

May 19, 2006

Dear Friend:

Last week, President Bush spoke to the nation outlining his plan for immigration reform, and I commend the President for addressing this critical issue. Congress must soon act to establish an immigration policy closely adhering to many of the points the President has enumerated, including increasing the number of Border Patrol officers, creating a temporary worker program, and creating a new biometric identification card for every foreign worker to ensure employer accountability.

While I do support many of the policy proposals the President presented, I believe his proposal to send our National Guard to the southern border is short-sighted. We cannot afford to overextend our National Guard because the Congress has failed to enact serious and comprehensive legislation on immigration. The men and women of the National Guard are capable of handling any task and we are very grateful for their service. They respond in times of war, when national disasters occur and when fires ignite. Though these brave men and women are capable, our border patrol should be doing this job, which the Administration has repeatedly under funded.

Comprehensive immigration reform must include an updated guest worker program. The current guest worker program is overly burdensome and it provides too few protections for U.S. workers. Additionally, current policies restrict the number of guest workers admitted into the United States, which does not meet current labor needs. Comprehensive immigration reform must also address the millions of people already in the U.S. We need a way for undocumented immigrants living and working in the United States to declare their presence. This is not amnesty. It is a way for these people to come out of the shadows. We need to ensure that people have the proper documentation to ensure our national security.

Unfortunately, the immigration reform bill the House passed in December did not include anything to address either of these issues. The House missed an opportunity for comprehensive immigration reform, and I was therefore unable to support it. The Senate is currently considering its immigration bill after a long delay in April. I hope the bill the Senate passes will be more comprehensive than the House version. If the Senate passes its legislation, the two Chambers will then enter into a joint House-Senate conference committee to address the changes between the two bills. It is my hope that this will be done quickly to finally enact a comprehensive immigration policy.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. I hope you have found the information useful. Please watch your inbox for future updates.

Very Truly Yours,

Tom Udall
Member of Congress