

(4) have applied, prior to March 31, 2006, for a license or certification in the State in which such professional will provide the health-related services under subsection (a) without State licensure or certification.

(c) EVIDENCE OF LICENSURE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A State may develop a process to verify the licensing credentials of a health professional to which this section applies if the professional has no official evidence of licensure in his or her possession.

(2) FRAUD.—An individual who wilfully provides any false or misleading information to a Federal, State, or local official for purposes of being covered under the provisions of this section shall, in addition to any State penalties that may apply, be subject to a fine, as determined appropriate by the Attorney General in accordance with title 18, United States Code.

(d) STATES DESCRIBED.—The States described in this subsection are Louisiana and Mississippi.

(e) LIMITATION.—A health professional may only elect to utilize the provisions of this section for a single 90-day period.

(f) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed as altering or affecting any procedures adopted by State health professional licensing or certification boards relating to waivers of licensing and certification requirements for health professionals affected by Hurricane Katrina.

(g) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “health-related services”, as such term is applied to health professional under this section, means services provided by a health professional that are consistent with the scope of practice of the professional in the State in which such professional is seeking licensure or certification.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise for the purpose of making a unanimous consent request for a piece of legislation that is within my jurisdiction, and then, also, as a favor to another person, to make a unanimous consent request. Before I make that unanimous consent request, I would like to make a short statement, and then have Senator BAUCUS make a short statement before I proceed to the unanimous consent request. May I go ahead?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EMERGENCY TAX RELIEF FOR HURRICANE KATRINA VICTIMS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on Tuesday night, Senator BAUCUS and I introduced a package of tax relief measures designed to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina both in the short and long term.

We know that tax incentives helped to revitalize New York after 9/11. They can do the same for New Orleans, Gulfport, and other hurricane-hit areas. We are pleased that the Members of the affected region join us in this effort, including Senators LOTT, LANDRIEU, VITTER, COCHRAN, and SHELBY.

The immediate relief package will help get short-term aid to the hurri-

cane victims by encouraging food donations and the employment of displaced persons, as two examples.

For those who have suffered casualty losses, we have liberalized the tax rules to permit affected taxpayers to deduct losses from damaged property.

We also want to help protect Katrina victims from undeserved IRS harassment.

We expect to see prompt action by Congress on this tax relief package. We need to get these tax incentives on the books and help Katrina victims make a fresh start.

After this package is completed, our focus in the committee will be on longer term tax incentives to help rebuild homes and businesses. We are looking at depreciation changes, tax-exempt bond authority, and enterprise zone initiatives.

Life will never be the same for our fellow citizens in the gulf region, and what we have all seen over the last 2 weeks will stay in the hearts and minds of all of us for years to come.

With this first initiative from the Finance Committee, a bipartisan initiative—and I thank Senator BAUCUS for his extreme cooperation, in fact, even leadership in getting this to where it is now—this first initiative—and there are going to be more in other areas where we have jurisdiction—we want the victims in all the affected areas to know they can count on us to create a set of measures that will help return vitality and vigor to the gulf region.

Mr. President, I defer now to Senator BAUCUS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, Senator GRASSLEY, the chairman of the Finance Committee. We believe that Congress must act quickly. We bypassed the usual committee process. Senator GRASSLEY and I sat down with our staffs and said: What can we do right away to help Katrina victims? What can we do to help the States and get something passed very quickly?

Time is of the essence, clearly. We decided that people needed cash. So we have enacted several provisions in this legislation which allows people to have more cash or ways so they do not have to make payments that otherwise they would have to make.

Second, we are trying to help ease some of the dire housing conditions in the affected areas. We have provisions which allow people to take an exemption for taking in Katrina victims. We think that will help significantly.

We are also helping by giving incentives to employers so they can more quickly hire people and, if they cannot hire them, we are going to make sure we get more dollars into former employees' pockets.

This is a start. We clearly have to do more. I very much hope that later on today we can pass legislation with respect to Medicaid assistance. Senator GRASSLEY and I have been working

very hard in both these areas. In the not too long term, we obviously are going to bring up a package for long-term assistance—enterprise zones, increasing appreciation acceleration, bonding authority—to help rebuild the infrastructure.

I thank Senator GRASSLEY very much for his help. I also thank him very much for helping clear some objections to this bill on the other side. There were two Republican holds on this bill today. I had hoped to bring this bill up this morning and get it passed. We did have some holds. I thank very much the Senator from Iowa for his help in getting those holds released so we can get this bill passed.

I also hope, as I mentioned, we can get the Medicaid bill passed today. This is the week. We have to pass this legislation. We, as Senators, cannot get too wrapped around the axle. We cannot be too concerned about how the I's are dotted or the T's are crossed. We have to act. Congress will meet another day. We can make up differences. We can amend legislation in future days if something is not quite perfect either today or in the next couple of days. Let's not let perfection be the enemy of the good here.

This is good legislation. We are getting this tax package passed. That is good. I very much hope we can get the Medicaid package passed. It is good, too.

I urge all of us to work together and rise to the occasion. This is an emergency. Let's get this legislation passed—not only this package but the Medicaid package as well.

Again, I thank Senator GRASSLEY for working to get those holds on the bill removed so we could get this legislation passed.

