



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
Thursday, September 8, 2005

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Baucus Urges Swift Action On Katrina Relief *Senator Joins Colleagues in Releasing Relief Package*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus and other top Senate Democrats today pushed for swift action in assisting Hurricane Katrina victims. As the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator Baucus proposed a number of tax, welfare, and health provisions to help recovery efforts in the Gulf Coast region yesterday.

“Thousands have lost their homes, jobs, and access to health care because of Hurricane Katrina,” Baucus said. “Their lives have been turned upside down and will never be the same. These victims will need immediate assistance, but we will also have to plan for the future as this area begins the rebuilding process. These proposals were created after consulting with Senator Landrieu and I am currently working with Senator Grassley to deliver a package that will provide much needed assistance.”

Baucus’ plan provides unemployment insurance, health care coverage, temporary cash assistance, and tax relief to bring both immediate and long-term relief to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

Highlights of the Baucus Relief Package follow:

Provide Healthcare for Katrina Victims

- **Immediate Access to Medicaid for Displaced Individuals**
- **Federal Support for Affected States’ Medicaid Programs:** States caring for hurricane evacuees should receive full federal support for their Medicaid and SCHIP programs.
- **Compensation to Affected Health Providers:** Providers caring for evacuees should receive federal add-on payments to alleviate the burden of uncompensated care.

Help Ease the Cash Crunch for Displaced Workers

- **Unemployment Insurance and Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA):** Expiring Unemployment Insurance should automatically be extended for victims of Katrina that were out of work prior to the disaster. Disaster Unemployment Assistance, a program in

place to provide assistance for victims of disaster, should be expanded to cover more workers. The weekly DUA benefits should be expanded to at least the Federal limit of \$270 a week and coverage should be expanded from 26 weeks to 52 weeks to give victims more time to get back on their feet.

- **Make TANF Contingency Fund Accessible for Affected States** – Provide Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi access to portion of the TANF Contingency Fund, which currently has \$2 billion for financial crises.
- **Waive Penalties Related to Work Requirements and Time Limits for Beneficiaries in Disaster Affected States.** In order to receive TANF assistance, recipients have to perform 30 hours of work a week and have a limited amount of time they are eligible to receive assistance. States could relax these rules for victims of this disaster to ensure people receive TANF assistance.

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