

United States Senate

OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7010

March 3, 2006

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Reid: 

I am increasingly concerned that the Senate Intelligence Committee is unable to carry out its critically important oversight and threat assessment responsibilities due to stifling partisanship that is exhibited through repeated calls by Democrats on the committee to conduct politically-motivated investigations. This is deeply troubling given that the Select Committee was established years ago to promote bipartisanship in some of the most sensitive and vital areas of our nation's security.

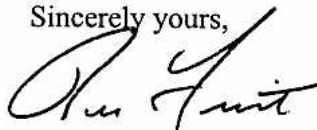
The inquiries currently underway, and the ones being proposed by the minority, would demand an overwhelming amount of staff time, attention and resources. Rather than conducting oversight of the intelligence community and its activities, or assessing current and future threats to United States national security, the committee is focusing most of its efforts on investigations that offer little (or no) value to the challenges our Nation now faces.

Issues such as the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea, the spread of Islamic radicalism in the Middle East, and the military modernization efforts of China are just a few examples of the important intelligence matters on which Chairman Roberts had hoped to focus the Committee's attention. Also, issues within the intelligence community ranging from implementation of the 2004 intelligence reform bill and increasing the nation's human intelligence capabilities, to ensuring the United States has the best overhead collection systems we can afford in the long term, also demand attention.

I would propose that we meet with Senators Roberts and Rockefeller as soon as possible to discuss and rectify this matter. The Committee was established and structured to reflect the Senate's desire for bipartisanship, and to the maximum extent possible, nonpartisan oversight of our nation's intelligence activities. If attempts to use the committee's charter for political purposes persist, we may have to simply acknowledge that nonpartisan oversight, while a worthy aspiration, is not possible. If we are unable to reach agreement, I believe we must consider other options to improve the Committee's oversight capabilities, to include restructuring the Committee so that it is organized and operated like most Senate committees.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,



William H. Frist, M.D.
Majority Leader
United States Senate