
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 1140 Session of
2018

INTRODUCED BY RABB, SOLOMON, SCHLOSSBERG, McCLINTON, THOMAS,
BRADFORD, SCHWEYER, D. COSTA AND ROZZI, OCTOBER 12, 2018

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, OCTOBER 12, 2018

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the President of the United States and the Acting
2 Secretary of Homeland Security to ensure the health and
3 welfare of foreign nationals residing in the Commonwealth of
4 Pennsylvania by reconsidering the recent determinations
5 relating to the temporary protected status designation of
6 nationals from Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua.

7 WHEREAS, Under 8 U.S.C. § 1254a, the Secretary of Homeland
8 Security may grant a national of a foreign country temporary
9 protected status (TPS) due to conditions in that country which
10 temporarily preclude its nationals from safely returning or in
11 certain circumstances where the country is unable to adequately
12 handle the return of its nationals; and

13 WHEREAS, Regulations governing TPS require the occurrence of
14 life-altering events or phenomena, including the outbreak of
15 civil war, environmental disasters and other extraordinary
16 conditions, in order to prompt the Department of Homeland
17 Security (DHS) to designate and subsequently extend TPS to a
18 foreign country and nationals residing in the United States; and

19 WHEREAS, There currently is a total of 10 countries with TPS
20 designations, including Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Honduras,

1 Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti, Syria, Yemen and Nepal; and
2 WHEREAS, Ongoing wars and armed conflicts in Somalia in 1991,
3 Sudan in 1997 and South Sudan in 2011, natural disasters such as
4 Hurricane Mitch which devastated the countries of Honduras and
5 Nicaragua in 1998, a series of earthquakes that befell El
6 Salvador in 2001 and a 7.0-magnitude earthquake that ravaged
7 Haiti in 2010, the outbreak of civil wars in Syria in 2012 and
8 Yemen in 2015 and a 7.8-magnitude earthquake that hit Nepal in
9 2015 constitute the extraordinary occurrences which precipitated
10 the original TPS designation for those countries; and

11 WHEREAS, While TPS is not meant to serve as a mechanism for
12 providing a pathway to United States citizenship, it is
13 important to recognize that the program is meant to serve as a
14 temporary form of humanitarian relief to countries mired in
15 domestic turmoil or reeling from the effects of a natural
16 disaster until which time a country can achieve a state of
17 stability; and

18 WHEREAS, Lawful immigrant workers comprise approximately 19.5
19 million of the total United States labor force and studies have
20 shown that the overall labor force participation rate of TPS
21 holders within the United States is 88.5%, as compared to 62.9%
22 of the United States population; and

23 WHEREAS, It is estimated that 80.3% of TPS holders pay income
24 taxes, 30% are civically active in their respective communities
25 and approximately 20% embrace the principle of volunteerism by
26 participating in community service efforts; and

27 WHEREAS, Evidence of the stated objective and efficacy of the
28 program has borne itself in the case of the country of Sudan,
29 which originally received TPS designation on November 4, 1997,
30 but, upon review of the country's conditions and following

consultation with the appropriate government agencies, has been scheduled for termination on November 2, 2018; and

WHEREAS, In November 2017, DHS Acting Secretary Elaine Duke announced changes to the dates of TPS expiration for Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua, which were previously scheduled for January 2018; and

WHEREAS, Acting Secretary Duke determined that extraordinary but temporary conditions in Nicaragua and Haiti no longer exist and that the TPS designations were to be terminated; and

WHEREAS, Acting Secretary Duke also determined that additional information regarding the TPS designation for Honduras is necessary in order to assess the country's conditions; and

WHEREAS, In making a determination, DHS officials should consider the numerous factors supporting an extension, including that 2.5 million Haitians are still in desperate need of humanitarian aid seven years following the massive earthquake which hit the country of Haiti, and more than 6% of its population has endured the worst cholera epidemic in recent history and that Hurricane Mitch, which made landfall in Honduras and Nicaragua in 1998, continues to be considered the most deadly hurricane to strike the western hemisphere in the last 200 years, having resulted in more than 11,000 deaths and more than \$5 billion in damages; and

WHEREAS, Honduras is still recovering from the devastating landslides and flooding caused by Hurricane Mitch, and is also reeling from a dire and sustained economic downturn that occurred following a military coup in 2009 which has resulted in widespread economic inequality and increased poverty rates that make the return of its citizens untenable, unstable and

1 dangerous; and

2 WHEREAS, In Honduras, more than 66% of its people lived in
3 poverty in 2016, more than 43% of the labor force earned less
4 than the minimum wage in 2012 and one in five Hondurans in rural
5 areas live in extreme poverty, earning less than \$1.90 in United
6 States dollars per day; and

7 WHEREAS, Although the Constitution of the Republic of
8 Honduras provides for the free exercise of all religions, its
9 government has taken a position of intolerance relative to other
10 religious denominations and only provides official recognition
11 to the Roman Catholic Church; and

12 WHEREAS, The Honduras government's intolerance has resulted
13 in widespread discriminatory practices against non-Catholic
14 religious communities which include many not being recognized as
15 official churches, being deemed ineligible to receive tax
16 exemption and being classified as nongovernmental organizations,
17 which often places a disparate administrative burden on smaller
18 churches and precludes them from administering lawfully
19 recognized marriages; and

20 WHEREAS, Honduras continues to be rife with corruption and
21 has one of the highest murder rates in the world; and

22 WHEREAS, Journalists, human rights defenders and lesbian,
23 gay, bisexual and transgender individuals are among those most
24 vulnerable to violence in Honduras; and

25 WHEREAS, Many of the murders that occur in Honduras,
26 particularly those that are perpetrated against journalists, are
27 largely underreported and often go unpunished; and

28 WHEREAS, Nicaragua, despite some economic strides in recent
29 years, continues to be the poorest country in Central America
30 and is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere; and

1 WHEREAS, Nicaragua possesses the lowest level of gross
2 domestic product per capita in Central America and widespread
3 underemployment resulting in roughly one-half of its total
4 population living in poverty and a third of the population
5 having no access to sustainable sources of drinking water; and

6 WHEREAS, Many of the issues involving crime and corruption
7 plaguing Honduras are also present today in Nicaragua, including
8 restrictive media policies which provide preferential treatment
9 to progovernment press, attempts to limit Internet freedom by
10 granting government sweeping powers to control online content
11 and an uptick in the number of threats, harassment, firings and
12 physical violence being perpetrated by the government against
13 media personnel; and

14 WHEREAS, Newly revised travel restrictions applicable to
15 Catholic and evangelical Protestant missionaries have been
16 instituted to discourage outside influence, diversify religious
17 ideas and to ensure that both religious groups and leaders are
18 supportive of Nicaragua's ruling political party; and

19 WHEREAS, Many religious leaders continue to lament over the
20 longstanding and morally corrupt policy of the Nicaraguan
21 government of either providing or withholding financial support,
22 tax and utility subsidies of churches based on the political
23 affiliation of the church's clergy; and

24 WHEREAS, The affected foreign nationals who reside in the
25 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and who have positively added to
26 our social, cultural and economic landscape are well-deserving
27 of our collective compassion and kindness during these very
28 trying and tumultuous times in their home countries; therefore
29 be it

30 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the

1 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania urge the President of the United
2 States and the Acting Secretary of Homeland Security to ensure
3 the health and welfare of foreign nationals residing in the
4 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by reconsidering the recent
5 determinations relating to the temporary protected status
6 designation of nationals from Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua, as
7 well as other countries currently designated for TPS; and be it
8 further

9 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be sent to the
10 President of the United States and the Acting Secretary of
11 Homeland Security.