

Washington, DC - 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) issued the following statement in response to President Bush's nationally televised speech earlier this evening on the nation's illegal immigration crisis:

“Twenty years ago, Congress passed an immigration reform package that gave amnesty to 3 million illegal aliens and created a guest worker program to help supply a stable and affordable workforce for our nation's agribusinesses. But because there was no real commitment to securing our borders, nothing changed.

Since then, more than 11 million people have illegally crossed the border - more people than the entire population of the State of Georgia.

“In order to get immigration reform right in 2006, we need to recognize what went wrong 20 years ago. That means acknowledging that 100% of our efforts must be put into securing our borders first - before we start trying to reform anything else.

“President Bush believes that we owe a place in America to anyone who wants to come here. But I believe that we have a greater obligation to all of us who are here legally - those who've been here a long time and those who just got here - not to take on more than our economy can handle.

“The President insists that the plan he outlined tonight is not amnesty, but I disagree. Any plan that gives illegal immigrants the legal right to stay in this country indefinitely amounts to amnesty - no matter what you call it.

If President Bush is really serious about securing our borders he ought to focus on that, and stop insisting on some sort of amnesty plan.

We need to work on what we can all agree on.”

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