



March 31, 2006

The United States Senate, Washington DC

Dear Senator:

We write to endorse and urge the passage of the bipartisan immigration legislation passed out of the Judiciary Committee by Senators Arlen Specter and Patrick Leahy. We believe that this legislation — which is based on the McCain-Kennedy bill — is tough where it needs to be, fair where it ought to be and provides a practical solution that addresses America's immigration problem.

Over the past 5 years, illegal immigration in America has reached a crisis point. The number of immigrants who illegally enter the United States adds up to over 700,000 each year, while enforcement of federal illegal immigration laws has dramatically declined. Under President Bush, the number of illegal immigrants who have been apprehended at the border has dropped by 30%, while the number of illegal immigrants who are apprehended inside the U.S. border has declined by 60% from the 1990s. In fact, it would take 398 years to deport all of the illegal immigrants currently in the country at the rate that the Bush Administration now enforces our immigration laws.

This situation — where illegal immigrants pour over the border and our immigration laws are willfully ignored — cannot be allowed to stand and calls for a tough, fair, and practical solution. The bill passed out of Judiciary Committee does this by:

- Getting far better control of the border,
- Rewarding immigrants who play by the rules,
- Vigorously enforcing the immigration laws on the books,
- Expecting new arrivals to learn English and better assimilate into American culture,
- Eliminating the shadow economy that employs and sometimes abuses illegal immigrants,
- Making full taxpayers out of all undocumented workers,
- Severely punishing those who traffic in human beings, and
- Allowing undocumented workers already in America to earn citizenship once they come forward, accept their punishment, pay restitution, remain employed, learn English, pay taxes, and obey the law.

We offer our sincerest appreciation to Senators Specter, Leahy, Kennedy, and McCain for leading the effort to move this legislation forward. We urge passage of this bill and oppose amendments that are punitive, harsh, and impractical.

Sincerely,

Jim Kessler

Vice President for Policy, Third Way