I am proud to announce that Saturday is the Senator's birthday. So I hope this will be a good birthday present for the Senator, to get both of these bills passed today so we can, on this coming Saturday, know that a couple days earlier, the chairman of the Finance Committee got legislation passed that did some good for people in the affected area.

Mr. President, I thank the chairman for helping.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, obviously, I thank Senator BAUCUS for the personal comment he made about my upcoming birthday. More importantly, once again, we have had such smooth working relationships on these two very important bills. Our staffs have cooperated very closely. There has been some compromise but not a lot because I think we are all going in the same direction.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, pursuant to the remarks I made and the remarks Senator BAUCUS has made, that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S. 1696 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1696) to provide tax relief for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, to provide incentives for charitable giving, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank Senate Finance Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member BAUCUS for their extraordinary work, to so expeditiously draft this important legislation in a bipartisan manner. This package will provide immediate tax relief to those directly affected by this incredible disaster.

As we have rightfully focused on rescuing, reuniting and rebuilding, we must also make sure to take care of our strained military families. The first and best definition of patriotism is keeping faith with those who wear our uniform. That means giving our troops the resources they need to keep safe while they are keeping us safe. And it means supporting our troops at home as well as abroad.

More than 40 percent of military reservists and National Guard members suffer pay cut when they are called to defend our Nation, including those serving in the gulf coast today. These citizens serve nobly. They are much more than weekend warriors. Currently, there are over 140,000 reservists called up for active duty in the war against terrorism and over 10,000 of these reservists and guardsman are from Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. Over 50,000 National Guard members have been called up to assist with Hurricane Katrina.

Many of these reservists are being hit with a double-whammy. After recent service in Iraq or Afghanistan, they are coming home to an area that has been devastated. The all-volunteer Army depends on these reservists. They have been serving our country with distinction and pride for many years, and should not be penalized financially for their honorable service.

Businesses on the gulf coast want to do the right thing for their employees. But in the wake of this disaster, most just can't afford it. This legislation will help businesses do the right thing. The bill will provide an employee retention credit which provides a 40 percent tax credit for wages paid up to \$6,000 after August 28, 2005 and before December 31, 2005. This credit will help employers in the gulf coast who pay employees that are not able to work because the business was either damaged or destroyed and pay reservists and guardsmen that worked for them right up to the time before they were deployed.

For the last couple of years, Senator LANDRIEU and I have worked on legislation to provide assistance to businesses that employ reservists who have been called up to active duty. That legislation would provide tax credits to em-

ployers who pay reservists wages that are above their military pay and to help with the costs of hiring replacement workers. I thank Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member BAUCUS for working with me to include wages paid to eligible reservists and guardsman as part of the employee retention tax credit.

The Hurricane Katrina tax relief legislation helps our reservists and the businesses that employ them to ensure that our great tradition of citizen soldiers does not fade or end because of the effect service can have on work and family in this time of crisis.

I am also pleased that this tax package has a set of provisions to encourage charitable giving. We have all been overwhelmed by the generosity and compassion of the American people, who have sacrificed their time and money, sent food and supplies south by the truckload, and even opened up their homes to strangers. This provision will make giving easier, particularly by allowing rollover contributions from IRA accounts.

This legislation is the right thing to do in the face of this disaster. It can help make sure our reservists' families don't have to sacrifice beyond their means while our brave men and women are away from home helping other families. This legislation can make it easier for the incomparable generosity of the American people to continue by easing some restrictions on charitable giving.

Again, I thank Senators GRASSLEY and BAUCUS for their efforts on this package.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment at the desk be agreed to, that the bill, as amended, be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that the bill be held at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 1722) was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The bill (S. 1696), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as I said, I have another request I want to do for other Members.

SPORTFISHING AND RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2005

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3649, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3649) to ensure funding for sportfishing and boating safety programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund through the end of fiscal year 2005, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment at the desk be agreed to, that the bill, as amended, be read the third time and passed, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARTINEZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 1723) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To make technical corrections to Public Law 109-59)

SEC. . CORRECTION OF DISTRIBUTION OF OBLIGATION AUTHORITY UNDER SECTION 1102(e)(4)(A) OF PUBLIC LAW 109-59.

Notwithstanding section 1102(c) (4) (A) of Public Law 109-59; 119 Stat. 1144, et seq., or any other provision of law, for fiscal year 2005, obligation authority for funds made available under title I of division H of Public Law 108-447; 118 Stat. 3216 for expenses necessary to discharge the functions of the Secretary of Transportation with respect to traffic and highway safety under chapter 301 of title 49, United States Code, and part C of subtitle VI of title 49, United States Code, shall be made available in an amount equal to the funds provided therein: Provided, That the additional obligation authority needed to meet the requirements of this section shall be withdrawn from the obligation authority previously distributed to the other programs, projects, and activities funded by the amount deducted under section 117 of title I of division H of Public Law 108-447.

The bill (H.R. 3649), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALEXANDER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I was honored to join Majority Leader FRIST in cosponsoring S. Res. 238 recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month and celebrating the vast contributions of Hispanic Americans to the strength and culture of our Nation. S. Res. 238 passed the Senate by unanimous consent today, September 15, the kickoff of a month-long celebration and observation of Hispanic-American strength and culture in this country.

Diversity truly represents the best of America, a nation where each of us can be proud of our ancestry, our heritage, and our native language, yet a nation