

United States Senate

SENATE STEERING COMMITTEE

June 26, 2007

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid:

Thank you for your response to our letter regarding your unprecedented efforts to bring the immigration bill back to the Senate floor after it was rejected three times by the full Senate. We are writing to address several of the issues you raised.

First, you said the Senate was not allowed to complete its earlier debate on this bill because some of us objected to your calling up further amendments. This is untrue. You repeatedly objected to Republican amendments being offered and insisted on selecting our amendments for us and for the entire Senate. Consequently, we objected to all amendments until we could get a full and fair debate. We did not believe you had the right to hand-pick amendments then, and we do not believe you have that right now.

Second, you said the abuse of Senate rules during this debate is justified because it allows you to "overcome the tactics of a small number of Senators." This is also untrue. We hope you realize that 65 Senators voted against cutting off debate because they opposed the substance of the bill and the process you used to debate it. This is not a small group.

In addition, your unprecedented abuse of the rules and precedents of the Senate will negatively impact every senator by fundamentally reducing their rights to debate and to offer amendments in the future. We believe you understand our concern because just two years ago you said, "the Senate should not become like the House of Representatives, where the majority manipulates the rules to accommodate its momentary needs." If you go forward with this plan, history will show that your decision not only impacted the ever-growing number of senators who oppose this immigration bill, but hundreds of senators in the years to come who wish to make their voices heard.

Third, you repeatedly defended this process for debate by blaming the Senate Republican Leadership and the President himself. While their cooperation may give you comfort, it does not justify your actions. As Senate Majority Leader, only you can execute this abusive practice. Only you can set up a process that guarantees consideration of a hand-selected group of amendments to buy support for a bill while at the same time blocking all other amendments. You may want Americans to believe this is a Republican bill, but your willingness to use your office to force it through the Senate, shows precisely how much you support it and the extent you are willing to go to pass it.

We respectfully ask you to reconsider your plan to force this bill through the Senate. The American people do not support this legislation and they do not support the heavy-handed tactics being used to pass it.

Sincerely,

