

A Memorial to Extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Liberian Persons

1 WHEREAS perhaps as many as 7,000 to 10,000 people displaced from the Republic of Liberia
2 have settled in the Minneapolis area, becoming valued members of our community and our
3 congregations, and
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5 WHEREAS extreme violence and danger forced many of the displaced to leave in haste, without
6 acquiring formal refugee status, and
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8 WHEREAS the United States Congress has been granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to
9 Liberians for more than 10 years, and
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11 WHEREAS, the United States Department of Homeland Security has announced its intention not
12 to renew TPS for Liberians after October 2007, and
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14 WHEREAS such a lapse in TPS will result in approximately ten percent of people again being
15 displaced from their homes in Minnesota, and an estimated 200,000 nationwide, and
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17 WHEREAS the United States Congress can reverse the decision of Homeland Security on TPS
18 for Liberian people, therefore be it
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20 RESOLVED that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly call for an extension of TPS for
21 displaced Liberian nationals, and be it further
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23 RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, through the office of its bishop, contact all
24 Minnesota representatives and senators in the United States Congress to convey this call for
25 action, and be it further
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27 RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2007 ELCA
28 Churchwide Assembly to call for extension of TPS on behalf of Liberian refugees throughout the
29 United States, and be it finally
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31 RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2007 ELCA
32 Churchwide Assembly to direct the office of the presiding Bishop to convey to each member of
33 the United States Congress this call for action.

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The Reference and Counsel Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

Background Information

In 1989, a civil war erupted in the Republic of Liberia, claiming about 150,000 lives and forcing over one-half of its citizenry to seek refuge in neighboring countries as well as the United States of America. It is estimated that 7,000 to 10,000 Liberians live in Minnesota. Ten percent of them are here on Temporary Protective Status (TPS). These traumatized Liberians welcomed the humanitarian gesture of the U.S. Government, which enabled them to sustain themselves and their families economically by granting them TPS. With this status, the recipients are eligible to receive work authorization, pay taxes, and renew their status every year. At the inception of TPS in 1999, over 14,000 Liberians in the U.S. were granted the status. Over the years, the number of Liberians registered for TPS has greatly increased.

There has been a democratic election in Liberia with Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf taking over as the first female leader of The Republic of Liberia. Rebuilding a nation that has been shattered by war is a daunting task. One of her pledges during the elections was to have electricity restored to some parts of Monrovia, the capital city. At the moment, only a portion of the city gets electricity sporadically and pipe-borne water. Unfortunately, the success of Mrs. Sirleaf's election was misread by the Department of Homeland Security as adequate reason to terminate the TPS granted to Liberians.

Presently, the unemployment rate in Liberia is about 85%. A high majority of the working force in Liberia is employed by the Government. The sudden expulsion of Liberians from the U.S. will result in the following: a high rate of crime, fear, insecurity, and most notably vigilante justice. Housing is also another problem. A local newspaper recently reported Internally Displaced People (IDP) in Liberia living in cemeteries and under bridges. President Sirleaf, on a trip to the U.S. earlier this year, appealed to U.S. lawmakers to allow Liberians to remain in this country a little longer. She further said "if all of a sudden 200,000 Liberians descended on us, we wouldn't know what to do in terms of jobs and housing and all the things to which they're entitled. But we do want to see them, as they've started to trickle back on a voluntary basis."

The scheduled termination of Temporary Protective Status in October 2007 threatens to directly affect approximately ten percent of Minnesota's Liberian population. The cost to their families—including the many elderly people and children who are U.S. citizens that TPS holders support—will be tremendous. Without congressional action, thousands of Minnesotans face the eminent separation of their families and the loss of all they have built all these years.