

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

One Bowdoin Square
Tenth Floor
Boston, MA 02114

March 7, 2009

Dear Friends,

I wish I could be with you in person to mark the second anniversary of the Bianco raid. Two years after the raid that exposed, as never before, just how broken our immigration system has become, I remain proud to stand with the remarkable people at Greater Boston Legal Services, Catholic Social Services and social service organizations throughout South-eastern Massachusetts in support of the families and community that know better than any other that our immigration system must be fixed once and for all.

And to all the people of faith gathered here today to build a more just society, today we honor our responsibility to our fellow men and women no more clearly stated than in Matthew 25:34-40:

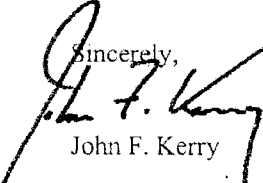
"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

The raid at Michael Bianco prompted me to introduce the Families First Immigration Enforcement Act. I saw it as a way to stop other communities from experiencing the same kind of soul wrenching event we experienced in New Bedford. It included common sense ideas, such as coordinating with state agencies to provide interpreters and social services and establishing humanitarian exceptions for the sick, elderly, pregnant or nursing mothers and others especially vulnerable to the consequences of detention.

Thankfully, very, very thankfully, we have now achieved a change in leadership in Washington. President Obama understands the critical need for a comprehensive reform of the American immigration system and he has willing legislative partners in the new Democratically-controlled Congress. We have a rare opportunity to get this right which is why yesterday I sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano asking her to meet with me to discuss a new approach to immigration enforcement and urged her to use my Families First Immigration Enforcement Act as a blueprint for the complete overhaul of ICE.

Together we can all agree that the kind of raid we witnessed in New Bedford two years ago should not and must not be repeated anywhere. On this two year anniversary, we need to recommit ourselves to a more humane and just system that lives up to the highest ideals of America as a nation of laws – and always as a nation of immigrants.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry