

President Bush pushes immigration reform

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. (AP) — As Congress headed back Monday from a two-week recess, President Bush was in the country's most immigrant-rich state to push a stalled bill that would allow more foreigners to work legally in the United States.

Lawmakers, with an eye on Election Day in just over six months, remain far apart on whether to crack down on illegal immigrants or embrace them as vital contributors to the U.S. economy.

Bush wants a law that would give temporary guest worker permits to foreigners in low-paying jobs while strengthening border security. He was to push his idea in a speech Monday in Irvine, Calif., a state that has seen massive protests in recent weeks calling for immigrant rights.

Sen. Arlen Specter, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said Sunday he believes Congress will be able to work out differences and pass a bill. Specter, R-Pa., has pledged to have legislation ready for debate soon after lawmakers return.

Specter said Democrats and Republicans have to agree on a list of amendments to consider. And he acknowledged that even if senators pass a bill with a guest worker program, it will be tough to work that out

with House members who passed a much tougher bill that would impose criminal penalties on those who try to sneak into this country and would build up fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"It would be a tough conference, candidly, with the House, but we were able to work through the Patriot Act although there were big disagreements," Specter said on CNN's "Late Edition."

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., intends to seek passage of immigration legislation by Memorial Day by reviving the Senate bill that stalled earlier this month due to internal disputes in both parties as well as political maneuvering.

In a gesture to conservative critics of the measure, Republican leadership aides said last week that Frist also will seek roughly \$2 billion in immediate additional spending for border protection.

Some conservatives have said the Senate bill is unacceptable because provisions allowing for eventual citizenship to some of the illegal immigrants already here amount to amnesty.

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., said it is possible the Senate can pass a bill if "the administration will weigh in and the president will take a leadership role on this."

Illiterate custodian resists going to class



Abigail Van Buren

• Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: I have been dating a nice guy for two years. We started out as good friends and the relationship progressed from there. He's truly all that you could ask for. My dilemma is, he doesn't know how to read and write.

This is a very sensitive subject for him. He is 33 years old and works as a custodian for the school district. He earns a fraction over minimum wage and is making child support payments.

I have been very patient with him, but any time I raise the subject of his going back to school, we end up arguing. Now he has decided to take a part-time job in the evenings — so there will definitely be no time for school. What am I to do? He thinks my pushing him to learn to read and write is about the money. It's not! He keeps saying he's leaving his reading and writing "in God's hands." How can I help him?

DEAR WITS' END: Your boyfriend's unwillingness to reach out for help may stem from embarrassment. Please explain to him that there are programs especially for people like him, and that they are easy to access. All you have to do is call your county library and tell the librarian you are looking for a referral to a literacy coalition so your friend can learn to read. Your friend will be treated with dignity, I promise.

DEAR ABBY: I would like to thank you for more than 10 years of a happy marriage. Let me explain: I am an active-duty soldier with only 14 months left to retire after almost 20 years of service, including two tours in Iraq. In October 1995, I was deployed to Kuwait and I received three letters from Operation Dear Abby. One of them was from a beautiful lady from California. On Feb. 17, 1996, I met the young lady and married her.

Now, more than 10 years later, I am the proud father of three wonderful children.

I'm writing today to thank you for continuing the program with OperationDearAbby.net. This was the first holiday season in two years that I was home with my family, and I want to thank you for sending me my angel.

— STAFF SGT. ROB G., FORT LEWIS, WASH.
DEAR STAFFSGT. G.: Thank you for an upper of a letter. I'm pleased to know that Operation Dear Abby brought you not only a pen pal, but also a wife, children and happiness. You deserve them all.

Readers, why wait for a holiday? How about spreading some joy by logging on to OperationDearAbby.net and letting our young men and women

stationed around the world in the military know that they're in our hearts today, tomorrow and every day. They'll love hearing from you — and you'll be glad you did.

DEAR ABBY: My boss's mother passed away recently and the funeral is this weekend. I had spoken to "Mrs. White" on several occasions and met her twice. My question is, should I attend the visitation, as it is my boss's mother who passed away? I don't want to commit "career suicide" by not attending — but on the other hand, I don't think I'd feel comfortable being there.

— MISSISSIPPI MAIDEN
DEAR MAIDEN: Funerals are for the living. You attend not only as a gesture of respect for the deceased, but by your presence, to offer comfort to the living. To attend would be a kindness, and I'm sure it would be appreciated — so go.

DEAR ABBY: I just turned 23. During the past two years I have married, bought a house, had a baby, and am finishing up my B.A. degree in a few short months. I hold down a full-time job and still make time for my son, my husband, and even occasionally squeeze in a little "me" time. I have a wonderful life, and I would not change anything.

My problem is I am still only 23. Occasionally I like a girls' night out. We go out as a group, eat dinner, have a couple of drinks, dance and have a good time. This is enough to satisfy my need to "let loose," and I never do anything inappropriate.

On several occasions when I have mentioned these girls' nights out to older relatives, they'll respond with, "Mothers don't behave that way," or, "You aren't a college student any longer." But Abby, I AM a college student! I don't do this very often. I'm just out with friends, having fun. The majority of the time I spend the weekends with my son, going to the park or playing with our pets.

It is now hunting season. My husband is gone for days at a time. We support each other. I have no problem with him doing things he likes, and he supports my occasional evenings out with my friends. I thought I was doing OK, but now my relatives have me second-guessing myself. Am I being inappropriate? I'd like your input.

— MELISSA IN FLORIDA
DEAR MELISSA: This is between you and your husband. As long as he doesn't mind your occasional nights out with the girls, you'll get no argument from me. This is also nobody else's business — including your older relatives — so my advice to you is to stop making it a subject of conversation.

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