families who have made lasting contributions to our communities and contribute to the economic vitality of our nation. This bill does not propose substantial new relief, but only a continuation of the prior relief. Last year’s temporary extension to April 30, 2001 was designed to benefit immigrants who were in the country by December 21, 2000. This bill will extend the deadline to provide this group of immigrants with more time to file their petitions.

I know that some of my colleagues support the extension, but had concerns with our bill. We worked with them to develop an acceptable compromise. Our bill, with an amendment offered by Senator KYL reflects our promise. Our bill, with an amendment concerned with our bill. We worked with support the extension, but had concerns with their petitions.

The bill extends section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which expired on April 30, 2001. Section 245(i) allows foreign-born people who are present in the United States and eligible for legal permanent residency to apply for that status from within the country instead of having to return to their nation of origin to apply. We reauthorized section 245(i) last year, but only for a four-month period. Many eligible immigrants were unable to find attorneys and submit applications during that brief period.

There are at least three good reasons to extend 245(i). First, it allows families to stay together in the United States instead of forcing family members to return to their native countries to apply for their green cards. Second, because immigrants can also qualify to become legal permanent residents based on an employment relationship, extending 245(i) will allow businesses to retain vital employees. Third, because immigrants have to pay a $1000 fee to apply under 245(i), this program raises millions of dollars for the Federal Treasury.

Senators KENNEDY and HAGEL deserve great credit for their sponsorship of and support for this bill. I am pleased that the Senate has approved this bipartisan bill to keep families together, and I urge the House to follow the Senate's lead.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, let me briefly say that this is extremely important. With President Fox in the country, this sends a message to him that we really are trying to work toward making things easier in relations between the United States and Mexico. But the House will expeditiously move forward on this matter. The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee has been involved in this, Representative SENSENBERG. We are grateful for everyone’s cooperation.