

President Reagan signed into law the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act. This act, quite notably, was the only stand-alone environmental legislation passed during the Reagan administration, and was the first such designation.

After a tremendous accomplishment such as this, most people would claim victory and rest on their laurels. However, Nancy proved tireless and continued to pursue further Gorge protection. She successfully advocated for the purchase of 40,000 acres that were passed into public ownership, and personally purchased more than 30 properties to ensure their protection from development.

Sadly, in 2004 she was diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, but like any true champion, her dedication did not fade. Nancy made one final trip to the Gorge in August with close friends. I am sure that she was thinking that no matter how much you do in your lifetime you always want it to carry on for others to learn from and enjoy.

Madam Speaker, the Columbia River Gorge continues to see threats from unwanted development, but I know that the organization she founded, and the strength and spirit that Nancy Russell left us all with is the strength and spirit to not budge an inch on our commitment to the protection of the crown jewel of Oregon's natural heritage. That commitment is what I want to commemorate today, Madam Speaker, and that commitment is what I will continue to draw strength from in my fight to protect the Columbia River Gorge.

INTRODUCING HAITIAN PROTECTION ACT OF 2009

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Haitian Protection Act of 2009. This important piece of legislation would designate Haitian nationals as eligible for Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

The creation of TPS was intended to serve as the statutory embodiment of safe haven for those who are fleeing—or reluctant to return to—a potentially dangerous situation in their country of origin.

According to section 244(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990, TPS may be granted when: there is ongoing armed conflict posing a serious threat to personal safety; it is requested by a foreign state that temporarily cannot handle the return of nationals due to environmental disaster; or extraordinary and temporary conditions in a foreign state exist which prevent aliens from returning.

Haiti has continued to meet all three of these requirements, and yet, not once have Haitian nationals been granted TPS.

Last year, I, along with several of my colleagues, wrote on several occasions to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the President of the United States urging them to grant Haiti TPS.

Sadly, just today, the Miami Herald reported that Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff recently wrote to Haitian President René Prével formally denying his request for TPS. In his letter, Secretary Chertoff stated that "After very careful consideration, I have

concluded that Haiti does not currently warrant a TPS designation."

Madam Speaker, this response came as an utter shock. This past summer, only a few months after deadly food riots led to the removal of the country's Prime Minister, Haiti was ravaged by four back-to-back natural disasters. Thousands lost their homes, many were left starving and isolated from humanitarian assistance, nearly 800 lives were taken, and as of last month, over 300 people remain missing.

Though recovery efforts have slowly commenced, much of Haiti remains in a state of destruction. Up to 40,000 people are in shelters, and severe malnutrition concerns have arisen throughout rural areas.

How dire must the situation in Haiti become before the United States is willing to extend this helping hand to Haiti as it has done for other nations under similar circumstances?

The Haitian government's ability to provide basic governmental services—clean water, education, passable roads and basic healthcare—remains severely compromised by these natural disasters. Repatriating Haitians at this time imposes an additional burden on government resources that are already stretched too thin and poses a serious danger to deportees' personal safety.

Concerning stability and overall safety, Haiti is still in dire need of an adequate policing force to maintain order and halt the escalation in kidnappings that are plaguing the nation.

As of April 2008, the Department of State's current travel warning advises Americans that current conditions in Haiti make it unsafe to travel due to the potential for looting, the possibility of random violent crime, and the serious threat of kidnapping for ransom.

Madam Speaker, if it is unsafe for our citizens to travel to Haiti, then those same conditions should make it much too dangerous and inappropriate to forcibly repatriate Haitians at this time. It is unfortunate and appalling that our current immigration policies hold such harmful double standards.

I want to make it very clear that I acknowledge and heartily congratulate Haiti's efforts toward recovery and to a stable democratic government. However, President Prével's nascent democratic government still faces immense challenges with regards to rebuilding Haiti's police and judicial institutions to achieve the fair and prompt tackling of the ongoing political and criminal violence.

In addition to safety and human rights considerations, halting the deportation of Haitians is also an economic matter.

Under the law, TPS beneficiaries are eligible to obtain work authorization permits. The ability for Haitian nationals to legally work in the United States puts them in a position to contribute to their country's recovery and development until such time when it is safe for them to return to Haiti.

Madam Speaker, the Haitian Diaspora has always played a pivotal role in assisting Haiti. It is widely known that Haitians residing in the United States often work three jobs to send money back to Haiti each month. Many Haitians in the United States often send remittances to support family members, and others travel home to lend their expertise toward rebuilding and humanitarian efforts.

Designating Haiti under TPS status would preserve and increase remittances—totaling approximately a third of Haiti's GDP—from the

Haitian Diaspora to relatives and communities in Haiti that are key for welfare, survival, and recovery.

Haiti is more dependent than any other country on remittances with nearly a billion dollars a year sent home by Haitians in the United States. In fact, remittances to Haiti far exceed foreign aid.

Now, many Haitian nationals in the United States who previously sustained relatives in Haiti through remittances are being deported, further depriving Haiti of an important source of financial aid that is well-positioned to assist when based here in the United States.

Madam Speaker, there are currently six countries that are protected under the TPS provision: Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Burundi, Somalia, and Sudan. By refusing to give Haiti the TPS designation, our inequitable immigration policies continue to send the message that the safety of Haitian lives is not a priority compared to that of Salvadoran, Honduran, or Sudanese lives.

We must act to change this perception. Our immigration policies have to change. They must reflect fairness and treat Haitians equally to Nicaraguans, Hondurans, and Salvadorans whose deportations are suspended and who are allowed to work and support their families back home.

The Haitian Protection Act of 2009 is necessary to achieve fundamental fairness in our treatment of Haitian immigrants and remedy the accurate and widespread perception that U.S. policy has discriminated against them.

Madam Speaker, we cannot deny Haiti this opportunity to help stabilize its economy, recover from devastating natural disasters, rebuild its political and economic institutions, and provide a future of hope for Haiti's people.

I ask my colleagues to support this legislation and urge the House Leadership to bring it swiftly to the House floor for consideration.

TRIBUTE TO MRS. ADA MCKINNEY DEVEAUX

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to the life and legacy of the late Mrs. Ada McKinney DeVeaux, a Miami native who was known for her contagious spiritual, humorous, and endearing personality. It is with both profound sadness, but also an enduring sense of gratitude for the tremendous inspiration she provided to the South Florida community.

Mrs. McKinney DeVeaux was born to Edmund Sr. and Mary Edwards McKinney on September 2, 1931 in Miami, Florida. One of the distinguished members of Booker T. Washington Senior High's Class of 1949 or the "fantastic 49-ers", she went on to obtain her Bachelor of Science degree and a degree in Registered Nursing from Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University. Mrs. McKinney DeVeaux was united in Holy Matrimony to the late Father Richard DeVeaux.

A dedicated registered nurse for 42 years, Mrs. McKinney DeVeaux distinguished herself in a number of professional appointments throughout her nursing career. She served the community at the Dade County Health Department's Overtown office, Jackson Memorial