Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 24, 2002

VOTE "NO" ON THE ISSA AMENDMENT TO ELIMINATE LABOR LAW AND CIVIL SERVICE PROTECTIONS FOR INS EMPLOYEES

Dear Colleague:

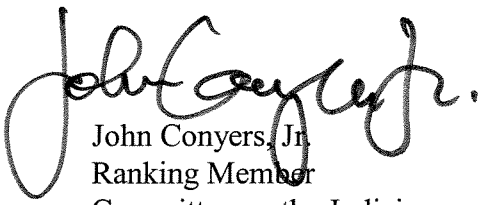
In a historic showing of bipartisan support, the Judiciary Committee voted 32-2 to restructure the beleaguered Immigration and Naturalization Service to become an efficient and effective agency. By making it simple for managers to hire employees and summarily dismiss them outside of the civil service process, the Issa Amendment would circumvent many of the positive reforms agreed to in this legislation. The Amendment is strongly opposed by the American Federation of Government Employees and the AFL-CIO.

Excepting INS employees from the civil service would return the agency back to the ages when cronyism and patronage ran rampant. Not too long ago, the only way to get a government job was if you knew someone in the government or someone owed you a favor. As a result, key policy and administrative decisions would be based on how it affected your patron rather than on whether it was good policy. The civil service program was carefully crafted to eliminate this egregious behavior. The INS has been able to hire thousands of employees year after year and there has been no showing that the civil service program is ineffective. Yet, the Issa Amendment would once again allow people to be hired based on who they know rather than whether they are qualified.

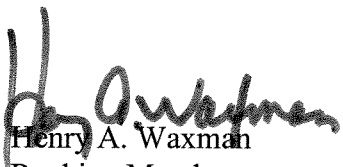
The Issa Amendment also eliminates most of the procedures that protect employees from summarily being fired. All protections in collective bargaining agreements are superceded and the notice and hearing procedures in the civil service laws are also overruled. Among other things, this would allow whistleblowers to be fired on the mere allegation of wrongdoing. Moreover, persons could be fired because of their political affiliation. Employee attrition at the agency is already at an unprecedented level due to low morale and the stripping of these basic labor protections certainly will not help the matter any.

This amendment guts labor law and civil service protections that remain critical to the successful restructuring of this agency. Without these protections, the delicate compromise reached on this bipartisan legislation will be jeopardized. We urge you to oppose this amendment.

Sincerely,



John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Government Reform

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