

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 6, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our strong support for extending and expanding Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) status for Liberians residing legally in the United States. In past years, the Administration has waited until days before DED expiration to grant an extension, causing great anxiety and uncertainty in our country's Liberian community. We therefore urge you to take earlier action on the current grant of DED, which is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2011.

As you know, in December 1989, Liberia was engulfed in a devastating civil war that lasted for seven years. Over 150,000 people died, incidents of severe human rights abuses soared, and more than half of 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 is presently being tried in The Hague on war crimes charges.

Several thousand Liberians were forced to flee from their homes because of civil war, and sought refuge in the United States. In 1991, Attorney General Barr granted Liberians present in the United States Temporary Protected Status (TPS). As the conflict in Liberia continued to rage, successive Attorneys General extended TPS each year for the next six years. In 1999, TPS was terminated, but President Clinton approved DED status for two years. In 2002, Attorney General Ashcroft once again granted TPS, and this status was extended through October 1, 2007. On September 12, 2007, the Bush Administration announced that while TPS status for Liberian refugees would expire in 2007, DED status would be extended to this population through March 31, 2009. On March 23, 2009, you extended DED for one year, and did so again, for an additional year and a half, on March 18, 2010. DED status for affected Liberians is currently scheduled to expire on September 30, 2011.

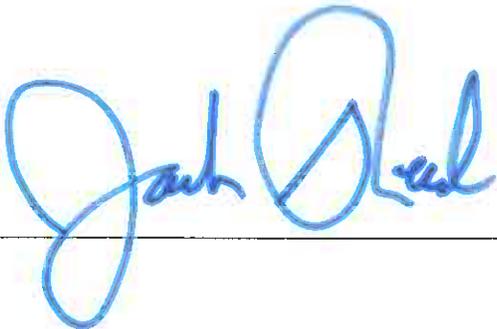
Liberia has made great strides in the past few years, and freely-elected President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has won much praise in her efforts to rebuild her country. Liberia's post-war recovery has been a long, arduous process and must continue to be managed carefully. The United Nations Secretary-General's most recent report on the mission in Liberia notes that disputes over access to land and resources, ethnic and communal tensions, and high unemployment continue to pose a significant security risk. Additionally, according to recent estimates, 64% of Liberians live below the poverty line, only 16% are formally employed, and 83% are without access to proper sanitation. Further, Liberia's mortality rate for children under the age of five is 112 deaths per 1,000 live births, meaning that more than one in nine dies before reaching a fifth birthday.

The fragile stability that has been achieved in Liberia over the past years has been significantly strained by the recent crisis in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire. On January 4, 2011, U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Linda Thomas-Greenfield issued a disaster declaration due to the large influx of refugees crossing the border from Cote d'Ivoire and the increased humanitarian needs of Liberian communities supporting this population, currently estimated at over 175,000 refugees. With as many as 250 refugees per day still entering Liberia from Cote d'Ivoire, a surge of Liberians returning from the United States could easily overwhelm this severely challenged nation.

Consequently, the situation in Liberia continues to be tenuous, and Liberians under DED authorization, many of whom have lived in the United States 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 here legally and are tax-paying members of our communities, many of whom have raised American-born children who are currently serving in the U.S. military. Liberians in the United States also provide crucial financial support to their extended families in Liberia through remittances.

Liberia is on its way to once again becoming a stable country with a thriving economy. But this progress must be protected. We strongly believe, as you stated in March 2010, that it continues to be in the foreign policy interest of the United States to extend DED to those Liberians presently residing in the United States. The United States must do all that is necessary to assist in the reemergence of Liberia, in the interest of regional stability, to help foster Liberia's continuing post-war recovery, and to protect the substantial foreign policy assistance and peacekeeping investments that the United States has made in Liberia. We believe that a crucial step toward this end is an extension of DED status for qualifying Liberians. We respectfully request, therefore, that you expeditiously grant affected Liberians a reprieve from imminent deportation by once again extending DED status to all eligible Liberians, including those who arrived after October 2002.

Sincerely,



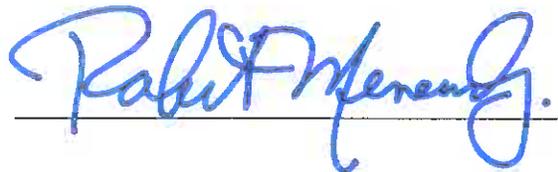
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