

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 20, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you in support of Haitian President René Préval's recent request for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian immigrants in the United States. We feel that Haiti's ongoing political and economic struggles and the extraordinary destruction caused by several natural disasters more than qualifies Haitian nationals who are already in the United States for TPS.

As you know, TPS may be granted when any of the following conditions are met: there is ongoing armed conflict posing a serious threat to personal safety; it is requested by a foreign state that temporarily cannot handle the return of nationals due to environmental disaster; or when extraordinary and temporary conditions in a foreign state exist which prevent aliens from returning. There are currently six countries that are protected under the TPS provision: Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Burundi, Somalia, and Sudan, all of which have obtained status renewal because the Department of Homeland Security has determined that the country in question is unable to handle the return of its nationals. As President Préval's letter makes clear, Haiti meets *all* of the requirements for TPS and is just as deserving as the other currently protected nations, if not more so.

In addition to the desperate poverty from which far too many of its citizens suffer and the political turmoil that has embroiled the nation for much of its recent history, this past October, Tropical Storm Noel dealt a devastating blow to this already struggling nation. Sadly, however, Noel was only one of several natural disasters to wreak havoc on Haiti. In May of 2004, floods caused thousands of deaths along the border with the Dominican Republic. Only four months later, Tropical Storm Jeanne caused more than 2,000 deaths, countless injuries, and the complete destruction of homes, agricultural fields, and businesses.

As you know, the original designation for Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador was granted in response to similarly destructive natural disasters. For the past ten years in the cases of Nicaragua and Honduras and the past seven in the case of El Salvador, the United States has rightfully acknowledged and supported the efforts of these nations to return to a sense of normalcy by granting and extending their TPS. Meanwhile, at the


same time and under equally dire situations, Haitian migrants have not received similar treatment.


Haiti has made considerable progress in its efforts to recover from the physical and political damages of recent years through its commendable rebuilding efforts and its recent democratic elections. Yet, the Haitian government still cannot sustain the lives of its entire population and the repatriation of the very people who can help Haiti through remittances only further hinders its recovery efforts.

It would take decades for a wealthier, more stable nation to recover from challenges similar to those facing Haiti. However, Haiti also lacks the physical and economic infrastructure necessary to protect its citizens from natural disasters, and any development efforts are further stunted by the constant crisis and turmoil afflicting the nation. By increasing the burden on this small nation's struggling economic and political system, we are not only delaying its recovery. Instead, we are also leaving the government vulnerable to greater political instability and increasing the likelihood of human and physical loss from the highly probable event of a future natural disaster.

Given the impact that regional instability has on our own economy and immigration levels, ensuring the long-term development of Haiti is not only an act of benevolence, it is truly in the best interest of the United States. We applaud President Préval's efforts on behalf of his struggling nation, and respectfully request that you grant Haitians the same consideration and protection that you have supported for other deserving nations.

Sincerely,


Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress


Kendrick B. Meek
Member of Congress