

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