

April 6, 2006
4:00pm Eastern

**STATEMENT FROM IMMIGRANT ADVOCACY GROUPS
ABOUT REPORTED BIPARTISAN COMPROMISE ON
LEGALIZATION OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS**

On the heels of this morning's announcement by Majority Leader Bill Frist, Minority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter, Ranking Member Patrick Leahy, John McCain, Ted Kennedy, and a bipartisan group of Senate leaders on immigration reform, pro-immigrant advocacy groups released the following joint statement:

We understand that an agreement on how to deal with the 12 million undocumented immigrants living and working in this country is not yet completed. We recognize that this is a compromise from what the Judiciary Committee passed, but it appears that the proposal could bring together the two Parties in the Senate to pass a bill that would significantly reform our broken immigration system.

We recognize the leadership of key members of the Senate, including Senators McCain and Kennedy who authored the original immigration reform bill, and Senator Specter who lead the Judiciary Committee in passing a strong bipartisan bill. Senators Hagel, Martinez, Brownback, Chafee, DeWine, Durbin, Frist, Graham, Kerry, Leahy, Lieberman, Menendez, Obama, Reid, and Salazar have played key roles.

As the senators said in their news conference this morning, nothing is a done deal yet, but they appear closer than ever. In order for this new deal to be acceptable to those of us who advocate on behalf of immigrants, we need assurances that the integrity of the bipartisan breakthrough will hold throughout conference negotiations with the House.

We ask that Senate leadership commit to appointing all Senate Judiciary Members as conferees for these negotiations. We also want the bipartisan coalition of senators crafting this proposal to protect its work against amendments on the floor that would vitiate their agreement or undermine due process.

Other provisions in the legislation remain of grave concern. We ask Members in both chambers to remove harmful measures that undermine the rights of immigrants, while we support the resolution of a strong bill that both chambers can pass and the President can sign into law.

American Immigration Lawyers Association
Asian American Justice Center
National Council of La Raza
National Immigration Forum
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
UNITE HERE International Union