

March 2, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid:

We come together as the nation's civil rights leaders to urge you to stand up for all of America's workers and resist efforts to derail the job creation agenda. Given the economic emergency our nation faces, it is appalling that certain senators plan to introduce measures that would result in massive layoffs and prevent millions of unemployed Americans from getting hired.

Workers and families are hurting; they cannot afford unnecessary obstructions and setbacks on the road to recovery. These roadblocks include anti-immigrant measures that purport to "put American workers first," which would in reality block legally present workers and U.S. citizens from getting jobs, while adding crippling costs to struggling small businesses. Any member of Congress who cares about American workers and businesses should vote against these harmful amendments.

- **Expanding the E-Verify system nationwide would cause at least 3.6 million workers to lose their jobs** if they don't go to a Social Security Administration (SSA) office to correct discrepancies in their records, according to the SSA.
- **Minority workers and foreign-born U.S. citizens—who already face staggering unemployment rates—would face greater harm.** While the national unemployment rate is 9.7%, it is 16.5% for African Americans and 12.6% for Latinos. Evaluations of E-Verify have shown that minorities and legally present immigrants are up to 30 times more likely to be incorrectly flagged as ineligible to work.
- **Mandating the Social Security "No Match" letter rule would cost employers approximately \$1 billion per year to implement,** according to an independent analysis for the government. Furthermore, complying with E-Verify would be impossible for small businesses without high-speed Internet access.

In a letter sent to you on February 19, we outlined several bold proposals to rescue Americans from job loss and foreclosure and to lay the foundation for a more prosperous future for all. Our plan ensures that relief and opportunity is targeted to those hardest-hit by the recession. We recommend:

- **Fast-tracking the creation of jobs in the public sector which serve community-level needs.** With a focus on distressed neighborhoods, unemployed and underemployed residents should be hired to provide housing counseling, maintain foreclosed properties, and carry out

community redevelopment plans. Incentives for hiring, such as a work-sharing tax credit and the use of existing TANF Emergency Contingency Funds, should help create subsidized jobs.

- **Investing immediately in the infrastructure of schools and public transit.** Hiring local residents to upgrade the physical infrastructure of their communities has a triple bottom line. Local unemployment rates decline as people are hired to work on necessary projects that improve children’s educational outcomes and residents’ access to jobs and local services.
- **Protecting unemployed and other homeowners in distress from foreclosure.** Homeowners who have lost their jobs should be automatically approved for a fixed-rate, low-interest loan until their income returns to a level sufficient to allow payment. Flexibility should be granted to homeowners in distress, including “cram down” provisions and the option for homeowners to rent back their recently foreclosed properties.

The House has passed a jobs bill. Now is the time for the Senate to act. In his State of the Union address, President Obama urged the Senate to act quickly, and we join the president’s call to Congress and strongly urge the House and Senate to resist harmful blockades on the road to economic recovery.

Sincerely,

Deepak Bhargava, Executive Director
Center for Community Change

Gregory Cendana, President
United States Student Association

Wade Henderson, President and CEO
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Benjamin Todd Jealous, President and CEO
NAACP

Janet Murguía, President and CEO
National Council of La Raza

Steve Phillips, President
PowerPAC

cc:

Senator Max Baucus
Senator Christopher Bond
Senator Sherrod Brown
Senator Susan Collins
Senator Kent Conrad
Senator Byron Dorgan
Senator Judd Gregg
Senator Kay R. Hagan
Senator Tom Harkin
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Mary Landrieu

Senator George LeMieux
Senator Joseph Lieberman
Senator Blanche Lincoln
Senator Claire McCaskill
Senator Ben Nelson
Senator Mark L. Pryor
Senator John D. Rockefeller
Senator Olympia Snowe
Senator Debbie Stabenow
Senator Jon Tester
Senator George Voinovich

Senator Jim Webb