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May 17, 2006

Dear Senator:


As the Senate continues debate on immigration reform legislation, I write on behalf of the American Bar Association to urge you to support an amendment offered by Senators Brownback and Lieberman (Amendment #4020) that would provide important protections for asylum-seekers and help to ensure an effective and humane system of immigration detention.

Under many proposals to the pending legislation the numbers of individuals in immigration detention, many of whom will be asylum-seekers, would increase significantly. It is therefore critical that a humane and effective detention system be in place. The Brownback-Lieberman Amendment would ensure prompt initial custody determinations, full implementation and enforcement of detention standards, and reasonable alternatives to detention for those individuals who are eligible.

The amendment also would expand the Legal Orientation Program (LOP) of the Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review to immigration detainees nationwide. The LOP facilitates immigrants' access to justice, improves immigration court efficiency, and saves government resources. Since the inception of the program, the ABA has provided LOPs at the Port Isabel Detention Center in South Texas, and can unequivocally attest to the benefits that these presentations bring both to detainees and the immigration court system. Expanding this program nationwide is in the best interests of all.

The Brownback-Lieberman Amendment would provide for reasonable and much-needed changes to our immigration system, particularly for the most vulnerable population of refugees and asylum-seekers, and we again urge you to support its adoption.

Sincerely,

  
Robert D. Evans