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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

March 15, 2006

The Honorable William H. Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Frist:

We have read with interest recent statements by several of our respected Republican colleagues that an immigration bill will be considered on the Senate floor the week of March 27, 2006. We applaud your willingness to take up this important issue of vital national urgency and commend your leadership. We are concerned, however, that an immigration bill could be debated on the floor even if that legislation is not a complete product of the thoughtful deliberations of the Senate Judiciary Committee. It is our sincere hope that this piecemeal approach does not occur. Immigration reform is a broad and complex issue and deserves the most thorough consideration that the Senate has to offer. Arbitrary deadlines and half-finished proposals serve neither the Senate nor the country well.

The Judiciary Committee has unique expertise on immigration law and, under the leadership of Chairman Specter, is working diligently to markup a comprehensive immigration reform bill. While we may not hold a uniform position on what the ultimate substance of this bill should be, we share the opinion that the issue should not be considered in a rushed manner. The Senate would be well served by the benefit of a complete committee markup, even if a brief extension of time is required to produce one. Indeed, the institution of the Senate is weakened every time the Committee structure is not fully utilized.

We all agree that the Senate's review of immigration law is long overdue. We firmly believe that now is the time to address this issue in a thorough and deliberate manner. The Committee should continue to move expeditiously through the Chairman's mark, and that upon completion of that process, the Senate should quickly move to floor debate of the bill.

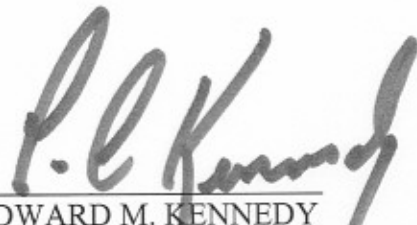
We stand ready to work with you to develop a consensus on this matter and look forward

The Honorable William H. Frist
March 15, 2006
Page 2

to ensuring prompt consideration of an immigration reform bill through the regular procedures of the Senate.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY
Ranking Member

EDWARD M. KENNEDY
United States Senator

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator