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SENATE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES PLAN TO HELP HAITI

Finance Committee Haiti Act Extends Tax Deduction for Charitable Contributions

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), along with Senators Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) and George Lemieux (R-Fla.), today lauded Senate passage, by unanimous consent of H.R. 4462, legislation to facilitate charitable giving by Americans to the emergency aid and rebuilding efforts in Haiti. The law allows U.S. taxpayers to make charitable contributions to Haiti relief programs before March 1, 2010, and claim those contributions on their 2009 income tax return. The House bill H.R. 4462 is identical to S. 2936, the Haiti Assistance Income Tax Incentive (HAITI) Act, legislation Baucus and Grassley introduced yesterday. Senators Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) also worked closely with the Finance leaders in developing the legislation. President Obama is expected to sign the bill this week.

“Last week, Haiti and the world was reminded Mother Nature knows no deadlines,” Baucus said.

“Today, Congress unanimously agreed to extend the tax deadline for charitable giving so Americans can continue to help the relief efforts in Haiti. In the days since the earthquake first struck, millions of Americans have donated millions of dollars to trustworthy organizations demonstrating the compassion and concern Americans know and the world expects. I applaud my colleagues for standing with us today to pass this vital legislation.”

“Americans give generously to disaster relief, and I hope this extension will encourage them to give even more,” Grassley said. **“I also hope Americans will make sure the charities they choose are above board. After the 2005 tsunami, some con artists were quick to try to turn a profit on the tragedy. People should be careful to give only to groups they recognize and trust.”**

“Giving folks an immediate tax break should spur donations for Haiti relief efforts,” said Nelson.

“Right now, the country needs all the help it can get.”

“The U.S. tax code should not stand in the way of humanitarian relief efforts. The people in Haiti need a great deal of assistance and there are many generous Americans who want to help,” LeMieux said.

“This will make it easier for more people to contribute to Haiti’s relief and recovery efforts in the weeks and months to come.”

“Haiti needs our help now more than ever before and we need to make sure U.S. citizens have every opportunity to provide the Haitian people the humanitarian aid they need,” said Schumer.

“Encouraging Americans to provide as much help as they can is the least we can do while Haiti beings it’s recovery and rebuilding efforts.”

“The tremendous damage in Haiti is horrifying and sobering for all of us as New Yorkers and Americans,” said Senator Gillibrand, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. **“The outpouring of support from individuals across the country has been inspiring, but there is more we can do. The legislation would encourage Americans to make further donations for emergency relief in Haiti by allowing them to deduct those contributions this year. I pledge that I, along with my colleagues in Congress and the Obama Administration, will continue to do everything we can to bring relief to the people in Haiti.”**

The HAITI Act of 2010 is similar to 2005 legislation to encourage Indian Ocean tsunami relief donations and allows taxpayers to deduct cash donations made to Haiti relief efforts on their 2009 tax filings.

Original co-sponsors of S. 2936 include Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), Senators Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), Jim Bunning (R-Ky.), John Kerry (D-Mass.), Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.), John Cornyn (R-Texas), Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Mary Landrieu (D-La.), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), Mark Udall (D-Colo.), Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), Tim Johnson (D-S.D.), Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), John Ensign (R-Nev.), Mike Johanns (R-Neb.), Kent Conrad (D-S.D.), Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), Roland Burris (D-Ill.), Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), Dianne Feinstein (D-Ca.), Mark Begich (D-Alaska), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), Christopher Bond (R-Mo.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Robert Bennett (R-Utah), John Thune (R-S.D.), and Robert Byrd (D-W. Va.).

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