

# HAITI ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP (HAWG)

*HAWG is a working group of international development, faith-based, human rights and social justice organizations advocating on issues related to U.S.-Haiti policy.*

## **Immigration: Create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program to Increase Remittances to Haiti Permit Applications to Waive the Humanitarian Parole Fee**

On January 14, President Obama promised leadership on Haiti. On at least two fronts, many urge bolder action by the Administration.

### **Need for a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program**

On July 2, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* editorial board urged the Administration to create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program (FRPP), citing DHS's creation of a Cuban FRPP in 2007. On June 26, the *Washington Post* editorial board again, as on January 29, urged the Administration to parole the 55,000 Haitian beneficiaries of *already-approved* visa petitions who such a program would cover, and who otherwise will languish years longer unnecessarily in Haiti due to the visa backlog, part of the burden on its government and the international community, rather than being part of the solution by working here and sending remittances home. On July 17, the *Boston Globe's* editorial board strongly urged the Administration to parole the 55,000 approved beneficiaries as "the most effective way" to help Haiti recover, as did the *Los Angeles Times'* editorial board on July 21, asking "why the disparate treatment?"

Creating a Haitian FRPP would serve the same goals as the existing Cuban program – orderly migration and saving lives at sea – and boost Haiti's recovery by getting crucial additional remittances to an estimated 550,000 or more Haitians. Given the extremely slow pace of recovery six months after the quake, ignoring this appropriate and implementable step only perpetuates unnecessary suffering.

**Support for a Haitian FRPP is broad.** On January 22, Elliot Abrams urged increasing legal immigration to spur remittance flow in a *Washington Post* op-ed. On January 29, the *Washington Post's* editorial board urged paroling the 55,000 approved beneficiaries to do this. On February 4 and 5, Senator Gillibrand and Rep. Yvette Clark introduced S. 2998 and H.R. 4616 to accomplish this, hoping to spur Administration action. On March 8 House Democratic leaders joined by four Republicans urged Secretary Napolitano to parole them; on March 12, 75 organizations urged her to create a Haitian FRPP, citing the Cuban FRPP. On March 22 and March 29, the *Miami Herald* editorial board urged the Administration to parole the 55,000, as did Haitian-Americans in their April 5 meeting with Vice President Biden and the U.S. Conference of Mayors in a strongly worded, unanimously passed June 14 resolution. "Haiti Remittances [Are] Key to Earthquake Recovery," reported the World Bank on May 17, but the Administration has yet to act.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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**Multiple organizations contribute on a case by case basis to issue or sector specific recommendations and positions expressed in HAWG materials. These materials are not designed to be consensus positions and have not been explicitly endorsed by each organization active in the HAWG.**

This is a step which the White House should approve and the Administration implement now.

### **Need for Humanitarian Parole Application Fee Waiver**

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) should have the ability to waive the currently non-waivable \$305 fee to apply for humanitarian parole (HP). HP is only for quake victims with *urgent, dire, and special needs* including the double amputees and rape victims. Applicants must meet stringent requirements, including who will care for them here. But they cannot afford the prohibitive per-person \$305 filing fee. If humanitarian parole is to have meaning in the context of Haiti's tragedy, this fee should be waived by the agency. Otherwise, HP-qualified quake victims will not be able to apply for it, which would tragically defeat HP's very purpose.

### **Recommendations**

We respectfully urge the Obama Administration to take the following actions to alleviate suffering in Haiti:

- Create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program: Parole 55,000 approved beneficiaries to help 550,000 Haitians survive and rebuild.
- Give USCIS the authority to waive the \$305 humanitarian parole application fee by considering individual fee waiver applications

### **For more information, please contact:**

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### **Support for This Position**

"Helping the Haitians," *Philadelphia Inquirer* editorial, July 2, 2010  
[http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/inq\\_ed\\_board/97630409.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/inq_ed_board/97630409.html)

"The U.S. Should Welcome Haitians In," *Washington Post* editorial, January 29, 2010  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/28/AR2010012803513.html>

"Haiti: Expedite visas for family members," *Boston Globe* editorial, July 17, 2010  
[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/editorials/articles/2010/07/17/haiti\\_expedite\\_visas\\_for\\_family\\_members/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2010/07/17/haiti_expedite_visas_for_family_members/)

"Helping Haitians help themselves," *Los Angeles Times* editorial, July 21, 2010  
<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/editorials/la-ed-haitians-20100721.0.3618364.story>

"President Obama Could Rapidly Aid Haitian Immigration Seekers," *Washington Post* editorial, June 26, 2010  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/25/AR2010062504520.html>

U.S. Conference of Mayors Resolution #43: Urging Parole for all Haitian Beneficiaries of Approved Immigrant Visa Petitions and Expedited Consideration and Approval of all Pending Immigrant Visa Petitions. June 14, 2010.