

United States Senate

OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7010

March 30, 2006

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express my opposition to the United States participation in the newly established United Nations Human Rights Council.

As you are well aware, Ambassador John Bolton proposed a set of reforms that could have restored the moral authority and effectiveness of a new human rights body. These proposals were supported by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and many of our allies. Regrettably, these initiatives were rejected by a majority of states either too afraid that an emboldened council would hold their egregious actions to account, by others who did not have the moral courage to publicly support honest reform, and still by some who were concerned that further negotiation would result in no reform.

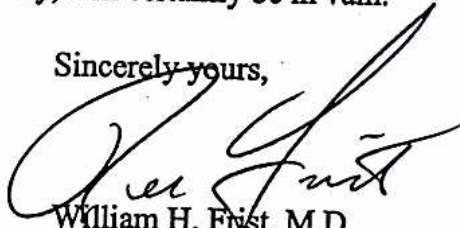
The United States' vote in opposition to this new Council was principled and correct, and I laud your courageous stand on this issue. The United States has always been the global leader and beacon of hope when it comes to the advancement and protection of human rights abroad, and your action was consistent with America's values, character, and heritage.

However, I am very concerned that your Administration now may provide financial support to this discredited Council, and may even seek a seat on this body. While I understand the urge to participate as a means to seek further reform, I believe our hand is strengthened by sticking to our principles and speaking to human rights abuses from outside this body. The United States' participation in this new, unreformed Council only undermines our own credibility and confers unwarranted legitimacy on this new body.

Instead, I would urge you to consider organizing a council of democracies outside the United Nations system that could meet regularly to monitor, examine, and expose human rights abuses around the globe. The honesty, clarity, and effect of a forum of like-minded and responsible states truly concerned with human rights would stand in stark contrast to another defunct U.N. bureaucracy comprised of some of the world's worst actors. This independent body could set a new standard for accountability and effectiveness, and would offer those oppressed and abused around the world some hope that their plight may be exposed and redressed.

Mr. President, your presidency has been marked by a courageous commitment to a set of core beliefs, most notably the advancement of freedom and democracy. Now is not the time to succumb to global peer pressure and participate in this new Council. Rather, we must remain true to the legacy of Ronald Reagan and remain that "shining city on the hill" that pursues truth and offers hope to the oppressed. If the United States fails to live up to its word and stand up for its principles, then we will surely disappoint the silent majority around the world that looks to us for hope and inspiration, and our future efforts to reform the rest of the United Nations and turn it into an effective international body, will certainly be in vain.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. H. Frist". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and "F".

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