

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 15, 2011

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We thank you and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano for redesignating Haiti for Temporary Protected Status last May. Additionally, we write to urge you to create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program (FRPP) to save lives, reunite families, and stimulate recovery by generating additional remittances into the indefinite future to help thousands in Haiti.

To serve these ends, DHS should start promptly paroling some of the beneficiaries of family-based visa petitions who despite DHS approvals remain on a 3 to 10 year wait list in Haiti. Many may not survive, including those in preference category 2A (minor children and spouses of lawful permanent residents) and/or those with earlier approval dates. It makes sense to begin such paroles with the most vulnerable and deserving of those DHS has approved, but whose lives remain at risk in post-quake Haiti.

As you know, the United States has paroled hundreds of thousands of Cuban, Indochinese, and Kosovar refugees over the years, and of direct precedent, DHS recently renewed the Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program (FRPP). Through this program, over 30,000 approved beneficiaries have been paroled into the United States since 2009. Given conditions in Haiti, a similar Haitian program is urgently needed.

There is broad support. On September 22nd, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick wrote Secretary Napolitano, urging DHS to promptly parole the beneficiaries of approved Haitian family-based visa petitions to “mirror” the Cuban FRPP and help Haiti recover by generating remittances. In addition, some of our colleagues from the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation sent a bipartisan, bicameral letter to Secretary Napolitano urging the same thing. Their letters joined a chorus of major editorial boards, city and mayoral resolutions, letters from political leaders and June’s Center for Global Development working paper.

As noted in the paper “Migration as a Tool for Disaster Recover: A Case Study on U.S. Policy Options for Post-Earthquake Haiti,” Center for Global Development, June 2011, at 15-16:

- Rather than waiting 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 served, but also to enable Haitians to send more remittances home and foster economic development in Haiti with greater speed.

- Instituting a family reunification parole program for Haitians is simpler than it may appear, as the Executive Branch has the authority to establish such programs without congressional action.
- The Haitian program would save lives by helping to prevent people from migrating by sea, providing for orderly migration to the U.S.
- No one would get a green card any sooner -- like the Cubans, they would be able to wait for their green card in the U.S. with their families rather than in Haiti.

Mr. President, we appreciate your leadership and commitment to help Haiti recover from this natural catastrophe. Again we urge you and Secretary Napolitano to promptly implement a Haitian FRPP -- or alternatively start expeditiously paroling the most vulnerable and deserving subgroups -- to save lives, reunite families, grant equal treatment with those similarly situated, and most importantly provide an important boost to the recovery of Haiti, still struggling to recover.

Sincerely,

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate

Richard J. Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate

Ben Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senate

Karen Bass

Karen Bass
U.S. House of Representatives

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
U.S. House of Representatives

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Robert A. Brady
U.S. House of Representatives

Yvette D. Clarke

Yvette D. Clarke
U.S. House of Representatives

John F. Kerry

John F. Kerry
United States Senate

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Gary Ackerman
U.S. House of Representatives

Howard L. Berman

Howard L. Berman
U.S. House of Representatives


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Earl Blumenauer
U.S. House of Representatives


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Corrine Brown
U.S. House of Representatives


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U.S. House of Representatives


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U.S. House of Representatives

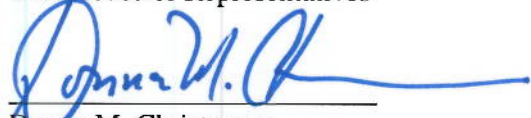

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U.S. House of Representatives

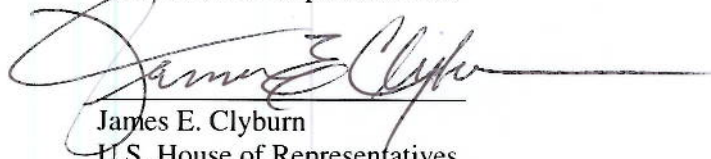

Sam Farr
U.S. House of Representatives

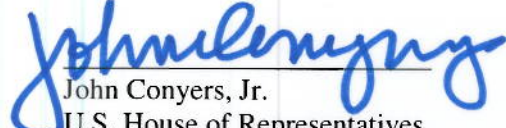

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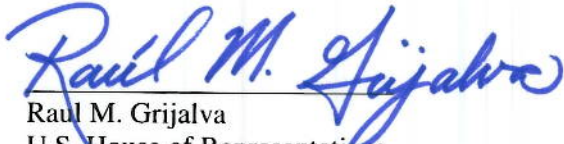

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Chaka Fattah
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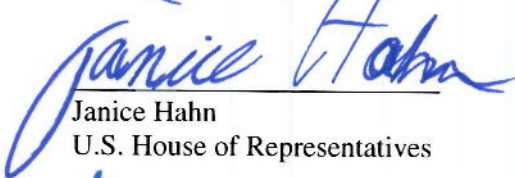

Marcia L. Fudge
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Charles A. Gonzalez
U.S. House of Representatives



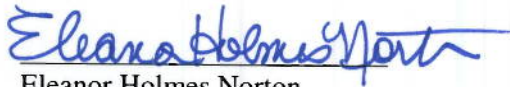
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Janice Hahn
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Maurice Hinchey
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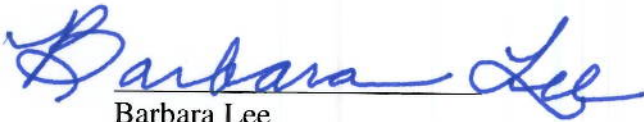
Eleanor Holmes Norton
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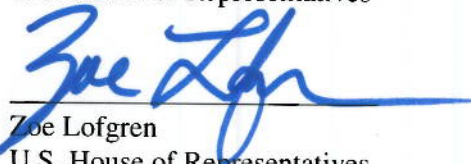
Eddie Bernice Johnson
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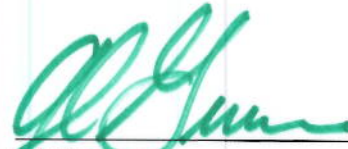
Barbara Lee
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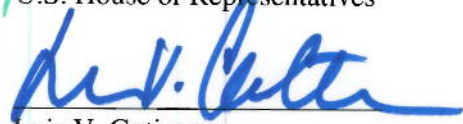
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Zoe Lofgren
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Al Green
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Luis V. Gutierrez
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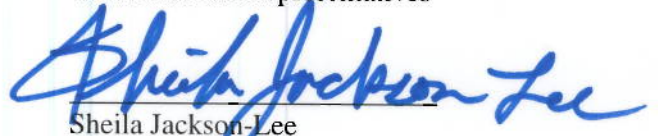
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Mazie K. Hirono
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Mike Honda
U.S. House of Representatives



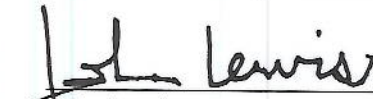
Sheila Jackson-Lee
U.S. House of Representatives



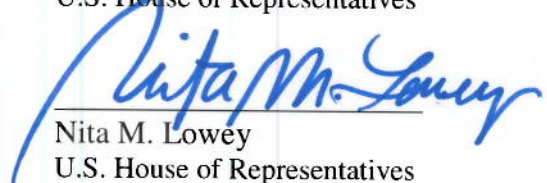
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U.S. House of Representatives

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
U.S. House of Representatives

Melvin L. Watt
Melvin L. Watt
U.S. House of Representatives

CC: Janet Napolitano, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security