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Emergency Spending Bills Pass

On Thursday, in a vote of 51 to 47, the U.S. Senate passed their version of the \$122 billion fiscal year 2007 Emergency Spending Bill that was originally intended to provide supplemental funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Senate bill also added funding for disaster relief for victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita along with approximately \$4 billion for farmers and ranchers hurt by natural disasters. The Senate included disaster assistance for livestock and the retained ewe lamb program in disaster counties for 2005 or 2006.

Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a similar bill including \$3.8 billion for agriculture disaster assistance on a 218 to 212 vote. The House version also included funds for peanut storage payments, continuation of the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program and aid for spinach growers but not a ewe lamb program.

Both the House and Senate versions contain timetables for withdrawing combat troops from Iraq. This pullout provision, as well as the funding for domestic programs unrelated to the war, prompted veto threats from the President. It remains to be seen what a final version of the bill will contain after the House and Senate meet to resolve differences in their respective bills.

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