

May 2, 2008

The Honorable Glenn F. McConnell  
South Carolina Senate  
101 Gressette Building  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Glenn,

Life has taught me to let a letter sit through the night when it comes as a response to bizarre or misleading allegations, and your words of yesterday fit both descriptions. I still saw fit in the new day to send this letter though to follow up on the call I just placed because to say I was disappointed that you would liken anything in a heated and important debate on immigration to anything that occurred in Nazi Germany is an understatement. It is simply wrong in both senses of the word. It's also a very callous comment that belittles the atrocious level of human suffering that took place under the Nazi regime.

Given that you're a bright guy, I don't know whether these comments were meant to take the debate away from what's at stake in the immigration debate, the ways in which the Senate has let down many people in this state who care about immigration, or just recklessness on your part. Whatever the category I think it's important that we go back to what is really being debated in immigration reform.

It strikes me that when you boil it all down, it's about three very simple things that have nothing to do with propaganda – but the degree to which the legislative body of which you're a part will represent the views of the overwhelming majority of South Carolinians.

Accordingly, when I talk to people in our state, they tell me that part of what makes America great is that we're a nation of laws and not men; and while they believe there should be fewer laws, they also believe that the laws on the books should be enforced and real. Our immigration policy is anything but real given the number of illegal immigrants in this country. While certainly businesses and individuals go through the masquerade of filling out the appropriate paperwork, we all know that thousands of illegal immigrants are hired on a daily basis across the state of South Carolina in the “wink and nod” system

of laws currently on the books. People are sick of it and want to see it changed. If in fact that change goes too far, there are all sorts of remedies, whether it's through agricultural, tourism, or other guest worker programs to alleviate the labor availability issues that are causing this to be such an intense debate between those who favor real enforcement and those supporting something that offers only cosmetic levels of enforcement.

This brings me to my second point. At its core this bill is about E-verify because the states that have given it a try, including our neighboring state of Georgia, have seen it work. It's telling that the Chamber and opponents of immigration reform like Senator John Land were against immigration reform before this "newfound compromise" came along night before last. Over the days preceding that vote we had conversations with the person who represent your boss in negotiations on immigration matters, Jim Ritchie of the Senate, who was accompanied by Jim Harrison of the House. We laid out very clearly our position toward E-verify, given its success in other states. As I trust you know by now, the fines that were presented in the Senate bill would be null and void, as they would be pre-empted by federal law. The state I-9 proposal – as contemplated in the Senate bill – at the end of the day could do nothing more than essentially mirror the federal I-9, and as a consequence produce immigration results identical to the ones we currently have. This is considered to be unacceptable to the overwhelming number of people I talk to about immigration matters here in the state, and its for this reason we have moved to insisting on E-verify over the last few weeks.

Finally, it strikes me that actions always speak louder than words, and in that regard the Senate has essentially said it does not want to stand by its work thus far on immigration reform. Most casual observers would say that has a lot to do with how the vote was taken. Many I have talked to would like a roll call vote so one could look 6 months, 6 years, or 60 years from now to identify how people stood on this proposal, and Ritchie's proposal for E-verify.

Legitimately there are different points of opinion on whether immigration reform should or should not occur, but I would humbly suggest that it's important to transparency in the process that there are roll call votes throughout – and that more willpower is exhibited by the Senate if people are going to take claims that they've worked toward immigration reform honestly. To that end, three or four hours of "filibuster" hardly fits the mold of a heavily debated issue. It's important to remember that Strom Thurmond held the floor for about 24 hours, and over the course of history people in legislative chambers across the

country have acted similarly in trying to advance their particular viewpoint. I think that viewpoints come across as shallow when the shop gets closed up and debate is curtailed, and in this regard four hour filibusters seem to pale and be at odds with the degree to which people feel strongly on both sides of the issue now before us.

Over the weeks ahead as this issue gets resolved I will make it a point to include you in any other meetings we may have with Senator Ritchie (who again is your conference chair for the Senate on immigration) and with Chairman Harrison. My aim in this is to keep you informed as to these details so that we can find ways to work together in finding a resolution to this issue so important to many in South Carolina. Take good care.

Sincerely,

Mark Sanford

MS/bts/kp

CC: Senator Jim Ritchie  
Senator Harvey Peeler  
Chairman Jim Harrison  
Speaker Bobby Harrell  
Representative Jim Merrill

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