

Letter to President Bush

June 2006

“First Things First on Immigration: An Open Letter to President Bush, Senate Majority Leader Frist, and Speaker of the House, Hastert”

Recently, columnist Thomas Sowell wrote: “It will take time to see how various new border control methods work out in practice and there is no reason to rush ahead to deal with people already illegally in this country before the facts are in on how well the borders have been secured.”

We the undersigned agree with this statement. In 1986, Congress passed “comprehensive” immigration reform that included amnesty for around 3 million illegal immigrants, border enforcement, and interior enforcement (employer sanctions). Amnesty came, but enforcement was never seriously implemented either at the border or in the interior.

Let us not make this mistake again. We favor what Newt Gingrich has described as “sequencing” First border and interior enforcement must be funded, operational, implemented, and proven successful - and only then can we debate the status of current illegal immigrants, or the need for new guest worker programs. We are in the middle of a global war on terror. 2006 is not 1986. Today, we need proof that enforcement (both at the border and in the interior) is successful before anything else happens. As Ronald Reagan used to say “trust, but verify”

The majority of Republicans in the Senate opposed the recently passed Hagel-Martinez bill. Senator Vitter (R-LA) said that because border enforcement will not be in place, “this [bill] will in fact make the illegal immigration problem much bigger.” The No. 3 Republican in the Senate, Senator Rick Santorum (PA) said, “We need a border-security bill first.” Senator Vitter, Senator Santorum, the majority of Senate Republicans, and the majority of House Republicans are right - we need proven enforcement before we do anything else. Adopting cosmetic legislation to appear to be “doing something” about enforcement, but which actually makes the situation worse, is not statesmanship, it is demagoguery.

We thank the majority of the Senate Republicans (33 in all) and the seven Democrats who supported the Isakson amendment, which insists upon verifiable benchmarks for border security before considering other issues. Moreover, we say “Thank You” to Jim Sensenbrenner, Peter King, and the bi-partisan House majority including 36 Democrats, that passed HR 4437. We may quibble with a clause here and there, but you in the House and the majority of Senate Republicans are right to emphasize that the Congress and the President must deal with enforcement first and other issues later. Stand fast; the American people are overwhelmingly with you.

Signed,

William B. Allen, Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University

William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education under President Reagan, former Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy under former President George H.W. Bush

Thomas L. Bock, National Commander of the American Legion

Robert H. Bork, Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, former Solicitor General, acting Attorney General, Supreme Court nominee, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge

William F. Buckley, Jr., founder and Editor-at-Large of *National Review*

Peter Collier, founding Publisher of Encounter Books, cofounder of Center for the Study of Popular Culture

Ward Connerly, former Regent at the University of California, founder and Chairman of the American Civil Rights Institute (ACRI), winner of the 2005 Bradley Prize for Outstanding Intellectual Achievement

T. Kenneth Cribb, former domestic policy advisor for President Ronald Reagan

Glynn Custred, Professor of Anthropology at California State University, Hayward, co-author of the California Civil Rights Initiative, Proposition 209, and Vice-Chairman of Friends of the Border Patrol

John C. Eastman, Professor of Law at Chapman University School of Law, Director of the Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence

John Fonte, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center of American Common Culture at the Hudson Institute

David Frum, former speechwriter for George W. Bush, Resident Fellow at American Enterprise Institute

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr., founder and President of the Center for Security Policy

Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Chairman of the Gingrich Group, Senior Fellow at American Enterprise Institute

Jonah Goldberg, Editor-at-Large of the *National Review Online*, national syndicated columnist

Victor Davis Hanson, Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution,

recipient of the 1991 American Philological Association Excellence in Teaching Award

David Horowitz, cofounder of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, Editor of FrontPageMag.com

Fred C. Iklé, former Undersecretary of Defense under Reagan, former Director of U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

David Keene, Chairman of the American Conservative Union

Brian Kennedy, President of the Claremont Institute, Publisher of the *Claremont Review of Books*

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John O'Sullivan, Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, Editor-at-Large of *National Review*

Juliana Pilon, Research Professor at the Institute for World Politics

Daniel Pipes, founder and Director of the Middle East Forum and Campus Watch, former member of the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace

Andrew "Andy" Ramirez, Chairman of Friends of Border Patrol

Phyllis Schlafly, founder and President of Eagle Forum

Thomas Sowell, Rose and Milton Friedman Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the Hoover Institution, winner of the 2003 Bradley Prize for Outstanding Intellectual Achievement

Shelby Steele, Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, winner of the 2006 Bradley Prize for Outstanding Intellectual Achievement

Stephen Steinlight, Fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, former National Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee, and Vice President of the National Conference of Christians and Jews

Thomas G. West, Director and Senior Fellow of the Claremont Institute, Professor of Politics at the University of Dallas

* Note: Our appreciation to Mr. John Fonte of the Hudson Institute for including Mr. Ramirez, and Dr. Custred as original co-signers.