

PELL GRANT HURRICANE AND  
DISASTER RELIEF ACT

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3169, 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. 3169) to provide the Secretary of Education with waiver authority for students who are eligible for Pell Grants who are adversely affected by a natural disaster.

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

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 3169) was read the third time and passed.

Mr. FRIST. Again, Mr. President, this is one of several bills we are addressing tonight that reflect the Senate's response to those who have been adversely affected by this disaster. The bill we passed was specifically related to Pell grants, giving the Secretary of Education the waiver authority for students who are eligible for Pell grants, those students who have been adversely affected.

STUDENT GRANT HURRICANE AND  
DISASTER RELIEF ACT

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3668, 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. 3668) to provide the Secretary of Education with waiver authority for students who are eligible for Federal student grant assistance who are adversely affected by a major disaster.

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

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 3668) was read the third time and passed.

TANF EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND  
RECOVERY ACT OF 2005

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3672, 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. 3672) to provide assistance to families affected by Hurricane Katrina, through the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families.

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

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR  
NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) RELIEF  
FOR STATES AFFECTED BY HUR-  
RICANE KATRINA

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I rise today to raise some concerns about H.R. 3672, the TANF Emergency Response and Recovery Act of 2005 passed recently by the House of Representatives.

I regret that the House Ways and Means Committee did not have the benefit of the insights of those in Louisiana responsible for administering this critical Federal program. Because if they did, I think that the bill might have been drafted very differently. I very much appreciate the leadership allowing me this opportunity to state these concerns for the record and am hoping that we can work together in the days and weeks ahead from this point on to be certain that these concerns are addressed.

Hurricane Katrina has left the Southeastern part of Louisiana in a state of emergency which, by all accounts will have significant and wide spread impact on our State and local economy. As a result, larger than expected numbers of individuals will be left without employment and in need of the services and support provided by the TANF program. It is precisely to address these circumstances, although I am not sure Members anticipated a disaster of this magnitude that compelled Congress to create a contingency fund in the 1996 Act. The purpose of the contingency fund was for States to be able to access additional funds in a time of need. But instead of availing ourselves of the funds contained in the contingency fund to carry us through this unexpected downturn, the House bill limits the use of these funds for nonrecurring, short term benefits to persons displaced by this disaster. I am afraid that this narrow definition of eligibility will stand in the way of people in need getting the support they deserve. I am pleased that the Grassley-Baucus proposal would allow Louisiana access to these funds and allow my State to direct these funds to families in need.

In addition, it should be noted that while the House bill contemplates that some families affected by Hurricane Katrina will need some short term benefit that should be considered differently from regular welfare, it does not extend eligibility for these emergency benefits to all families in the affected States. I believe that we should extend this benefit to all families in need. I am pleased to note that the Grassley-Baucus welfare proposal would extend eligibility of "Hurricane

Katrina Emergency TANF Benefits" for over a year to affected families in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama regardless of their circumstances prior to this disaster.

I will raise my final point in the form of a question to my good friend, the Senator from Iowa, Chairman GRASSLEY. The House bill includes a provision that provides that no penalty may be imposed against any of the States of Louisiana, Mississippi or Alabama for failure to repay a loan made to a State before October 1, 2007. Given the current financial conditions, our Governor is concerned about the State's long term ability to pay a loan of this size back in such a short time. They have been assured that the intent was for this provision to serve as a grant and that there is no penalty should they be unable to fully reimburse the Federal Government. Is that the Senator's understanding?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I understand that the Senator would like assurances that her State would not be penalized for failure to reimburse the Federal Government for funds to the State from the Federal Loans for State Welfare Program. I would point out that the House bill includes a provision that provides that no penalty may be imposed against the States of Louisiana, Mississippi or Alabama for failure to repay a loan made to a State before October 1, 2007. This provision provides that there will be no penalty for loans made during that time.

Furthermore, I appreciate the other comments from the Senator from Louisiana. While I think that the House passed bill represents a good faith effort on behalf of the House, I agree that it does not go far enough and that the delegations of the affected States should have been consulted as this bill was assembled. The collaborative process that we relied on with Senators from States directly affected by Hurricane Katrina has been invaluable as we have worked to assemble the disaster relief package that Senator BAUCUS and I announced yesterday.

I also recognize that my colleagues are concerned that the Senate's position on this issue be appropriately represented in a conference with the House.

I want to assure my colleagues these welfare provisions will be addressed during a conference with the House and that the Senate's position on these welfare provisions will be vigorously represented.

Mr. FRIST. I appreciate the comments from my colleagues. I support the chairman, and I too assure colleagues that these welfare provisions will be fully litigated in a conference with the House on a health and welfare disaster relief package.

I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.