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May 15, 2013

**Oppose Grassley Amendments #27 and #52 to S. 744
Maintain Improvements to the Asylum System**

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley, Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, we urge you to oppose Senator Grassley's amendments #27 and #52 to S. 744, which would eliminate or undermine the improvements to the asylum system contained in Sections 3401 and 3404 of the bill.

S.744 currently provides for the elimination of the asylum filing deadline. Grassley amendment #27 would reinstate the one year filing deadline for asylum applications, which has prevented thousands of bona fide refugees from receiving asylum based on this arbitrary and technical requirement. The deadline is inefficient and wastes government resources by overburdening the immigration courts to determine arrival times of asylum applications rather than their actual merits. There are many reasons that persecuted refugees don't apply for asylum when they first arrive. They may be traumatized from their experience, speak little English, need to assemble documentation, or may not even know what steps they need to take. Missing the deadline and therefore being denied asylum can result in grave harm to human rights activists who are sent back to the country where they were persecuted.

Grassley amendment #27 also would eliminate reforms in S. 744 intended to make the asylum system more efficient. As currently written, Section 3404 enables expert trained asylum officers to hear asylum claims after credible fear is shown rather than referring asylum seekers to a judge for lengthy and costly court proceedings. Asylum seekers would still be subject to rigorous biometric background checks and would still have to demonstrate that they are admissible to the United States. This provision would resolve many asylum cases without the need for additional resources needed for immigration court hearings. It should be left intact.



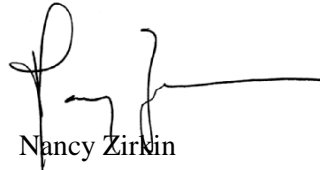
Grassley amendment #52 would delay asylum and student visa changes, including the implementation of Sections 3401 and 3404, until a coordinated review detailing the intelligence and immigration failures of the Boston Marathon terrorist attack is submitted to Congress by the Inspector Generals. Immigration failures of the Boston Marathon attack, if any, are in no way related to the problems these provisions seek to fix. These provisions maintain all current asylum security measures and are common sense fixes to problems that have impeded the effectiveness of the system. This amendment is simply another attempt to undermine the much needed reforms of the asylum system.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose Grassley amendments #27 and #52 when the Committee takes up these provisions in Title III. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact June Zeitlin, Senior Counsel, at (202) 263-2852 or zeitlin@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
President & CEO



Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President