



Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
Fighting for the human rights of Haiti's poor

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Massachusetts' State Black and Latino Legislative Caucus Urges DHS Secretary Napolitano to Create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program to Save Lives and Help Haiti Recover

(Boston, November 4, 2011) – On Wednesday, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano was once again urged by Massachusetts leaders to promptly parole into the United States Haitian beneficiaries of approved family-based visa petitions, to "mirror" the Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program which promptly paroles such beneficiaries and to help Haiti recover from last year's earthquake by generating significant remittances.

The eloquent letter is signed by the entire Black and Latino Legislative Caucus of the Massachusetts State Legislature: State Representatives Linda Dorcena Forry, Cheryl Coakley-Rivera, Gloria Fox, Russell Holmes, Benjamin Swan, Marcos Devers, Carlos Henriquez, Jeffrey Sanchez, and Sonia Chang-Diaz.

The legislators write, "As representatives of the state with the third largest population of Haitians and Haitian Americans, we are deeply concerned about the precarious status of many Haitian children, elders and families as they wait in Haiti to be reunited with their families in the United States. As you know, for many, the conditions in Haiti since the devastating earthquake of 2010 remain unstable and even dangerous. Establishing a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program (HFRPP), modeled after the Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program, would alleviate this crisis by simply allowing Haitians already approved for visas to wait for them in the United States with their families rather than in Haiti."

They cite the proposed program's "economic benefits," including "sending more remittances home to Haiti to foster economic development with greater speed," and note Haiti's historic ties to the United States and Commonwealth.

Wednesday's letter joins two other similarly excellent recent letters to Secretary Napolitano from Massachusetts leaders urging this same relief.

On September 22, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick wrote Secretary Napolitano urging this relief. And last week, on October 25, United States Senators

John Kerry and Scott Brown, joined by U. S. Representatives Michael Capuano, Barney Frank, James McGovern, Edward Markey, John Olver, and Stephen Lynch, all of Massachusetts, did so as well. (Senator Kerry serves as Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. His House counterpart, U.S. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, wrote Secretary Napolitano urging this relief on March 8, 2010, joined by seven other leading House members of both parties.)

These three letters join strong calls for the Obama Administration to implement this relief from the editorial boards of the *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Washington Post*, *San Antonio Express News*, *Miami Herald*, *Newsday*, *Star-Ledger*, and *Palm Beach Post*, in thirteen separate editorials; from Philadelphia's City Council, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the City of North Miami in resolutions; from six U.S. Senators in a separate 2011 letter; from Haitian-American leaders and editorial writers; and in a June 2011 Center for Global Development paper urging DHS to create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program and to start by promptly paroling the most vulnerable, as suggested for example in last week's letter to Secretary Napolitano from Massachusetts' Senators Kerry and Brown and their House colleagues.

As of November 1, 2010, the United States had approved family-based immigrant visa petitions for 105,000 beneficiaries who nevertheless remain on a wait list of four to eleven years in Haiti, where many may not survive. In contrast, over 30,000 approved Cuban beneficiaries have been paroled into the United States since 2009 alone under the Cuban FRPP, which the Massachusetts leaders urge DHS Secretary Napolitano to "mirror."

In urging this action as a low-cost way to help Haiti recover, the authors of "Migration as a Tool for Disaster Recovery: A Case Study on U.S. Policy Options for Post-Earthquake Haiti," Center for Global Development, June 2011, note:

- Rather than waiting 4 to 11 years for a visa in Haiti, beneficiaries could be paroled into the United States where they can be reunited with family and have employment authorization.
- The proposal has merit not only for the humanitarian purpose it would serve but also to enable Haitians to send more remittances home and foster economic development with greater speed.
- Instituting a family reunification parole program for Haitians is simpler than it may appear, since it requires no congressional action.
- The Cuban program's rationale of saving lives at sea and providing for orderly migration applies with equal force to Haiti.

- No one would get a “green card” any sooner — like the Cubans, they’d just be able to wait for them here w/their families rather than in Haiti.

In a related development, today a resolution urging the White House and DHS to create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program was introduced by New York City Council Members Mathieu Eugene and Daniel Dromm before the New York City Council.

The White House and Secretary Napolitano have so far ignored these urgent calls, while children and other close relatives, already approved by DHS to join their families here, continue on a 4 to 11 year wait list in Haiti, where many may not survive given post-quake conditions of devastation, cholera and danger. May today's letter not fall on deaf ears.

Since Haiti’s January 12, 2010 earthquake, IJDH has led national efforts to persuade the White House to create a Haitian FRPP. Grassroots efforts are underway in areas including Florida, New York, and Massachusetts, where a dedicated team of volunteers helped secure yesterday's letter, which the Haitian American community and its supporters strongly welcome and applaud.

(The letters from Massachusetts' congressional leaders and Governor Patrick may be found at http://ijdh.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Haitian_Family_Reunification_-_MA_Del_Letter.pdf and at [http://ijdh.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Gov. Patrick's Letter Urging Haitian Family Reunification.pdf](http://ijdh.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Gov._Patrick's_Letter_Urging_Haitian_Family_Reunification.pdf) .)

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