

for assistance of up to \$75,000 per year and not \$75,000 maximum over the life of the farm bill.

Our bill also increases Federal purchases of fruits and vegetables for use on nutrition programs, such as the Commodity Food Supplemental Assistance Program. I have been a longtime supporter of nutrition programs because they are a win for farmers and a win for the most vulnerable of our citizens—children, seniors, and the poor. Specialty crop farmers benefit by having a market to which to sell their fruits and vegetables. And children, seniors, and those with low incomes receive healthy and balanced meals. One of the key provisions of the Craig-Stabenow bill is the correction of USDA's chronic misinterpretation of section 10603 of the 2002 farm bill. This section instructs USDA to purchase at least \$200 million of fruits and vegetables annually over and above the purchases they currently make. Unfortunately, USDA is not complying with this provision. Instead of adding the \$200 million on top of baseline spending for school lunch and senior programs, USDA has eliminated the baseline spending so there is no guarantee of any new spending on fruits and vegetables for our children. In fact, in 2002 USDA did not even meet the minimum purchase requirement; only \$181 million in fresh fruits and vegetables were purchased. The Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act will correct this discrepancy and provide our Nation's children with much needed fruits and vegetables.

In addition, the Specialty Crops Competition Act improves growers' access to foreign markets by requiring the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, APHIS, to create a division to handle industry petitions on sanitary and phytosanitary barriers to specialty crop exports, increase technical assistance funding for specialty crops, and study the effects of recent trade agreements and propose a strategy for specialty crop producers to more effectively benefit from international trade opportunities.

I am pleased to offer the Specialty Crops Competition Act of 2006 with Senator CRAIG. This is just one more step in ensuring the future of specialty crop production in the United States. As the Senate begins work on reauthorization of the farm bill, Senator CRAIG and I will continue to work with specialty crop farmers and growers' associations to improve and expand this legislation. Supporting American specialty crop growers and providing nutritious fruits and vegetables to American people is vital to ensuring our own health and the health of our economy. I hope that my colleagues will join me and support the Specialty Crops Competition Act of 2006.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 416—RECOGNIZING THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE RITA 6 MONTHS AFTER THE DISASTER, COMMENDING THE RESILIENCY OF THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA AND SOUTHEAST TEXAS, AND COMMITTING TO STAND BY THEM IN THEIR RELIEF AND REBUILDING EFFORTS

Mr. VITTER (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mrs. HUTCHISON, and Ms. LANDRIEU) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 416

Whereas, on September 24, 2005, Hurricane Rita reached landfall causing extensive and significant damage along the Louisiana and extreme southeastern Texas coasts;

Whereas Hurricane Rita was named the fourth most intense Atlantic Hurricane ever recorded and the most intense tropical cyclone observed in the Gulf of Mexico;

Whereas the storm caused the loss of power in 700,000 homes in the State of Louisiana;

Whereas the total damage is estimated at \$9,400,000,000, making Hurricane Rita the ninth-costliest storm in the history of the United States;

Whereas the human suffering continues for thousands of people who have lost loved ones, homes, and livelihoods;

Whereas immediate humanitarian aid is still critically needed in many of the areas affected by Hurricane Rita;

Whereas Federal, State, and local first responders, the National Guard, and many ordinary citizens have risked their lives to save others;

Whereas the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, local religious organizations, and other volunteer organizations and charities continue to supply victims with necessities;

Whereas the State of Texas and numerous other States have welcomed thousands of victims from Louisiana and continue to provide them with aid and comfort; and

Whereas thousands of volunteers and government employees from across the Nation have committed time and resources to help with recovery efforts: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses the condolences of the Nation to the victims of Hurricane Rita;

(2) recognizes the 6-month anniversary of the disaster;

(3) commends the resiliency and courage of the people of the States of Louisiana and Texas; and

(4) commits to providing the necessary resources and to standing by the people of the States of Louisiana and Texas in the relief, recovery, and rebuilding efforts in the areas impacted by Hurricane Rita.

SENATE RESOLUTION 417—HONORING THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE VETERANS HOMES AND THE 119 STATE VETERANS HOMES PROVIDING LONG-TERM CARE TO VETERANS THAT ARE REPRESENTED BY THAT ASSOCIATION FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HEALTH CARE OF VETERANS AND THE HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM OF THE NATION

Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. FRIST, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. MENEZES, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. Kerry, Mr. KENNEDY, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. SUNUNU, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. CHAFEE, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. SCHUMER, Mrs. CLINTON, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. BURNS, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. GREGG, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. VITTER, and Mr. BINGAMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 417

Whereas the National Association of State Veterans Homes was established in 1954 by a group of administrators of State veterans homes to represent the interests of those homes in a unified voice before Congress and the executive branch;

Whereas the National Association of State Veterans Homes functions on an all-volunteer basis and focuses on endeavors that improve the conditions of care furnished to veterans by State veterans homes, elevate and monitor the qualifications for managers of such homes, and provide continuing education standards for staff who provide care to veterans in such homes;

Whereas the National Association of State Veterans Homes has been and continues to be in the forefront of developing and supporting new methods and models for providing long-term care services to elderly veterans, such as hospice care, respite care, Alzheimer's care, and adult day health care;

Whereas State veterans homes, which provide long-term care to thousands of veterans, were established initially in the States of Connecticut, Kansas, Ohio, and Maine in 1868 to house, feed, and care for thousands of homeless, wounded, and permanently scarred Union soldiers and thus have been in existence since before the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the earlier Veterans' Administration, and its predecessor agencies;

Whereas in 1888 Congress authorized the Federal payment of a daily allowance for the care of each former soldier or sailor in a State home-hospital, an allowance that continues today in the form of a per diem grant program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs that is authorized to provide up to 50 percent of the average daily cost of care, but currently provides only approximately 30 percent;

Whereas the Department of Veterans Affairs further participates in the care of veterans in State homes with a matching grant program to support construction and major renovation projects to sustain those homes and build towards sufficient levels of available, high-quality health care;

Whereas State veterans homes offer long-term services to eligible veterans in need of such services on certification of the Department of Veterans Affairs at 119 facilities in