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MEMORANDUM

TO: Reporters and Editors
FR: Jill Kozeny, 202/224-1308
for U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley
RE: Immigration Reform
DA: May 17, 2007

Sen. Chuck Grassley issued the comment below regarding the proposed compromise on immigration reform that was announced today. Sen. Grassley is Ranking Member of the Committee on Finance and a senior member of the Judiciary Committee.

Sen. Grassley's Comment:

“I support legal immigration. I support reforms to our visa process to strengthen national security. I support more legal channels for those wanting to work in the United States, and I recognize that some regions and sectors of our economy need more workers. But, I do not believe amnesty or even indirect amnesty is the answer. I voted for amnesty in 1986, and learned that rewarding illegality only promotes illegality. The legalization component of the 1986 law was for the estimated 3 million illegal immigrants who were in the United States at that time, and it was supposed to fix the problem once and for all. Instead, today we have an estimated 12 million people in the United States illegally. So I won't repeat the mistake of 1986 by voting for amnesty this year.

“It's disappointing and even ironic how the deal announced today skirts the democratic processes of Congress. It was cut by a group of senators operating outside the committees of jurisdiction and without public hearings on key components. No information is available about the costs of various proposals. The proposal is said to be a thousand pages or more, but it won't be available to read until tomorrow at the earliest, and votes are to occur next week.

“My concern about the details is exacerbated by one of the sections of the proposal that I have seen. It would give the Department on Homeland Security unlimited, open-ended access to all Social Security data including confidential tax return information. The protection of taxpayer information is a cornerstone of our voluntary tax system. These protections are found in section 6103 of the tax code, and they're designed to strike the balance between taxpayer privacy and legitimate law enforcement. The authority in the proposed compromise sends a wrecking ball at

that balance and greatly exceeds any reasonable need for the information necessary to create a workable employment verification system.”

Additional Information:

Earlier this week, Sen. Grassley joined Sen. Richard Durbin in asking the top nine foreign-based companies in 2006 that used nearly 20,000 H-1B visas to disclose details about their workforces and their use of the special visa program.

In March, Sen. Grassley won Senate approval for an amendment he offered to the 9-11 homeland security bill to close a loophole that allows an alien to stay in the United States after the individual's visa has been revoked on terrorism charges.

Last year, several Grassley-sponsored measures were included in the comprehensive immigration reform bill passed by the Senate. Sen. Grassley's initiatives included a requirement that illegal immigrants who qualified for amnesty through the provisions of the overall bill to pay all outstanding tax liabilities; a requirement that offices within the Citizenship and Immigration Services offices to investigate internal corruption and benefits fraud be permanently established; a requirement that spouses and children of immigrants who would hold newly established H2C visas to undergo medical exams and meet health standards; authorization for the State Department to award a grant to a land-grant university to establish a national program for a broad, university-based Mexican rural poverty mitigation program; and creation of a new worker verification system for employers to determine if their workers are eligible to work in the United States.