

May 19, 2005

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Frist:

In 2002, President Bush outlined a plan for reauthorizing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) that would increase independence and strengthen families. The President outlined an agenda to advance the historical work led by Republicans in passing the 1996 welfare reform law, and to build on that success. Those key principles included:

- Helping more welfare recipients achieve self-sufficiency through work;
- Promoting child well-being and strengthening families; and
- Empowering states to seek new and innovative solutions to help welfare recipients achieve independence.

Since that time, the House and Senate have considered TANF bills that support these goals, but have not been able to come to agreement on reauthorizing this important legislation. As Governors tasked with the responsibility of implementing welfare to work programs—including the vital family supports that improve the well-being of children and strengthen families—we believe it is critical for Congress to complete work on this five-year reauthorization.

This effort is far too important to leave to the limitations of a reconciliation process. Through the leadership of Chairman Grassley, the Senate Finance Committee reported out a bill on March 9, 2005. We urge you to join your colleagues in ensuring that it is scheduled for Senate floor consideration as soon as possible, and work to make certain the bill will be able to move past any parliamentary roadblocks. TANF is the critical link to every significant state program that stabilizes children and families—providing hope and a future.

Managing TANF through temporary extensions – currently ninth to date – promotes uncertainty and makes it difficult to effectively administer services and plan efficiently. Stable multi-year funding is essential for our states to build on the successful programs we have developed. As Governors, we believe the following provisions in the Senate bill are integral to state programs, and support their inclusion and protection as the bill moves forward through regular order:

Family initiatives — The Senate bill supports the continuation and an increase in funding for many programs that were initiated through the flexibility provided in the 1996 welfare law. Abstinence education funding, fatherhood and healthy marriage incentives are all valuable and necessary programs that will help families achieve self-sufficiency.

Funding — We support continued stable funding of the block grant, as well as the essential resources to provide families with adequate child care as they work to attain self-sufficiency. The Senate bill provides states with the ability to maintain and effectively utilize “carry forward” funds, while also protecting the state supplemental funding grants. Additionally, states are given the necessary flexibility to coordinate funding streams to better serve those utilizing the program.

State flexibility — The Senate bill provides states with the flexibility to manage their TANF programs and effectively serve low-income populations. Increased waiver authority, allowable work activities, availability of partial work credit and the ability to coordinate state programs are all important aspects of moving recipients from welfare to work.

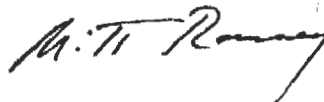
Many elements of the Senate and House bills are consistent with each other, and the goals established by the President. It is time to move this critical reauthorization forward, and settle any differences in conference. We will make ourselves available to answer any questions you may have on state specific issues, and to assist you in anyway possible.

Thank you for your help on this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Kenny C. Guinn
Governor of Nevada



Mitt Romney
Governor of Massachusetts



Jeb Bush
Governor of Florida



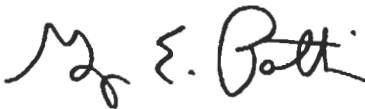
Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of California



Mike Huckabee
Governor of Arkansas



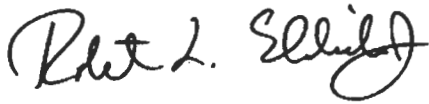
Haley Barbour
Governor of Mississippi



George E. Pataki
Governor of New York



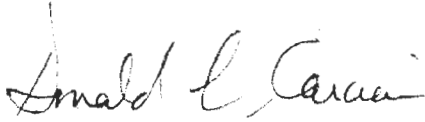
Linda Lingle
Governor of Hawaii



Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor of Maryland



Dirk Kempthorne
Governor of Idaho



Donald L. Carcieri
Governor of Rhode Island



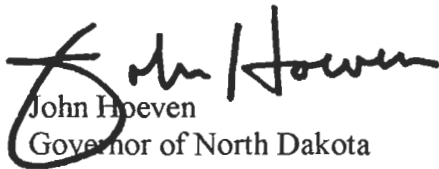
Sonny Perdue
Governor of Georgia



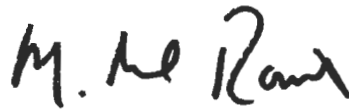
Tim Pawlenty
Governor of Minnesota



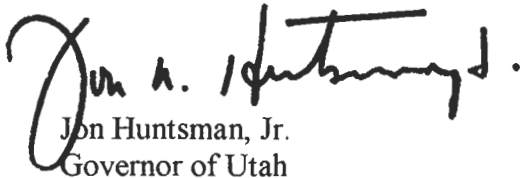
Dave Heineman
Governor of Nebraska



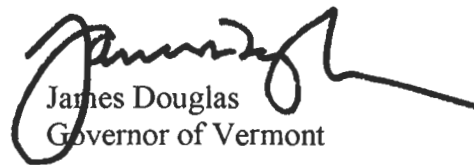
John Hoeven
Governor of North Dakota



M. Michael Rounds
Governor of South Dakota



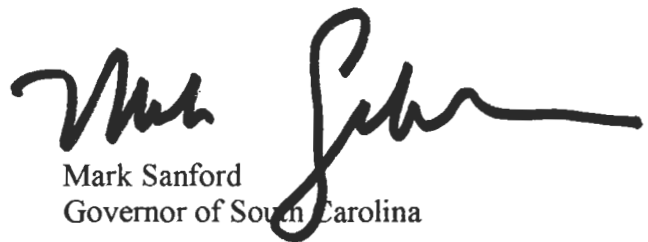
Jon Huntsman, Jr.
Governor of Utah



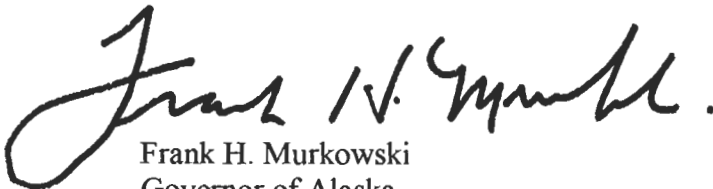
James Douglas
Governor of Vermont



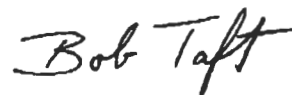
Ernie Fletcher
Governor of Kentucky



Mark Sanford
Governor of South Carolina



Frank H. Murkowski
Governor of Alaska



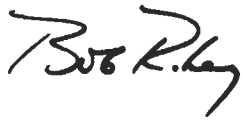
Bob Taft
Governor of Ohio



M. Jodi Rell
Governor of Connecticut



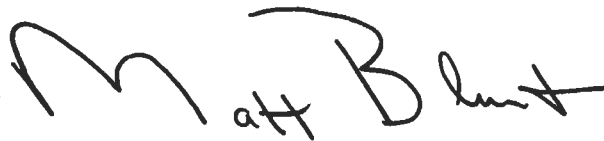
Bill Owens
Governor of Colorado



Bob Riley
Governor of Alabama



Governor of the Commonwealth
of the Northern Mariana Islands



Mitch Daniels
Governor of Indiana

Matt Blunt
Governor of Missouri



Rick Perry
Governor of Texas