

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 110314)

RESOLUTION

Urging the Obama Administration to Create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program to Help Haiti Recover, Save Lives, and End a Double Standard.

WHEREAS, On January 12, 2010, Haiti suffered one of history's greatest catastrophes, an earthquake which killed at least 250,000, left millions homeless and injured, and destroyed Haitian and international institutional resources and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Haiti is the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation and one of the poorest in the world; and

WHEREAS, On January 14, 2010, President Obama said that the disaster in Haiti "is one of those moments that call out for American's leadership"; and

WHEREAS, Remittances to Haiti are 20% of Haiti's GDP and "key" to Haiti's recovery, according to the World Bank, and therefore should be increased if possible; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as of November 1, 2010 had *approved* immigrant visa petitions for 105,193 Haitian beneficiaries who nevertheless remain on a wait list of up to 11 years in Haiti, where they remain at risk from cholera, gender-based violence, tent city conditions, and political and environmental turmoil, waiting for visa priority dates to become current; and

WHEREAS, Many of these already-DHS-approved beneficiaries will likely not survive up to another 11 years given these dangerous post-quake conditions in Haiti; and

WHEREAS, If even one fourth of these 105,193 DHS-approved approved beneficiaries, instead of suffering and remaining at risk in Haiti, a burden on Haiti's government and on the international community, were reunited with their petitioning families here, working, and sending remittances back home, about 300,000 quake victims in Haiti would benefit from those life-saving funds; and

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WHEREAS, DHS recently renewed the Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program, which it created in 2007 and under which nearly 25,000 approved Cuban beneficiaries were paroled into the United States in 2009 and 2010 to wait here for their visa priority dates to become current rather than in Cuba; and

WHEREAS, The United States has welcomed hundreds of thousands of Cuban, Indochinese and Kosovar refugees in recent decades in keeping with our noblest traditions; and

WHEREAS, Haiti's recovery from the quake and stability are in the national security interest of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Cuban program's rationale of "saving lives at sea" and providing for orderly migration applies with equal force to Haiti, given both countries' history of boat migration to our shores; and

WHEREAS, There is an accurate perception injurious to our community of disparate and discriminatory U.S. Government treatment of Haitians; and

WHEREAS, Broad and bipartisan support exists for the Obama Administration/DHS to create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program, mirrored on the Cuban program of that name, to promptly parole approved Haitian beneficiaries into the United States; and

WHEREAS, That support includes at least 13 editorials urging this by the editorial boards of the *Miami Herald*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *San Antonio Express News*, *Newsday*, *Star-Ledger*, and *Palm Beach Post* (including two editorials each in the *Washington Post*, *Miami Herald*, and *Star Ledger*); many op-eds; the unanimously passed June 14, 2010 resolution by the U.S. Conference of Mayors; the March 8, 2010 letter to Secretary Napolitano from U. S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and seven other House members including Representatives Lincoln and Mario Diaz-Balart; the January 11, 2011 letter to President Obama from U.S. Senators Leahy, Kerry, Gillibrand, Bill Nelson, Menendez, and Lautenberg; a March 12, 2010 letter from dozens of national organizations; among other support; and

WHEREAS, The *Miami Herald* editorial board on January 6, 2011 correctly condemned the Administration's "double standard" in failing to promptly parole these "legal" approved Haitians and on March 22, 2010, more than a year ago, opined, "There is no valid argument for failing to move quickly on this front;" and

WHEREAS, The *Los Angeles Times* editorial board on July 21, 2010, echoing other editorial boards, cited the Cuban program and asked, rhetorically, "Why the disparate treatment?" and

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WHEREAS, The *Boston Globe* editorial board on July 17, 2010, called creating such a Haitian program “the most effective way to take the leadership role America should have in helping Haiti cope with the catastrophe of last winter’s earthquake”; and

WHEREAS, The *Philadelphia Inquirer* editorial board on July 2, 2010 in its well-reasoned editorial, "Don't forget Haiti," urged President Obama to create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program; and

WHEREAS, Haitian-American leaders in Miami shortly after the earthquake urged Vice-President Biden to urge such a program and on January 6, 2011 at a White House meeting again urged officials to create such a program; and

WHEREAS, the Administration for nearly a year has said that creating such a program is under consideration, which amounts to a denial so long after the January 12, 2010 earthquake, Haiti’s recovery from which such a program would so effectively assist; and

WHEREAS, Reagan/Bush Administration official Elliot Abrams correctly stressed soon after the quake that increasing *legal* immigration would create an ongoing and sustained additional source of remittances and thereby be the best way to help Haiti recover, in "What Haiti Needs: A Haitian Diaspora," *Washington Post* op-ed, January 22, 2010; and

WHEREAS, the *Washington Post* editorial board on January 29, 2010 stressed in urging such a program that one Haitian working here can support ten persons in Haiti; and

WHEREAS, this worst catastrophe to hit our hemisphere uniquely warrants the creation of such a program, and Haiti remains the poorest and only hemispheric nation with one million persons living in dangerous tent city conditions; and

WHEREAS, absent such a program, President Obama’s promise of leadership in helping Haiti recover will remain unfulfilled and an accurate sense of disparate treatment against Haitian-Americans will remain in our community;

WHEREAS, President Obama can and should instruct DHS Secretary Napolitano to immediately implement a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program, and

WHEREAS, U.S. Department of State Secretary Hillary Clinton Haiti Special Coordinator Ambassador Thomas Adams have pledged to work for Haiti’s recovery and have powerful voices within the Administration on matters pertaining to Haiti’s recovery; and

WHEREAS, U.S. National Security Council, Domestic Policy Council, and other Administration officials also work on matters pertaining to Haiti’s recovery and to the welfare of our community; now, therefore, be it

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RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Urges the Obama Administration to Create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program to Help Haiti Recover, Save Lives, and End a Double Standard.

FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Urges Philadelphia's local, state, and national political leaders to do all in their power to urge the White House and DHS to create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program, like the recently renewed Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program, to help Haiti recover via the remittances it would generate to hundreds of thousands of quake victims, to save lives of DHS-approved beneficiaries during the up to eleven years they are now scheduled to wait in Haiti for their priority dates to become current, and to end a widely perceived double standard with similarly-situated approved Cubans, nearly 25,000 of whom were paroled into the United States in 2009 and 2010.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the fifth of May, 2011.

Anna C. Verna
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Kenney and Blackwell

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Kenney, Blackwell, Greenlee, Krajewski, Goode, Miller, Clarke and DiCicco