THE BLUE DOG HOPE

White House spokesman Tony Snow and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff both were at a meeting I attended this week, attempting to allay fear and anger over the immigration reform bill.

I have to tell you they were very persuasive. I am convinced they are both honest, that they are genuinely trying to solve a seemingly intractable problem with good patriotic intentions, that they believe this bill is an unprecedented ("Underline that word three times," said Tony) commitment to secure our southern border, to effect employer enforcement, and replace chain migration with a merit system.

Chertoff in particular scored points, such as arguing that "attrition," as in enforcing existing laws will cause illegals to leave through attrition, is a form of "secret amnesty" because it results in non-enforcement since there are not enough law enforcement resources.

"Attrition is just as much of a fairy tale as arguing we can balance the budget by getting rid of waste and fraud," was his effective observation.

Chertoff and Snow are two decent men arguing from principle and integrity. Both are smart - Chertoff is *very* smart. And both are, with innocent naiveté, being taken to the Destruction of America Cleaners by Teddy Kennedy.

You can't make a deal with the devil. You'll always get screwed, no matter how many amendments and marvelous provisions you stick into the deal.

Teddy Kennedy's life purpose is to damage America as much as he possibly can. Because America killed his brother. To assuage his guilt over killing Mary Jo Kopechne. To take out his guilt over never earning his wealth. Whatever moral disease infects his soul, he's been successful in his purpose.

As the chief sponsor of the Immigration Amendments of 1965, the Refugee Act of 1980, and the Immigration Amnesty of 1986, Teddy Kennedy more than any single individual by far is personally responsible for the illegal alien calamity of today.

And now these very smart decent conservative Republicans, Snow and Chertoff, along with their boss, believe they can trust Teddy Kennedy to fix the mess he created?

They are too decent and innocent to believe that Kennedy *wants* the mess - and wants to make it *worse*, not better.

So - if we want to prevent Teddy Kennedy from destroying our country, our sovereignty, and our

culture, we have got to thank well-meaning White House folks for sharing their well-meaning intentions, then do everything we can to strangle this mutant legislation in its crib.

Can it be done? I talked to a lot of Congressional staffers and their bosses this week. One school of thought among the Congressional leadership is that it is so unwieldy it will collapse under its own weight. "It will implode in the Senate," one high-ranking Congressman told me.

Others are afraid, and are convinced it will pass. "Just about every Democrat Senator will vote yes, I can assure you," another told me. "And you can count on enough of us (Republicans), unfortunately, to put it over the top."

If this is the case - and with no chance whatever of a Bush veto - the only hope lies with the House. And the hope there lies with the Blue Dogs.

These are conservative Democrats, many newly-elected freshman from normally Republican districts that slipped in due to the anti-GOP voter temper tantrum last November.

The bet is that these guys have to vote against the immigration bill to have any chance of being re-elected in 2008.

There are several dozen Blue Dogs. With two current vacancies, the Dems have a 31 seat majority (232-201). Since all but a small handful of Pubs will vote no - there is just too much anger in their districts for them to do otherwise - it will take just two dozen or so Blue Dog Dems to kill it.

There are 44 members in the Official Blue Dog Coalition. But there are plenty others, freshmen with thin 06 wins like Tim Walz (MN), Nancy Boyda (KS), Ron Klein (FL), or Harry Mitchell (AZ).

So if you live in a Blue Dog or Freshman Dem Thin-Win district, make sure they understand that if they vote yes on the immigration bill, you will do everything you can to ensure voters vote no on them next year.

The Blue Dogs may be America's only hope.