

study of a prior Commission to investigate and determine facts and circumstances surrounding the relocation, internment, and deportation to Axis countries of Latin Americans of Japanese descent from December 1941 through February 1948, and the impact of those actions by the United States, and to recommend appropriate remedies, and for other purposes.

S. 2429

At the request of Mr. LUGAR, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. DOMENICI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2429, a bill to authorize the President to waive the application of certain requirements under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 with respect to India.

S. 2433

At the request of Mr. SALAZAR, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2433, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish an Assistant Secretary for Rural Veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs, to improve the care provided to veterans living in rural areas, and for other purposes.

S. 2467

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2467, a bill to enhance and improve the trade relations of the United States by strengthening United States trade enforcement efforts and encouraging United States trading partners to adhere to the rules and norms of international trade, and for other purposes.

S. CON. RES. 84

At the request of Mr. KYL, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Con. Res. 84, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress regarding a free trade agreement between the United States and Taiwan.

AMENDMENT NO. 3210

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. DOMENICI) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3210 proposed to S. 2454, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide for comprehensive reform and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3212

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. DOMENICI) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3212 intended to be proposed to S. 2454, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide for comprehensive reform and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. CRAIG (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. SANTORUM, and Mr. LEVIN):

S. 2487. A bill to ensure an abundant and affordable supply of highly nutritious fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops for American consumers and international markets by enhancing the competitiveness of United States-grown specialty crops; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the "Specialty Crop Competition Act of 2006." This bipartisan legislation co-sponsored by the distinguished Senator from Michigan, Senator STABENOW, increases the focus on the contribution that specialty crops add to the U.S. agricultural economy. This bill specifically provides the proper and necessary attention to many challenges faced throughout each segment of the industry.

Most do not realize the significance of specialty crops and their value to the U.S. economy and the health of U.S. citizens. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, fruits and vegetables alone added \$29.9 billion to the U.S. economy in 2002. This figure does not even include the contribution of nursery and other ornamental plant production, which our bill recognizes.

The specialty crop industry also accounts for more than \$53 billion in cash receipts for U.S. producers, which is close to 54 percent of the total cash receipts for all crops. A surprising fact to some is that my State of Idaho is a top producer of specialty crops. Idaho proudly boasts production of cherries, table grapes, apples, onions, carrots, several varieties of seed crops and of course one of our most notable specialty crops, potatoes.

Maintaining a viable and sustainable specialty crop industry also benefits the health of America's citizens. Obesity continues to plague millions of people today and is a very serious and deepening threat not only to personal health and well-being, but to the resources of the economy as well. This issue is now receiving the necessary attention at the highest levels, and specialty crops will continue to play a prominent role in reversing the obesity trend.

The "Specialty Crop Competition Act" will also provide a stronger position for the U.S. industry in the global market arena. This legislation promotes initiatives that will combat diseases both native and foreign that continue to be used as non-tariff barriers to U.S. exports by foreign governments. Additionally, provisions in this bill seek improvements to federal regulations and resources that impede timely consideration of industry sanitary and phytosanitary petitions.

This bill does not provide direct subsidies to producers like other programs. This legislation takes a major step forward to highlight the significance of this industry to the agriculture economy, the benefits to the health of U.S. citizens, and the need for a stable, affordable, diverse, and secure supply of food.

Although we near the end of the 109th Congress, I look forward to working with my colleagues and the Administration to consider this comprehensive and necessary legislation as we begin to discuss new initiatives for the 2007 Farm Bill.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleague from Idaho, Senator CRAIG, in introducing the Specialty Crops Competition Act of 2006. I want to thank Senator CRAIG for his continued leadership on specialty crop issues. We have worked together for a number of years on legislation to promote American fruit and vegetable production and consumption of high quality, nutritious American-grown produce and this legislation is the next step in that process.

Michigan is a State that makes things and grows things. We are famous for our automobiles, and we are also known for our cherries, apples, blueberries, and asparagus. I am proud to represent a State that is rich in diverse agricultural production. In fact, Michigan is second only to California in the variety of crops that we grow. Furthermore, agriculture is one of the lynchpins of Michigan's economy. Our farms contribute \$37 billion annually to the State economy and provide more than half a million good jobs. Our specialty crops alone generate nearly \$1.3 billion every year.

For far too long, specialty crops have been ignored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Specialty crops account for 51 percent of total national farm receipts but they do not receive the same subsidies or USDA consideration as program crops.

I want to clarify that the Craig-Stabenow bill is in no way designed to take funding away from program crops, but rather to bring specialty crops up to the status of program crops. All of our farmers work hard and take a gamble every year to produce and receive a return on their crops. They gamble against heat, drought, frost, storms, pests, crop diseases, and most recently a flood of foreign produce to our markets. The Specialty Crops Competition Act of 2006 would give specialty crop farmers valuable tools to keep them competitive and productive in a global marketplace.

Our bill creates a specialty crop block grant to State departments of agriculture at a level of \$200 million annually in grants for fiscal years 2007–2009. The grants will support production-related research, commodity production, nutrition, food safety and inspection and other competitiveness enhancing programs. Each State will receive a minimum of \$3 million each year, and a cap of \$15 million annually per State is set to ensure funds for a competitive grant program, for which grower associations and others can apply. Our bill also fixes a longstanding misinterpretation of the Tree Assistance Program by ensuring that farmers who have lost trees and vines due to disasters or disease are eligible

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. MENENDEZ, 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