

United States Senate Committee on Finance

Memorandum

To: Reporters and editors
From: Jill Gerber for Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa)
Carol Guthrie for Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Re: Lebanon-related amendment passed by UC today
Date: Wednesday, July 26, 2006

This morning, the Senate adopted by unanimous consent the Grassley-Baucus amendment to the bill H.R. 5864, The Returned Americans Protection Act of 2006. This bill provides needed resources to the United States Repatriation Program, which is currently assisting United States citizens who are returning to United States from Lebanon. Estimates indicate that the program could reach its statutory \$1 million annual spending cap at any moment. In accordance with a request from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Grassley-Baucus amendment lifts the cap for FY2006 from \$1 million to \$6 million.

The United States Repatriation Program was established by Title XI, Section 1113 of the Social Security Act to provide temporary assistance to U.S. citizens and their dependents who have been identified by the Department of State as having returned, or been brought from a foreign country to the U.S. because of destitution, illness, war, threat of war, or a similar crisis.

“Unless Congress acts quickly, the ongoing repatriation efforts will be suspended,” said Grassley. **“We must not allow that to happen. The Senate alternative will maintain the critical assistance now being provided to evacuees, while at the same time offsetting the cost of this assistance in a reasonable and responsible manner.”**

“This bill involves a small and, thankfully, seldom-used Federal program. But as recent news events have made clear, this is a program that can provide much-needed assistance to our constituents during difficult circumstances. We should not allow these important resources to be needlessly delayed.” said Baucus. **“We have worked with the Department of Health and Human Services and other government agencies in creating this legislation. We believe we have a reasonable and fiscally responsible solution to this relatively minor problem.”**

The amendment also includes an offset from the President’s FY06 Budget to use the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) to improve the administration of the food stamp program. Access to the NDNH will help USDA verify wage and employment information on food stamp applications. That proposal was scored by CBO as providing \$11 million in savings over ten years.

The legislation, with the Senate-passed amendment, now returns to the House for final consideration.