

«letterdate»

«nameline»

«title»

«organization1»

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«address1»

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«city», «statelong» «zip9»

Dear «salutation2b»:

On behalf of President Bush, thank you for your correspondence. The President appreciates learning your views.

President Bush knows illegal immigration and border security are issues that concern Americans. We are a Nation built on the rule of law, and those who enter the country without authorization break the law. In communities near our borders, illegal immigration strains the resources of schools, hospitals, and law enforcement. It can involve smugglers and gangs who bring crime to our neighborhoods. Faced with this serious challenge, the President believes our Government must fix the problem of illegal immigration and deliver a system that is secure, orderly, and fair.

President Bush believes that comprehensive immigration reform is vital to ensuring the security of our citizens and strength of our homeland, and he supports a five-part plan to accomplish this goal. The President's vision will allow America to uphold the rule of law while honoring our heritage as a Nation of immigrants.

First, as President Bush has said, securing our borders is an urgent requirement for the safety of our country. Since 2001, the Administration has expanded the number of Border Patrol Agents from about 9,000 to 12,000, and the President has proposed to increase the number of agents to 18,000 by 2008. Through the President's Secure Border Initiative, high-tech fences in urban corridors will be constructed, new patrol roads and barriers in rural areas will be built, and a virtual fence that employs motion sensors, infrared cameras, and other advanced technology to detect and prevent illegal crossings will be created. The President is also working to end the practice of "catch and release" along the southern border. In addition, up to 6,000 National Guard members will temporarily be sent to our southern border to assist the Border Patrol until new technologies are integrated and new Border Patrol Agents are added. Guard members will help with surveillance, construction, and intelligence. They will not be directly involved in law enforcement activities, and their assistance will not affect the National Guard's capability to respond to natural disasters and win the war on terror.

Second, the President's plan includes a temporary worker program to allow foreign workers to enter our country in a legal, temporary, and organized way. This program would provide a way for employers to hire willing workers when no American can be found to fill the job. Applicants to the program would be required to pass criminal background checks, and temporary workers would have to pay their taxes and return to their home countries at the conclusion of their authorized stay. This program will meet the needs of our economy, add to our security, and give immigrants the chance to provide for their families while respecting the law.

Third, to ensure employers can account for the workers they hire, President Bush has proposed the creation of a tamper-proof identification card for legal, foreign workers and an electronic system to allow employers to verify the legal status of potential employees. These measures will help enforce the law and prevent employers from hiring illegal immigrants.

Fourth, the President believes we must face the reality that millions of illegal immigrants are already living in America. President Bush opposes granting amnesty to illegal immigrants, which is a policy that would give them an automatic path to citizenship. He knows this would encourage violation of our laws and further illegal immigration. For illegal immigrants who have roots in America and want to remain in America, the President has proposed to give these individuals the opportunity to pay their debt to society and demonstrate the character that makes a good citizen. These individuals would be required to pay a penalty, learn English, pay their taxes, and remain gainfully employed for a number of years. After meeting these conditions, they would be allowed to apply for citizenship. Citizenship would not be guaranteed, and applicants would have to wait in line behind those who followed the law.

Finally, as President Bush has said, we must honor the great American tradition of the melting pot. America has always been a compassionate Nation that values the newcomer and takes great pride in our immigrant heritage. Through the years, our Nation has been strengthened by generations of immigrants who became Americans through patience and hard work. In this new century, we must continue to welcome legal immigrants and help them learn the customs and values that unite all Americans, including an appreciation for our history, respect for our flag, and the ability to speak and write the English language.

The President is committed to addressing this important issue, and he has called on members of the Congress to work together to pass comprehensive immigration reform. By enacting immigration reform, we will preserve the promise of America and add to our country's security and prosperity. For more information on President Bush's comprehensive immigration policy, you may wish to visit the White House website at whitehouse.gov/infocus/immigration. Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

H

Darren K. Hipp

Special Assistant to the President
and Director of Presidential Correspondence