

September 25, 2006

VIA FAX

Dear Senator:

The Senate will soon consider HR 6061 PCS, the "Secure Fence Act of 2006," which has erroneously been referred to as the "fence bill." This bill goes far beyond the construction of border barriers. It provides unprecedented authorities to the Secretary of the Department Homeland Security (DHS) "to take all actions necessary and appropriate to prevent all unlawful entries into the U.S."

The consequences of such an immense and vague mandate to the Secretary could result in policies and procedures that would adversely affect American communities at the Northern and Southern borders, and maritime states – wherever 'border' might be defined. United States citizens and lawful permanent residents would not be immune to the consequences of the extraordinary powers granted DHS in this bill. We must remember that the border is not simply a delineation line; communities live along the border and their rights must be respected. Moreover, DHS must be held accountable for actions taken in these communities.

Finally, we question the wisdom of delegating such sweeping authority to a government agency. Numerous GAO and CRS reports to Congress cite accountability and management problems at DHS, showing that DHS requires the same Congressional and legal oversight as other agencies of the government.

H.R. 6061 is a broad bill with potentially harmful consequences for American communities. We strongly urge the Senate to oppose H.R. 6061.

Signed by the following organizations:

American Immigration Lawyers Association
American Library Association
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, New York
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Michigan
Asian American Justice Center
Border Action Network, Tucson, Arizona
CARACEN, Washington, D.C.
CAUSA, Oregon
Center for Community Change
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for National Security Studies
Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program
Coalicion de Derechos Humanos, Tucson, Arizona
Grassroots Leadership, Charlotte, North Carolina

Hispanic Coalition, Miami, Florida
Hispanic Development Corporation, Newark, New Jersey
Interfaith Refugee Action Team- Elizabeth, New Jersey
International Catholic Migration Commission
El Centro, Inc., Kansas City, Kansas
Episcopal Migration Ministries
FIRM (Fair Immigration Reform Movement)
First Amendment Foundation
First Friends, Elizabeth, New Jersey
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Miami, Florida
Idaho Community Action Network, Boise, Idaho
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Legal Resource Center, San Francisco, California
Latin American Community Center, Wilmington, Delaware
Latino Family Services, Detroit, Michigan
Legal Momentum
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington State
MAAC Project, San Diego, California
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Committee Against Repressive Legislation
National Council of La Raza
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
NETWORK: A Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New York Immigration Coalition
NWA Crisis Intervention Center, Springdale, Arkansas
Political Asylum Project, Austin, Texas
South Asia Network, Los Angeles, California
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
UN DIA (United Dubuque Immigrant Alliance), Dubuque, Iowa
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Wind of the Spirit, Immigrant Resource Center, Morristown, New Jersey

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Andy Silverman, Tucson, Arizona
Naomi Swinton, Wilmington, North Carolina
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Roberta Warmack, President, Latinos for Education & Justice Organization, Calhoun, Georgia
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