

U.S. SENATE,
OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER,
Washington, DC, June 27, 2006.

Hon. ARLEN SPECTER,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SPECTER AND CHAIRMAN SENSENBRENNER: Thank you for your diligent efforts to bring the Senate and the House of Representatives together on legislation to create a national sex offender registry and protect children from sexual predators. While I am pleased with the progress made so far, I remain concerned that time may be running short in this legislative session. So today, I urge you to join me in setting a clear goal to have sexual predators legislation ready for signature by the President no later than July 27, 2006—in honor of the 25th anniversary of the tragic abduction and murder of Adam Walsh, the 6-year-old son of John and Revé Walsh, who are the founders of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

John and Revé have transformed the tragedy of Adam's death into a lifelong commitment to protecting children from abduction, abuse, and exploitation. They have been at the forefront of most major child protection legislation passed by Congress over the last quarter century—from the Missing Children's Act in 1982, which improved law enforcement information sharing in missing child cases, to the Protect Act in 2003, which established a nationwide Amber Alert network to coordinate rapid emergency responses to missing child alerts. Their tireless dedication has been an inspiration to parents of child victims and millions of American families.

I know we share a commitment to strengthen laws that protect our children from sexual predators lurking in our neighborhoods or enticing our children online. Currently, there are more than 550,000 registered sex offenders in the United States and at least 100,000 are missing from the system. The loopholes in the current system allow some sexual predators to evade law enforcement and put our children at risk. In addition, we must do more to address an emerging global crisis in child pornography, an estimated \$20 billion commercial industry fueled by the Internet. The Internet has become an anonymous gateway for sexual predators to initiate contact with children, win their confidence, and attempt to victimize them. By passing legislation that establishes a national sex offender registry, toughens criminal penalties for sexual predators, and cracks down on child pornography, we can take another step forward in making America safer.

The Senate and the House have both passed bills addressing these issues. It is time to bridge any remaining differences and finish the job. We should not allow extraneous issues to delay the bill.

I look forward to working with you in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM H. FRIST, M.D.

Majority Leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I am pleased to join with my colleague, Senator REID, who is endorsing this July 27 date as a goal as well. The reason why it is important for us to speak to this now is that there are a number of issues out there that are unrelated to the sex offender registry bill, which are important issues in and of themselves, but in some ways they impede or lessen

the likelihood that we are going to get this particular bill through.

The registry is important. By creating a national registry, we are going to make it easier for law enforcement to act if they get a tip and to be able to identify and stop these offenders before they can commit repeat crimes and victimize more children.

Many States, including my State of Tennessee, have registries, but that information is not shared with other States. Therefore, you have these sex offenders simply going from State to State. If a sex offender is registered in Florida and then moves to Tennessee, there is no way to track him today. Under the new law, Florida would have to notify Tennessee law enforcement that the sex offender is moving. It is a big problem.

There are currently 550,000 registered sex offenders in the U.S. and at least 100,000 of them are missing from the system. Every day that we don't have this national sex offender registry, these missing sex predators are out there somewhere. We don't know where they are or whether or who they are victimizing.

So there is a lot we can do. Now is the time for us to do it. The national sex offender registry will save the lives of thousands of children. By passing this legislation, we can take another major step forward to making the country safer. I thank Senator HATCH, and especially Senator REID, for their leadership.

I urge our colleagues in the Senate and in the House to act quickly and get this bill done by July 27. It is for law enforcement officers, it is for parents, and it is especially for our Nation's children.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION AND NOTIFICATION ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, first of all, I appreciate very much the statement of the majority leader. I understand that he has other matters, and I will speak to him later about a number of other things.

On the issue of sex offender legislation, yesterday, rightfully so, the majority leader sent a letter to Chairmen SPECTER and SENSENBRENNER asking them to bridge their differences and finish the legislation. I commend Senator FRIST for making this bill a priority.

I agree that this is important legislation, and it should not be stalled by disagreements over controversial, extraneous matters. Specifically, the leader asked the two chairmen to complete work on the bill by the end of July. That timetable seems perfect for me. The Senate passed its version by

unanimous consent on May 4. There should be no further delay. I believe this is an urgent matter.

I remind my colleagues that when the Senate passed this version of the bill 2 months ago, Senator KENNEDY—even though he felt very strongly about the hate crime bill—agreed to set that aside. That was a major concession by all of us who favor the hate crimes bill. We made the decision that the sex offender bill should not be delayed by unrelated matters.

Since that time, I am sorry to report that some Members of the House have held up the sex offender bill by trying to add their own pet projects related to the death penalty, habeas corpus, and other matters. They are all important matters, but we have to move forward with this sex crime legislation.

As the majority leader correctly wrote in his letter, "We should not allow extraneous issues to delay this bill."

Why is the sex offender bill so important? Because the safety of children is at stake. The national sex offender registry will make it easier for local law enforcement to track sex offenders and prevent repeat offenses. The bill authorizes much-needed grants to local law enforcement agencies to establish and integrate sex offender registry systems.

Is it going to take another news story about yet another brutal assault and murder of some young child to make it clear that we need to act now? I hope not.

Obviously, there are still issues to work out between the House and Senate. I understand that, I favor, of course, the Senate-passed bill, S. 1086, which I think did a better job of distinguishing among types of offenders. We need to move forward without delays or distractions on unrelated issues.

Finally, if anyone ever doubts that one person can make a difference in our country and our world, one only need to look at John Walsh. Because of the tragic event dealing with his son Adam, we now have a National Center for Missing Children. We have a TV program called "America's Most Wanted," and because of that program, we have gotten scores of felons who have done very bad things. I have never met John Walsh, but a former Governor of Nevada was a good friend of his. He told me years ago about this good man. I applaud John Walsh. It is because of him that we are moving forward on this legislation.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I know the Democratic leader has other statements to make. I think the signal that we are both sending is that this is significant legislation. It will directly impact families all over the United States of America. It is an obvious need. We have made huge progress and, as the Democratic leader said, much of that is to be attributed to John Walsh, his family, because of the tragedy they suffered with the loss of their child.

Again, the Democratic leader and I are joined at the hip pushing this

through in the Senate. We, working together, agreed to have a focused bill, a targeted bill, that would accomplish the specific objectives here. And our appeal today is that the House do likewise so we can pass this by July 27.

IMMIGRATION BILL CONFERENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we saw the Senate at its best a few weeks ago when we passed comprehensive immigration reform. Democrats and Republicans, working together, passed a very complicated bill in a relatively short period of time, with dozens of amendments. We passed a bill. People are looking for us to do things together and we did something together. The President was involved in this and I appreciate that very much. We did good border security. We did something to deal with guest workers. We did something to put the 12 million people who are here on a proper pathway to legalization. Even though they have the opportunity to do that, they will not go to the front of the line. It is something we have to do. They will have to have jobs, pay taxes, make sure they stay out of trouble, and learn English. We also put in the bill excellent provisions so that employer sanctions will be enforced.

So we did a good job on this bill. We passed a bipartisan, comprehensive bill that will address the urgent national security issue facing us, and that is immigration and border security. In contrast, the House passed a bill that would make felons out of 12 million people. In addition, potential felons would be a Catholic priest giving eucharist to his parishioners or a health care worker trying to help someone who is homeless or a social worker and many examples where they would become felons.

The bill in the House is mean-spirited and it is wrong. People who run soup kitchens should not be felons. People who are domestic violence counselors should not be felons. Certainly, members of the clergy should not be felons.

A little over 3 weeks ago, I proposed a unanimous consent agreement that would allow us to move forward a House-Senate negotiation on the immigration bill. I asked consent that we take up the House immigration bill, substitute the text of the Senate bill, and then appoint conferees. My friend, the majority whip, Senator MCCONNELL, objected due to a threat of the House Republicans to "blue slip" the bill. Senator MCCONNELL asked that we take up and appoint conferees to H.R. 4096, a House-passed tax bill that is here in the Senate to address the House's constitutional concerns. I think they are unfounded, but I accept Senator MCCONNELL's objection. Therefore, I had no choice but to object because I was concerned that House leaders would use this tax bill as an opportunity for mischief and would insert many items that are repugnant to what we are trying to do with taxes in an immigration bill.

