Excerpts from Letter to President Bush on Civil Liberties and Counterrorism
U.S. Congressman Michael M. Honda
November 30, 2001

When I wrote to President Bush on November 30, 2001, I raised a number of my concerns regarding several actions recently taken by the U.S. Department of Justice that I fear may place the civil liberties of all Americans at risk:

> I expressed to the President that I was very troubled to learn that the United States will use secret military tribunals, which employ military personnel— not judges or juries, to prosecute those suspected of terrorist activities.
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> I told President Bush that I am further troubled by his recent decision to allow the Justice Department to wiretap confidential communications between a suspect and their attorney and urged him to reconsider this policy.
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> I communicated my serious concerns about the Justice Department's recent effort to round up large numbers of individuals for questioning based primarily on their ethnic or religious background.
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> I noted that the recent incident that involved the questioning of over 5,000 young Middle Eastern men represents the largest single incident of government sanctioned racial profiling in the United States since World War II.
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> I argued that racial profiling flies in the face of our democratic values and, as evidenced by a November 28, 2001 *Washington Post* article, many former senior FBI officials agree it is largely ineffective. This is a shameful chapter in the annals of federal law enforcement and I urged the President to make sure that it should never be repeated.
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> I also conveyed to the President that our nation is a nation of laws that apply equally to all of us, regardless of race, color, ethnic background or religion and that this is the foundation of our democracy.
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> I asked Mr. Bush to make good on his campaign promise to end the use of racial profiling, an invasive and inaccurate law enforcement technique that must be abolished forever.

I closed by pointing out that there are some who have argued that new security concerns justify relaxing or doing away with certain rights guaranteed by our Constitution to allow our government to better prosecute the war on terrorism. As an American citizen who spent the first few years of my life in an internment camp for Japanese Americans during World War II, I assured the President that just the opposite is true.

I stated that our most cherished principles of liberty are most at risk not during times of peace, but during times of tension and fear, and therefore, must be most vigorously safeguarded during times of conflict. I urged President Bush not to go down a road that guarantees one set of rights for one group, and a separate, lesser, set of rights for another. America will not be defined by this newest crisis, but rather by the manner in which we respond to it.

It is for this reason that we must fight and win the war on terrorism— without waging war on our most sacred ideals.

I informed the President that I shared his concern for the continued safety and security of our great nation and expressed my strong desire to work with him and his Administration to shape an effective national counter-terrorism policy that enables us to better apprehend and prosecute terrorists while living up to both the spirit and the letter of our Constitution.