

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 17, 2006

Mr. Kurt Grela

Alexandria, Virginia 22311-1807

Dear Mr. Grela:

On behalf of President Bush, thank you for your correspondence. The President appreciates learning your views.

The President knows illegal immigration and border security are issues that concern Americans. We are a Nation built on the rule of law, and those who enter the country without authorization break the law. In communities near our borders, illegal immigration strains the resources of schools, hospitals, and law enforcement. It involves smugglers and gangs that bring crime to our neighborhoods. Faced with this serious challenge, our Government's responsibility is clear: We are going to protect our borders.

Since 2001, the Administration has increased funding for border security by 60 percent, and border agents have removed more than 4.5 million illegal immigrants from the United States, including nearly 350,000 with criminal records. Yet, we must do more to build on this progress.

The President has outlined a comprehensive strategy to reform our immigration system. The strategy begins with a three-part plan to protect our borders. First, we will promptly return every illegal entrant we catch at our border, with no exceptions. For illegal immigrants from Mexico, we are working to expand an innovative program called interior repatriation, in which those caught at the border are returned to their hometowns, far from the border, making it more difficult for them to attempt another crossing. For non-Mexican illegal immigrants, we are changing the unwise policy of catch and release to a policy of catch and return, and we are speeding up the removal process.

Second, we must fix weak and unnecessary provisions in our immigration laws, including senseless rules that require us to release illegal immigrants if their home countries do not take them back in a set period of time.

Third, we must stop people from crossing the border illegally in the first place. So we are hiring thousands more Border Patrol agents, deploying new technology to expand their reach and effectiveness, and constructing physical barriers to entry.

Comprehensive immigration reform also requires improved enforcement of the laws within our country, because border security and interior enforcement go hand-in-hand. In October 2005, the President signed legislation that more than doubled the resources for interior enforcement, which will help increase the number of immigration enforcement agents and criminal investigators, enhance work site enforcement, and continue efforts to apprehend smugglers, gang members, and human traffickers. Our immigration laws apply across America, and we will enforce those laws throughout our country.

In addition, comprehensive immigration reform requires us to create a new temporary worker program that relieves pressure on the border, but rejects amnesty. The President opposes amnesty, which encourages violation of our laws and further illegal immigration. Instead, the President has proposed a legal channel for willing employers to hire willing workers, when no American worker can be found to fill the job. This program can reduce the number of workers trying to cross our borders illegally and free law enforcement officers to focus on criminals, drug dealers, and terrorists.

America has always been a compassionate Nation that values the newcomer and takes great pride in our immigrant heritage. Through the years, our Nation has been strengthened by generations of immigrants who became Americans through patience, hard work, and assimilation. In this new century, we must continue to welcome legal immigrants and help them learn the customs and values that unite all Americans, including liberty and civic responsibility, equality under God, tolerance for others, and the English language. By enacting immigration reform, we will preserve the promise of America and add to our country's security, prosperity, and justice.

For more information on the President's comprehensive immigration policy, you may wish to visit the White House website at www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/homeland. Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marguerite A. Murer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marguerite A. Murer
Special Assistant to the President
and Director of Presidential Correspondence