Since then, I have asked the majority leader for some assurances that this procedural maneuver would be used solely to get around the blue slip problem and that the conference report would not be used as a vehicle for tax provisions that have nothing to do with the immigration bill.

The majority leader has provided such assurances to me orally. In addition, Senators SPECTER, GRAHAM, and MCCAIN have given me written assurances that they will not sign a conference report that contains tax provisions unrelated to the immigration bill.

Among other things, this letter says:

As chairman—

That is Senator SPECTER—

and likely members of the immigration conference—

That is Senators MCCAIN and GRAHAM—

we would not sign any conference report that contains tax changes not related to immigration. We simply will not allow the use of the tax bill as a vehicle for comprehensive immigration reform to be abused in conference.

I very much appreciate these three fine men giving me this letter. I think this is a way to move forward.

Based on the oral assurance of the majority leader and the written assurance from these three Republican Senators, we as Democrats stand ready to appoint conferees and to move forward on this bill at any time the majority leader allows that to happen. We are willing to move forward under the terms previously suggested by the majority whip. We would consent to using the House-passed tax bill as a vehicle for this immigration conference based on these new assurances. I hope we can do that as soon as possible.

I express my apology to my friend from Kansas and thank him for being so patient waiting for Senator FRIST and I to complete our morning statements.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Nevada, the Democratic leader, for his last statement of willingness to appoint conferees and use other vehicles that will not have the blue slip problem on the House side. Comprehensive immigration reform is a critical and most important piece of legislation we will pass in conference if we can get it done. I appreciate my colleague doing that.

It is a tough topic. He has been willing to work with us along the way, not without difficulties at different steps. I really appreciate his willingness to work on such a difficult topic with us.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will my friend yield for a question?

Mr. BROWNBACK. Yes, I will.

Mr. REID. The Senator heard the statement I read into the RECORD in the letter from Senators SPECTER, GRAHAM, and MCCAIN. I am confident that the Senator from Kansas agrees that the immigration bill should not con-

tain any extraneous tax matters; is that correct?

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I do, and I appreciate the opportunity to say so on the Senate floor as well. I don't want to see this process manipulated and the Senator put in a position where he is not comfortable with trying to get done what we all want. I don't think that is right. I don't think that is the comity of the Senate, and I stand with my colleagues who signed that letter as well.

Again, I thank the Senator for moving this forward. If we can get this immigration bill moving forward, it would be a major accomplishment for us and for the Nation.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I stand to deliver some good news today to the Senate and hopefully contribute to the debate we are going to have probably in July on the overall issue of stem cells, embryonic stem cells, human cloning, adult stem cells, and cord blood.

I wish to start by saying I think everybody is of good heart and good mind in this body and that they want to try to do something to help people in this country. While we have some differences of opinion on embryonic stem cells and on human cloning, there is strong bipartisan support in the adult stem cell and cord blood area.

The differences come down to the basic view of the youngest of human life. This is a long debate. It has been going on for some time. We have differences of opinion. I view human life as sacred at all of its stages and all of its places. Period. It is unique, it is beautiful, it is a child of the living God. It deserves our respect and protection under law at the very earliest stages of life and at the very latest stages in life. It is life in this country and a life in other countries. It is life seeking to come to this country in whatever form it may be. This life is unique and sacred.

We can try to divide it under law. We can say it is property at this stage of life; it is not worth living at that stage of life. All of those, I think, are false distinctions. Life is sacred, period, per se because it is human and it is sacred, period, because it is human. That is the point of view from which I come. That is the point of view from which I think a lot of Americans come.

When people think about it, when they look at this issue they say: How else would you divide a baby? It is pretty hard to do unless you start where life begins and you end where life ends and you don't draw distinctions in between.

Others are willing to draw that distinction in between and say a human life is not sacred, per se, at certain early stages, or if it is so decrepit at other stages of life. I think those are false distinctions. I don't think they stand the test of science. I don't think