

*News from*

# *Congressman Eliot Engel*

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## **ENGEL THANKS OBAMA FOR GRANTING HAITIAN NATIONALS PROTECTIVE STATUS TOP STAY IN U.S.**

Congressman Eliot Engel thanked President Obama and the Department of Homeland Security for granting Temporary Protected Status to Haitians in the United States whose visas have expired or may expire, and who were subject to deportation.

Reps. Engel and Charles Rangel had rounded up fellow New York Congress members to sign a letter to President Obama asking for the TPS to be given. Almost at the same time DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano issued a statement announcing the granting of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Haitians in the U.S. as of last Tuesday.

She said in a statement, "I am announcing the designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian nationals who were in the United States as of January 12, 2010. This (earthquake) is a disaster of historic proportions and this designation will allow eligible Haitian nationals in the United States to continue living and working in our country for the next 18 months." She added that Haitians in the U.S. who are eligible to apply for TPS should go to [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) or call the toll-free USCIS Forms Hotline (800) 870-3676.

Rep. Engel, the Chair of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said that Haiti's condition after the devastating earthquake made it impossible to return people to that country, but the U.S. government is detaining many thousands awaiting deportation while thousands of others must live facing that possibility.

Rep. Engel noted that nationals of a country may be designated for TPS when that country has suffered substantial, temporary disruption of living conditions and is temporarily unable to handle adequately the return of its nationals. TPS status has been routinely extended to nationals of various countries which have suffered natural disasters. In the Western Hemisphere alone, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras, are covered by TPS designations.

The Congress members noted that just over a year ago Haiti was ravaged by hurricanes that destroyed much of the country's infrastructure and Haiti was only just beginning to recover when the earthquake struck. Rep. Engel said, "I called for Haitians to be given TPS when the hurricanes hit in 2008. We didn't do it then. Thankfully, we are doing it now."

The letter was initiated by Rep. Eliot Engel and Rep. Charles Rangel and was cosigned by Reps. Ackerman, Bishop, Clarke, Crowley, Higgins, Hinchey, Israel, Lowey, Maloney, McCarthy, Meeks, Nadler, Serrano, Slaughter, Tonko, and Velazquez.

*(Letter attached)*

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On Tuesday, a devastating earthquake struck Haiti. This terrible event has killed thousands in the Port-au-Prince area and destroyed countless buildings. We thank you for extending to the people of Haiti the deep condolences and unwavering support of the American people and directing your administration to respond with a swift, coordinated, and aggressive effort to save lives.

As members of Congress from New York, home to a very large Haitian diaspora community, we know that Haiti's emergency needs are overwhelming. Even with the death and casualty toll still unknown, the immediate need for food, medicines, water, emergency shelter, and equipment are obvious. It is also clear that there will be an even greater need for a long-term commitment to rebuild the nation's infrastructure, as well as educational, security, and economic assistance. As the leader in our hemisphere and Haiti's most important political partner, the U.S. should lead the way in supporting these efforts.

In the short term, we urgently request that you immediately direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Haitians currently in the United States. As you know, nationals of a country may be designated for TPS when that country has suffered an environmental disaster resulting in a substantial, temporary disruption of living conditions and it is temporarily unable to handle adequately the return of its nationals. We believe that with Tuesday's severe earthquake Haiti has more than exceeded the conditions for TPS designation and should be designated without delay.

Just over one year ago, Haiti was struck by severe flooding following hurricanes and storms, destroying much of the infrastructure of the country. Before yesterday's earthquake, Haiti was only beginning to recover from that disaster. Given yesterday's calamity, Haiti is completely incapable of handling an influx of thousands of additional people if they were sent back from the United States.

TPS has been routinely extended to nationals of various countries which have suffered natural disasters. In the Western Hemisphere, alone, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras, are covered by TPS designations. Given the devastation in Haiti, it would be incomprehensible if TPS was not extended to Haiti, as well.

It is our understanding that Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Assistant Secretary John Morton have halted all removals to Haiti for the time being in response to the devastation caused by yesterday's earthquake. We urge you to take the next step and to designate Haitian nationals in the United States for TPS.

Again, as members of Congress from New York, the home of a very large Haitian diaspora community, we thank you for your assistance to the people of Haiti at this difficult time, and we look forward to hearing from you about Temporary Protected Status for Haitians in the United States.

Sincerely,