

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 7, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to extend and expand Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Liberians residing legally in the United States. Moreover, to avoid the anxiety and uncertainty in our country's Liberian communities, we also ask that you take swift and early action on this matter and extend DED for an additional two years.

As you know, in December 1989, Liberia was engulfed in a devastating seven-year civil war. Over 150,000 people died and more than half the population fled the country or became internally displaced. During the conflict, food production was halted, and the country's infrastructure was destroyed. A second civil war that began in 1999 ended four years later with the departure from power of former President Charles Taylor, who was recently convicted of war crimes in The Hague.

Thousands of Liberians who were forced from their homes sought refuge in the United States. In 1991, Attorney General Barr granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Liberians present in the United States. Since that time, the status of many Liberian refugees in the United States has been extended through renewals of both TPS and DED. The current DED extension is set to expire on March 31, 2013.

Liberia has made great strides in the past few years, and recently re-elected President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has won much praise in her efforts to rebuild her country. However, socio-economic conditions remain challenging, and the security situation remains fragile and must be managed carefully. The presence of the United Nations (U.N.) Mission in Liberia continues to be necessary in order to guarantee peace and security in Liberia, and the U.N. Secretary-General's August 2012 report on the mission notes significant continuing security risks posed by civil unrest, public disorder, and violence against women, as well as by instability along the country's border with Cote d'Ivoire. Additionally, according to recent estimates, 64% of Liberians live below the national poverty line, only 16% are formally employed, and 82% are without access to proper sanitation.

The United States must continue to do all that is necessary to assist in the reemergence of Liberia, to ensure regional stability, help foster Liberia's continuing post-war recovery, and protect the substantial foreign policy assistance and peacekeeping investments that the United States has made in Liberia. We strongly believe, as you stated in August 2011, that it continues to be in our foreign policy interest to extend DED to those Liberians presently residing in the United States. Moreover, a flood of Liberians from the United States could overburden the

country's limited infrastructure and reverse the advances that Liberia has made. It would also stem the crucial socio-economic investment and assistance that Liberians in our country provide through remittances to their relatives in Liberia. As such, we believe it is beneficial for both countries if they are allowed to remain in the United States.

Liberians, many of whom have lived here for more than two decades, should not be forced to return to a country that is still in the process of rebuilding. These individuals are lawful and tax-paying members of our communities, many of whose sons and daughters are American-born citizens serving in our military. We, therefore, request that you grant eligible Liberians a reprieve from imminent deportation by once again extending DED status to all eligible Liberians, including those who arrived after October 2002.

Furthermore, the current system of short-term DED renewals leaves Liberians and their families with perennial uncertainty about whether they will be able to remain members of the communities they have come to call home. For this reason, we urge you to support comprehensive immigration reform that includes an adjustment to permanent resident status for qualifying Liberians and their families.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed Chuck Sch

Whitmore

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Frank R. Laukenberg

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Patrick Leahy

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