

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2006

SENATE APPROVES COLLINS- LIEBERMAN "KATRINA EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ACT"

The Senate today approved legislation introduced by Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) that provides relief for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The Collins-Lieberman Katrina Emergency Assistance Act includes provisions that would extend disaster unemployment benefits, and would allow communities to be reimbursed for buying supplies that are purchased to help hurricane victims, such as linens, cots, and toiletries.

"Our legislation ensures that federal aid for families devastated by Hurricane Katrina is commensurate with the magnitude of the disaster. It provides increased flexibility in disaster assistance while ensuring accountability," said Senator Collins. "It is my hope that the President will act quickly to enact the measures outlined in our bill." "The unemployment that continues to burden so many families is a grave reminder of how far we are from realizing our promise of hope to the proud people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast," said Senator Lieberman. "Extending the limited federal unemployment assistance by 13 weeks, just as we did after September 11th, is the least we can do to help these families still suffering from this terrible storm." The Katrina Emergency Assistance Act extends the length of benefits for Disaster Unemployment Assistance from 26 weeks to 39 weeks. It also gives unemployed persons more time to apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance. The measure allows communities to be reimbursed for buying supplies, such as linens, cots, and

toiletries which are distributed to Katrina victims, rather than only reimbursing those expenses incurred by the individuals themselves as allowed by current law. In addition, the legislation expresses a sense of Congress that deportation proceedings should be refrained from or suspended for international students who are being removed solely because of their inability to fulfill the terms of their visas as a result of Hurricane Katrina.