

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 22, 2011

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary of Homeland Security
United States Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Clinton and Secretary Napolitano,

As members of the Florida congressional delegation, we thank you for your commitment to Haiti. As a new Haitian government takes shape, and as the country still grapples with cholera and post-earthquake reconstruction, additional help is needed. Today, we write to inquire about two issues: 1) the number of Haitians who have been approved for U.S. residency, but whose entry to this country has been delayed, and 2) the extension of low-skilled, temporary employment visas to Haitians.

It is our understanding that tens of thousands of Haitians have been approved for U.S. residency, yet have been forced to wait several years to leave disaster-stricken Haiti. Reportedly, there are over 100,000 Haitians who have already been approved for family-based visas, and are merely waiting for their visa number to become available. The National Visa Center estimates that of those who are waiting, 15,584 are the spouses and children of U.S. citizens, and another 16,216 are the adult children of Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs).¹ We would appreciate your assessment of this situation and ways in which you could potentially increase or expedite family migration.

Additionally, we urge you to consider extending low-skilled, temporary employment visas to Haitians – such as the H-2A and H-2B visas. According to The Center for Global Development (CGD), international migration has lifted more Haitians out of poverty than all the foreign aid, investment, and trade preferences extended to Haiti over the past thirty years, combined.² This migration has drastically increased remittances to Haiti from the United States, which are estimated to total over \$2 billion every year. This represents nearly twice the amount the United States has pledged to Haiti in assistance.

¹Annual Report of Immigrant Visa Applications in the Family-sponsored and Employment-based Preferences registered at the National Visa Center as of November 1, 2010. Accessed online at <http://travel.state.gov/pdf/WaitingListItem.pdf> (September 21, 2011).

² Royce Murray and Sarah Williamson “Migration as a Tool for Disaster Recovery: A Case Study on U.S. Policy Options for Post-Earthquake Haiti,” CGD Working Paper 255, June 2011.

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Since remittances undoubtedly play such a huge role in Haiti's reconstruction and stabilization efforts, it is critically important that we explore additional ways to Haitians. Low-skilled, temporary employment seems to be one way in which a limited number of Haitians may come to the United States, reunite with their families, help build the U.S. economy, and, most importantly, assist Haiti in its reconstruction through repatriated skills and capital.

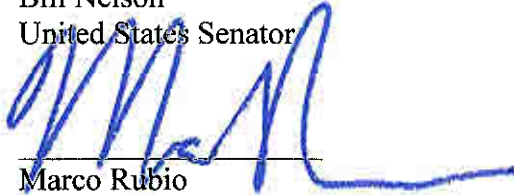
As you know, Haiti is not included on the list of nations eligible for participation in the H-2A and H-2B temporary worker programs. While individual Haitians are sometimes permitted visas, these cases are rare and are only done on a case-by-case basis as determined by the Secretary of Homeland Security. We would appreciate your assessment of why these programs exclude Haitians, and what specific steps the Haitian government could take that would lead to its inclusion.

These issues are of great importance to the Haitian diaspora community and to our Florida constituents. Thank you for your attention to these matters, and we greatly look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



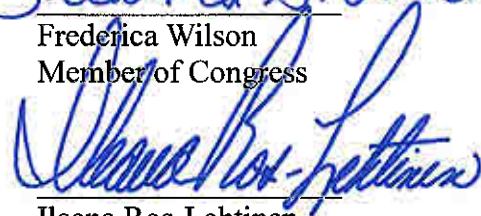
Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



David Rivera
Member of Congress



Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Corrine Brown
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Mario Diaz-Balart
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