

December 16, 2005

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned national Latino organizations write to express our extreme disappointment with the Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) issued yesterday supporting the "Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005" (H.R. 4437). This bill defies any attempt at serious or effective immigration reform, which you yourself acknowledged is urgently needed. Your SAP is baffling in light of recent statements made by RNC Chairman Ken Mehlman, which correctly point out that the House Republican proposal overreaches in ways which are harmful to the country and which will alienate the Latino community. Your support of H.R. 4437 is inconsistent with the very principles for immigration reform that you have put forward.

The impact of H.R. 4437 on the Latino community would be devastating. This bill is excessively harmful to American families, businesses, and communities as well as immigrants. Among its many appalling provisions: it criminalizes 11 million undocumented workers; it subjects family members, employers, religious institutions, and others to criminal penalties under broadened definitions of smuggling, harboring, and transporting; it expands expedited removal and mandatory detention; and it creates an unworkable employer verification system that will displace millions of workers and disrupt the economy. All of these provisions will have a far-reaching impact on the entire Latino community, yet none would solve our very real immigration problems. H.R. 4437 does not put us on a path toward comprehensive immigration reform; rather it stymies constructive debate and is an affront to those who are truly interested in solutions.

As you know, leaders from both political parties have acknowledged the need to address our immigration problems in a comprehensive manner and are working on realistic, rational immigration reform legislation. However, House Republicans have provided this shortsighted and mean-spirited bill which is intended to appear tough on immigration without resolving our nation's immigration problems. Only a comprehensive approach that provides a path to citizenship for current undocumented immigrants, creates new legal channels for future flows of needed immigrants, reduces family immigration backlogs, and protects worker rights will reduce undocumented immigration and bring order to our immigration system.

We are shocked and saddened by your Administration's statement of strong support for H.R. 4437. It is difficult to understand how you will explain your posture on this legislation to the Latino community, which is following this debate very closely. We urge you to withdraw your support for H.R. 4437 and get back on the path toward comprehensive immigration reform.

Sincerely,

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)  
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials  
(NALEO) Educational Fund  
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)