergency Aid to American Survivors of The Haiti Earthquake Act Monday. The legislation will provide \$25 million in funding for the U.S. Repatriation Program, which is currently providing support for thousands of Americans returning from Haiti due to the devastating earthquake. The bill became law today following passage by unanimous consent in the Senate on Monday and the House on Tuesday.

“The U.S. Repatriation Program now has the funding it needs to continue bringing Americans home safely and providing the care they need after suffering this terrible tragedy in Haiti,” said Baucus. **“We thank our colleagues and President Obama for working quickly with us to ensure this program can meet its commitments.”**

“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, **“These loans for Americans living in Haiti when the earthquake hit will provide a badly-needed bridge until they can get back on their feet. Many of them will return home through New Jersey, and they will need a hand in the short-term -- even with 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 funding for the Qualifying Individual Program, which helps to pay Medicare Part B premium costs for low-income seniors. Without this 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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