

March 4, 2002

The Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Mitch Daniels
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20500

James W. Ziglar
Commissioner
Immigration and Naturalization Service
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Secretary Veneman, Director Daniels and Commissioner Ziglar;

It has come to my attention that as of February 27, 2002 the United States Department of Agriculture will no longer act as an interested government agency on behalf of those desiring recommendation for a J-1 visa waiver. It is also my understanding that all pending waiver requests will be returned to the sender.

As a Senator from a rural state that relies very heavily on the J-1 Visa program for physicians, I am very concerned about the impact of the USDA's decision on the public's health in medically under-served areas. There are a number of areas in my state, that would have no convenient access to primary care were it not for a physician with a J-1 Visa waiver.

As the Ranking Member of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration in the Senate, I am very concerned that neither the public, nor the legislature, nor my office—which had made specific inquiry to the USDA on this matter—was informed of this decision until the day *after* the policy change went into effect. It is unacceptable for the Federal government to make a decision that affects so many lives, without time for proper public comment.

I have several questions for the Administration to answer:

- 1) For what reasons did the Department of Agriculture decide to eliminate their role as an interested federal government agency?
- 2) Does the Administration plan to continue issuing J-1 Visa waivers to health care professionals in medically under-served areas?
- 3) What agency if any will, in the future, be designated to act as the interested federal

agency with respect to J-1 Visa waivers?

- 4) Does the Administration have *any* plan to deal with pending waiver requests?

As I am sure you are each aware, this issue is of great importance to many communities across this country and in the State of Kansas. I trust that you will be able to answer these questions in a short time frame so that we might begin to work together to fill the hole left by the USDA's untimely decision on this matter.

Sincerely,

Sam Brownback
United States Senator