

May 24, 2007

Please Vote Yes on Clinton-Hagel-Menendez Amendment

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to vote yes on the Clinton-Hagel-Menendez Amendment to amend the “immediate relative” category for family-visa petitions to include minor children and spouses of legal permanent residents (LPRs). This amendment would ensure that LPRs can be more quickly reunited with their family members; without this amendment, LPRs will continue to face long waits of five years or more to be reunited with their loved ones.

Devastating impact on families with Clinton-Hagel-Menendez Amendment

The U.S. prides itself in welcoming newcomers and protecting families, but immigration policies are keeping these families apart. More than one million minor children and spouses of LPRs are currently awaiting reunion with their parent or spouse. The U.S. restricts travel for LPRs, and with the stringent requirements for obtaining a visitor’s visa, families remain separated for long periods of time. The current bill will have a devastating impact on highly vulnerable populations, such as refugees and asylees. The cap will keep them from reuniting with their families, even after they become LPRs.

Currently, spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens are classified as “immediate relatives” for purposes of applying for family-sponsored visas. These family members of U.S. citizens do not have to wait in line to receive visas to join their family members in the United States and there is no annual cap on the number of visas granted to them. By contrast, spouses and minor children of LPRs are capped at 87,900 visas each year. Due to the backlog created by insufficient visas to match the demand, these spouses and minor children of LPRs must wait in line five years before being able to join their families.

Family unity is beneficial for the U.S. economy

Countless examples of entrepreneurialism within immigrant communities show that families, by living together and sharing resources, contribute to the economy in powerful and sustaining ways. By keeping nuclear families apart, both the current system and proposed point system create disincentives for immigrants to invest their talents in the U.S. economy.

U.S. legal permanent residents have played by the rules and are waiting patiently in line to reunite with their loved ones. **We urge you to vote yes on the Clinton-Hagel-Menendez Amendment to ensure our immigration system prioritizes the reunification of families.**

Very truly yours,

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Families United
American Friends Service Committee

American Immigration Lawyers Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian American Justice Center
Asian Law Caucus
Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California
Association for Community Organizations for Reform Now
Ayuda, Inc.
CASA of Maryland, Inc.
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Relief Services
Causa, Oregon Immigrant Rights Coalition
Center for Community Change
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program
Democracia Ahora
The Episcopal Church
Fair Immigration Reform Movement
First Friends: The Elizabeth Detention Center Visitors' Project
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Grupo de Apoyo e Integración Hispanoamericano
Guru Gobind Singh Foundation Sikh Center
Hate Free Zone
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Irish Apostolate USA
Jesuit Conference USA
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Korean American Resource & Cultural Center
Korean Resource Center
Law Office of Anthony J. Keber
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Momentum
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Lutheran World Relief
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund
National Capital Immigration Coalition
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center

National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Organization of Chinese Americans
People For the American Way
Political Asylum Project of Austin
Service Employees International Union, CTW, CLC
Shirlington Employment and Education Center
Sikh Council on Religion and Education
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
UNITE HERE International Union
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Farm Workers Foundation
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church, General Commission on Religion and Race
UniteFamilies.org
YKASEC - Empowering the Korean American Community
World Relief