



DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

June 10, 2002

The Honorable Trent Lott
Senate Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lott:

The War on Terrorism must be fought on many fronts. From an economic perspective, we must minimize the risks and consequences associated with potential acts of terror. No measure is more important to mitigating the economic effects of terrorist events than the passage of terrorism insurance legislation.

Last November 1, the Administration publicly agreed to bipartisan legislation negotiated with Chairman Sarbanes, Chairman Dodd, Senator Gramm and Senator Enzi. While the House of Representatives quickly responded to this urgent need by passing appropriate legislation, the Senate did not act and has not passed any form of terrorism legislation in the intervening seven months.

The absence of federal legislation is having a palpable and severe effect on our economy and is costing America's workers their jobs. In the first quarter of this year, commercial real estate construction was down 20 percent. The disruption of terrorism coverage makes it more difficult to operate, acquire, or refinance property, leading to diminished bank lending for new construction projects and lower asset values for existing properties. The Bond Market Association has said that more than \$7 billion worth of commercial real estate activity has been suspended or cancelled due to the lack of such insurance. Last week, Moody's Investors Service announced that 14 commercial mortgage-backed transactions could be downgraded due to a lack of such insurance.

Without such insurance, the economic impact of another terrorist attack would be much larger, including major bankruptcies, layoffs and loan defaults. While we are doing everything we can to stop another attack, we should minimize the widespread economic damage to our economy should such an event occur.

One important issue for the availability of terrorism insurance is the risk of unfair or excessive litigation against American companies following an attack. Many for-profit and charitable entities have been unable to obtain affordable and adequate insurance, in part because of the risk that they will be unfairly sued for the acts of international terrorists.

To address this risk at least two important provisions are essential. First, provisions for an exclusive federal cause of action and consolidation of all cases arising out of terrorist attacks, like those included in the Air Transportation Safety and System Stabilization Act, are necessary to provide for reasonable and expeditious litigation.

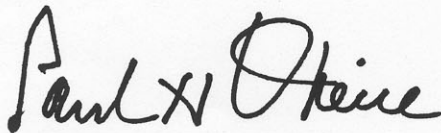
Second, the victims of terrorism should not have to pay punitive damages. Punitive damages are designed to punish criminal or near-criminal wrongdoing. Of course such sanctions are appropriate for terrorists. But American companies that are attacked by terrorists should not be subject to predatory lawsuits. The availability of punitive damages in terrorism cases would result in inequitable relief for injured parties, threaten bankruptcies for American companies and a loss of jobs for American workers.

It is also clear that the potential for massive damages imposed on companies that suffer from acts of terror would endanger our economic recovery from a terrorist attack. Indeed, the added risks and legal uncertainty hanging over the economy as a result of last September 11th are major factors inhibiting a business willingness to invest and to create jobs. It makes little economic sense to pass a terrorism insurance bill that leaves our economy exposed to such inappropriate and needless legal uncertainty.

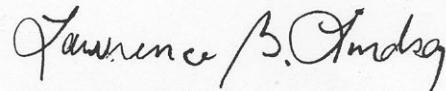
The bipartisan public agreement reached between the Administration and Chairman Sarbanes, Chairman Dodd, Senator Gramm and Senator Enzi last fall provided these minimum safeguards. We would recommend that the President not sign any legislation that leaves the American economy and victims of terrorist acts subject to predatory lawsuits and punitive damages.

The American people and our economy have waited seven months since our public agreement on legislation. The process must move forward. Prompt action by the Senate on this vitally important legislation is needed now.

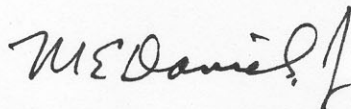
Sincerely,



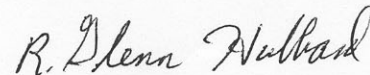
Paul H. O'Neill
Secretary of the Treasury



Lawrence Lindsey
Director,
National Economic Council



Mitchell E. Daniels
Director
Office of Management and Budget



R. Glenn Hubbard
Director
Council of Economic Advisors

cc: Senator Daschle