

Thank you for contacting me regarding immigration and border security. It is good to hear from you on this important issue.

At a time of heightened homeland security, the need to protect our borders and prevent illegal immigration is stronger than ever. We are proud of the freedom and democracy we enjoy and are pleased to extend these liberties to those who seek to immigrate by lawful means. However, we must make it very clear that our doors are not open to those who refuse to abide by our laws.

Having just spent a week along the Southwestern border, I understand the huge problem that illegal immigration presents the United States. Last year alone, our Border Patrol agents arrested 1.2 million illegal aliens attempting to enter the U.S. from Mexico. Significantly, 155,000 of those arrested were from countries other than Mexico, including Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. This poses a very serious threat to our national security.

The economic impact from illegal immigration is also catastrophic. Illegal immigration costs taxpayers \$45 billion a year in health care, education and incarceration expenses. The cost of the estimated 630,000 illegal aliens in Florida alone is about \$2 billion a year.

As you may know, on December 16, 2005, the House passed the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (H.R. 4437). This bill has been sent to the Senate to await further action. Specifically, H.R. 4437 would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to strengthen enforcement of the immigration laws and would also enhance our border security.

As Congress continues to debate various immigration and border security issues in the 109th Congress, I will keep your thoughts in mind. You can be assured I will continue to work toward the improvement of our immigration system, the prevention of illegal immigration, and the heightened security of our borders.

Again, thank you for writing. I look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Sincerely,

Ric Keller  
Member of Congress