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February 14, 2008

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

I am concerned with the Department of Homeland Security's recent decision to grant permanent residency to tens of thousands of applicants before the FBI completes a required background check.

Surging immigration applications are creating a backlog, but simply easing background checks and handing out green cards will create security problems. I understand that immigrants given green cards will be expected eventually to clear the FBI's name check, but I am afraid that we will never find and deport those who have their legal status revoked. This policy makes no sense. If we don't complete background checks, we run the risk of terrorists slipping into the country.

Just this week you reiterated that the threat we face is not over, noting in an interview, "our biggest challenge is making sure we do not drop our guard because time passes." In my opinion, DHS is dropping its guard with this new policy. I urge you to reconsider this decision and continue to complete background checks before granting green cards. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr." in a cursive style.

F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.
Member of Congress