

REPLY TO:

- ☐ 135 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501
(202) 224-3744
e-mail: grassley.senate.gov/contact.cfm
- ☐ 721 FEDERAL BUILDING
210 WALNUT STREET
DES MOINES, IA 50309-2140
(515) 288-1145
- ☐ 150 1ST AVENUE NE
SUITE 325
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA 52401
(319) 363-6832

United States Senate

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501

June 11, 2010

REPLY TO:

- ☐ 103 FEDERAL COURTHOUSE BUILDING
320 6TH STREET
SIOUX CITY, IA 51101-1244
(712) 233-1860
- ☐ 210 WATERLOO BUILDING
531 COMMERCIAL STREET
WATERLOO, IA 50701-5497
(319) 232-6657
- ☐ 131 WEST 3RD STREET
SUITE 180
DAVENPORT, IA 52801-1419
(563) 322-4331
- ☐ 307 FEDERAL BUILDING
8 SOUTH 6TH STREET
COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA 51501-4204
(712) 322-7103

The Honorable John Morton
Assistant Secretary
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Secretary Morton:

I'm writing with serious concerns about your agency's latest changes to detention policies that will allow illegal aliens access to recreational activities and increased communication opportunities, giving detainees an overly-comfortable place to reside while they are prosecuted for breaking the law.

According to the Houston Chronicle, illegal aliens could now be given access to bingo, art classes, and continental breakfasts on weekends. The article also states that ICE plans to eliminate lockdowns and lights-out for low-risk detainees, allow visitors to stay as long as they like in a 12-hour period, and allow low-risk detainees to wear their own clothing or other non-penal attire. More disturbing is the report that ICE will now be providing e-mail access and Internet-based free phone service to detainees.

I realize that there are many low-risk detainees under the control of ICE, but reducing the standards for these lawbreakers will create a moral hazard and reduce the deterrent effect that prison time is supposed to have. Even one ICE official stated the new management standards reinforces the idea that detention is "not about punishing people for a crime they committed." These detainees, low-risk or not, broke the law in order to enter or remain in this country, and could have more entertainment and access to the outside world than other inmates in U.S. jails. Giving illegal aliens access to computer training and tutoring, as well as dance lessons, cooking classes and movie nights, will only encourage illegal aliens to ignore the law and take more risks to defraud our immigration system.

According to the same article from the Houston Chronicle, many working in these facilities will fear for their safety if detention standards are lowered. One union leader states that while some of these detainees have no serious criminal history, many may be former gang members. Gang members and the like will now have an easier time to ply their trade in this setting, jeopardizing the safety of the other detainees and correction officers.

RANKING MEMBER,
FINANCE

Committee Assignments:

BUDGET
JUDICIARY
AGRICULTURE

CO-CHAIRMAN,
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL CAUCUS

Finally, taxpayers would be very disappointed if the reports are true since they are financing detention and removal efforts. Expending taxpayer dollars to give illegal aliens access to bingo, dance lessons and the internet is a slap in the face to hardworking Americans who foot the bill. It's even more frustrating given that so many Americans are unemployed and looking for work while illegal aliens are getting free tutoring and computer classes to advance their own lives.

For these reasons, I urge you to reconsider lowering detention standards. I would also appreciate a copy of the internal memo obtained by the Houston Chronicle in addition to a briefing to discuss this report no later than Friday, June 18. Please contact Kathy Nuebel Kovarik of my staff at 202-224-3744 about this matter.

Sincerely,


Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator