

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 12, 2010

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

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to extend and expand Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Liberians residing legally in the United States.

As you know, in December 1989, Liberia was engulfed in a devastating civil war that lasted for seven years. Over 150,000 people died and more than one-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.

Several thousand Liberians, who were forced from their homes because of the civil war, 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, and this status was extended 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 an additional year, and this status will expire on March 31, 2010.

Liberia has made great strides in the past few years. Charles Taylor is presently being tried in The Hague, and freely-elected President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is working to rebuild her country. The rebuilding of Liberia, however, has been a long process and must be managed carefully. For example, as of 2007, 64% of Liberians lived below the poverty line, and only 16% were formally employed. Additionally, Liberia's mortality rate for children under the age of five was 110 deaths per 1,000 live births, meaning that more than one in ten died before reaching a fifth birthday.

As you can see, the situation in Liberia continues to be fragile, and Liberians who have lived in the United States for almost two decades should not be forced to return to a country which is still in the process of rebuilding. Furthermore, Liberians in the United States are providing invaluable financial support to Liberia through remittances to families.

Liberia is on its way to once again becoming a stable country with a thriving economy. But this progress must be protected. We believe the United States needs to do all that is necessary to assist in the reemergence of Liberia. We believe it would be very beneficial for both countries if Liberians living in the United States are allowed to remain. We, therefore, request that you grant Liberians a reprieve from imminent deportation by once again extending DED status to all eligible Liberians, including those who arrived after October 2002.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

  
Jack Reed

  
Sheldon Whitehouse

*Rich Durbin*

Richard J. Durbin

*Chuck Schumer*

Charles E. Schumer

*Kirsten E. Gillibrand*

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

*Amy Klobuchar*

Amy Klobuchar

*Arlen Specter*

Arlen Specter

*Al Franken*

Al Franken

*Ed Kaufman*

Edward E. Kaufman

*Barbara Mikulski*

Barbara A. Mikulski

*Ben Cardin*

Benjamin L. Cardin

*Pat Leahy*

Patrick J. Leahy

*Sherrod Brown*

Sherrod Brown