

## The Biden Administration Should Promptly Restart and Improve the Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program

Campaigning in Miami on October 5, 2020, President Biden [promised](#) to protect and reinstate the Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program (HFRP), which former President Trump had effectively crippled on taking office in 2017 by not having the National Visa Center (NVC) issue any new invitations to apply for it, as the program requires.

This strangled HFRP by restricting it to completion of the processing of beneficiaries whose petitioners had applied for the program on receiving NVC invitations during the Obama administration. Soon the number of such beneficiaries still in the pipeline dwindled as they were eventually approved or rejected.

President Biden should promptly restart the program by having the NVC issue a new batch of invitations to eligible petitioners to apply for it, and he should improve the program in the following ways: USCIS should *expand* HFRP by permitting petitioners whose beneficiaries are further out than 42 months from their visa priority dates to apply for it, e.g. when they come within 84 to 90 months. Petitioners should also be permitted to apply for the program affirmatively, without having to wait for an NVC invitation, if they can otherwise establish their eligibility. And the per-beneficiary application fee, already exorbitant and decreasingly cost-effective under Obama given the relatively narrow eligibility window, the frequency of a petitioner having multiple beneficiaries, the need to await an NVC invitation, and processing time, should be significantly reduced.

HFRP was created in 2015 to give Haitians a semblance of equal treatment -- a similarly-named Cuban program had existed -- and to help Haiti recover, in part by increasing the flow of remittances, from catastrophes including Haiti's January 12, 2010 earthquake, which killed an estimated 250,000 and devastated its capital. Creating such a program to speed up legal immigration enjoyed broad editorial, civil society, and bipartisan political support in the United States starting immediately after the earthquake. Although the program as eventually created was too limited in coverage, 8,300 beneficiaries of DHS-approved immigrant visa petitions were paroled into the United States under it; none received their green card any earlier than they otherwise would have had the program not existed.

Former President Trump's crippling of the program and desire to terminate it was consistent with his anti-Haitian, anti-black, anti-immigrant agenda. He also took Haiti off the list of nations whose citizens are eligible for H-2A and H-2B temporary workers visas, and he illegally terminated Haiti's Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation despite overwhelming evidence of incomplete earthquake recovery, the October 2010 cholera epidemic introduced by United Nations peacekeepers, October 2016's devastating Hurricane Matthew, and other disasters, all supporting TPS's extension. He said Haitians "[all have AIDS.](#)" come from a "shithole country," and "Why do we need more Haitians? Take them out [of the deal]" in rejecting a proposed bipartisan immigration deal including them, saying that he prefers people from places like Norway. See "[Trump derides protections for immigrants from 'shithole' countries,](#)" by Josh Dawsey, *Washington Post*, January 12, 2018.

The Haitian Family Reunification Program was and should once again be an embodiment and example of our nation's ideals and goals to reunite families, protect our national security, and provide equality and justice. President Biden should promptly rescind or otherwise nullify the effects of the December 28, 2020 Federal Register Notice seeking to terminate the program; *restart* the program by having the NVC issue a new batch of invitations to eligible petitioners to apply for it; *expand* the program by permitting petitioners to apply for it when their beneficiaries have come within a more generous period of time, e.g. 84 to 90 months, of their visa priority dates; and permit otherwise-eligible petitioners to apply for the program affirmatively instead of having to wait to receive an NVC invitation. He should also significantly decrease the per-beneficiary fee for applying for HFRP, which were already exorbitant and decreasingly cost effective during the Obama administration given the program's narrow eligibility window, the frequency of a petitioner having multiple beneficiaries, the need for petitioners to wait to receive an NVC invitation before being able to apply, and requisite processing time. These factors combined to limit HFRP's accessibility and goal of speeding up the reunification of these families.

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