



March 14, 2002

The Honorable Thomas Daschle
Majority Leader, United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Daschle:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of The Latino Coalition (TLC) and the Hispanic Business Roundtable (HBR), we strongly urge you to support the President's efforts to pass a temporary extension of 245i before he departs for his trip to Latin America. We cannot allow empty and inflammatory rhetoric to drown good public policy.

Passage of this legislation will send a clear message of friendship and cooperation not only to our southern neighbors, but also to Hispanic voters across the country. By allowing family members to pay a significant fee in order to apply for legal status without having to leave the country, we will help promote family-friendly policies at the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Foes of 245i are taking advantage of the September 11th attack on America to once again instill fear against individuals from Latin America. The fact is that there has been no evidence that people affected by this legislation have been involved in any kind of terrorist activities. As a matter of fact, those same opponents have completely ignored our northern border and the problems associated with overstayed visas. 245i will only strengthen the love of this country for individuals who already have strong ties to America. Using 9-11 as an excuse for opposing this legislation is simply an outrageous attempt to hide their support for an ethnic-based immigration policy that discriminates against people from Latin America, and play on the fear of all Americans.

We believe that family reunification should be a fundamental goal of our nation's immigration policy, and support a temporary extension of Section 245(i), which allows eligible people to apply for legal residency in the United States without having to first return to their country of origin. The legislation recognizes that immigrant families are an essential part of a strong, tolerant and compassionate America. Many immigrants who are otherwise eligible to become legal residents will be forced to leave the United States and their families unless a temporary extension is granted.

We at The Latino Coalition and the Hispanic Business Roundtable strongly support policies that reform our immigration system. However, let's make sure that we base our policies on sound policy rather than on an ethnic bias. Let's promote policies that are practical and that promote the safety and security of all Americans. We urge you to support 245i.

Best regards,

Robert G. de Posada
President, The Latino Coalition

Mario Rodriguez
President, Hispanic Business Roundtable