

**Letter on Comprehensive Immigration Reform
Sent to members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Senate Leadership**

February 22, 2006

Dear Senator:

With the Senate preparing to begin consideration of legislation to address the complex problem of undocumented migration to the United States, we are writing to urge you to take a comprehensive approach to these difficult issues. The Senate's leadership on immigration reform is crucial if the unfortunate approach taken late last year in the House of Representatives is not to be repeated. The House legislation has continued the decades-old failed strategy of expanding enforcement without reforming our nation's immigration laws to realistically serve our security, economic and humanitarian interests.

As leaders of Jewish community organizations, we look both to the teachings of our Jewish religious and ethical tradition, and to core American values relating to immigrants, for guidance on immigration reform. They call on us to "welcome the stranger," and provide an effective legal immigration system characterized by rule of law, national interest and compassionate treatment.

A comprehensive approach to immigration reform must recognize and respond to the reality that approximately 11 million undocumented individuals currently reside in the United States; that unrealistic immigration laws and ineffective border enforcement policies have created conditions that have resulted in thousands of deaths and increasing violence in the border regions; and that extensive backlogs for family immigration visas have led to prolonged and inhumane separation of families. Furthermore, the failure to reform our immigration laws perpetuates an illegal immigration system and undermines government efforts to target enforcement resources on criminals and terrorists who pose grave dangers to the country.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation that results from Senate deliberation should include provisions that provide:

- Border protection policies that are consistent with American humanitarian values and effective against illegal migration, thereby allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of identifying and preventing entry into the United States of terrorists and dangerous criminals;
- Opportunities for hard-working immigrants who are already contributing to this country to come out of the shadows, regularize their status upon satisfaction of reasonable criteria and, over time, pursue an option to become lawful permanent residents and eventually United States citizens;
- Reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families, who currently must wait many years, to be reunited with loved ones; and
- Legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner with their rights fully protected.

We firmly believe that with your leadership, the Senate can review and ensure that our country's immigration laws are reformed in a comprehensive manner that will make the United States stronger and safer while honoring our tradition as a nation of immigrants.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

Rabbi Abba Cohen
Director and Counsel, Washington Office
Agudath Israel of America

Richard T. Foltin
Legislative Director & Counsel
American Jewish Committee

Jess Hordes
Director of Government and National Affairs
Anti-Defamation League

Neil Greenbaum
President and CEO
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Steve Gutow
Executive Director
Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Avram B. Lyon
Executive Director
Jewish Labor Committee

Dr. Carl Sheingold, Executive Vice President
Dan Cedarbaum, President
Rabbi Shawn Zevit, Director of Outreach and External
Affairs
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

Phyllis Snyder
President
National Council of Jewish Women

Rabbi Perry Raphael Rank
President
Rabbi Leonard D. Gordon
Chair, Social Action Committee
Rabbinical Assembly

Rabbi David Saperstein
Director
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

William Daroff
Vice President for Public Policy and Director of the
Washington Office
United Jewish Communities

Nathan Diament
Director of Public Policy
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America

Lewis Grafman
Interim Director of Public Policy and Social Action
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Bernice Balter
Executive Director
Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Robert Kestenbaum
Executive Director
Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring

Local Organizations:

Arthur C. Abramson, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Baltimore Jewish Council

Judy Lackritz, Community Relations Director
Alice Viroslav, Community Relations Chair
Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation
of San Antonio

Jeff Gubitz
Executive Director
Fort Wayne Jewish Federation

Henry Efroymson
President
Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council

Josh Protas
Director
Jewish Community Relations Council
Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona

Vic Rosenthal
Executive Director
Jewish Community Action, St. Paul, Minnesota

Steven J. Brodie, Chairman
Judy Gilbert-Gould, Director
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Greater
Miami Jewish Federation

Burt Siegel
Director
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater
Philadelphia

Jonathan Frisch
CRC Vice President
Memphis Jewish Federation

Stephen Silberfarb
Executive Director
Jewish Community Relations Council of
Minnesota and the Dakotas

Jane Ramsey
Executive Director
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, Chicago

Arlene D. Schiff
Executive Director
Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Howard Gases
Executive Director
Jewish Federation of Greater Monmouth County

William E. Rapfogel
CEO/ Executive Director
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

Ron Soloway
Managing Director, Government and External Relations
UJA-Jewish Federation of New York