



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

September 30, 2004

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your commitment to provide Florida Agriculture with additional funds during the debate on the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill. Unfortunately, Florida Agriculture has been hit hard; and the Florida Department of Agriculture estimates that Florida's Agriculture losses will approach \$3 billion from the four hurricanes. Florida Agriculture will need more federal assistance than is presently requested and allocated by the President.

As you know the President's Supplemental request for disaster aid for Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne included \$400 million for agriculture for all the states hit by those storms and the President will release \$500 million of Section 32 funds just for Florida citrus, vegetable and nursery growers. Under normal circumstances \$900 million would be a generous aid package, but the devastation of Florida's agriculture industry by the four hurricanes necessitates more aid, especially because dairy, sugar, cattle and citrus packers are not even eligible for the crop disaster program payments which are the bulk of the \$400 million package and received no Section 32 funds. If only \$900 million is made available to Florida's agriculture community, less than a third of Florida's losses will be addressed and many commodities will be left without any assistance. For these reasons, I seek more funds for Florida agriculture without payment limitations or adjusted gross income requirements that make many of our crops ineligible. The additional assistance should be used to fund crop disaster payments, the Tree Assistance Program, the Emergency Conservation Program, the Emergency Watershed Program and the Livestock Assistance Program to help our dairies, sugar producers, cattlemen, citrus packers, citrus growers, nurseries, vegetable growers, timbermen, sod growers and others, who suffered severe losses as a result of the four hurricanes. (Florida Department of Agriculture Loss chart attached).

I appreciate the many competing concerns you must balance in the Department of Homeland Security bill, but Florida has experienced an unprecedented number of hurricanes and Florida's future economic livelihood depends upon Florida agriculture rebounding from its substantial losses.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson