



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1094-2011, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1094

Resolution urging the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2011, which would grant permanent residency to qualifying Liberian nationals who have been continuously present in the United States for a certain defined period of time, or are the spouse, child, or unmarried son or daughter of such an individual.

By Council Members Dromm, Rose, Brewer, Dickens, Eugene, Gentile, Jackson, James, Koppell, Lander, Mendez, Palma, Vann, Williams and Mark-Viverito

Whereas, On March 28, 2011, Senator Jack Reed and Representative Keith Ellison introduced the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2011 (S. 656/H.R. 1293), a bill that would provide benefits to certain Liberian immigrants; and

Whereas, This legislation would provide the population of Liberian immigrants who are legally present in the United States and contributing members of their communities with a pathway to obtain permanent residency in the United States; and

Whereas, A brutal civil war in Liberia in the 1990s killed over 150,000 people and forced more than half of the population to become internally displaced or flee the country, in most instances to the United States; and

Whereas, In 1991, these Liberian refugees in the United States depended on the short-term provision of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), a temporary immigration status granted to certain undocumented immigrants who cannot return to their home country due to ongoing conflict, the temporary effects of an environmental disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions; such immigrants may not be removed from the United States during the period in which such status is in effect; and

Whereas, Upon the expiration of TPS designation for Liberia in September 2007, President George W. Bush directed that Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) be provided to Liberians in the United States; and

Whereas, According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, DED is not an immigration status, but allows qualified individuals to remain in the United States for limited periods of time according to a presidential directive; and

Whereas, On August 16, 2010, President Obama signed a memorandum extending DED to Liberian nationals through March 31, 2013, which will only provide temporary work authorization but will not provide a pathway to obtain lawful permanent residency; and

Whereas, According to the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), a nonprofit agency serving refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers, detainees and other migrants through resettlement, advocacy and social ministry, the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act, if enacted, will prevent the deportation of thousands of Liberians, who have been living in the United States for over twenty years, have developed roots in their communities, started families, and have made significant economic and cultural contributions to New York City and to the United States; and

Whereas, If enacted, this Act would finally settle the status of Liberian refugees in the United States; and

Whereas, According to LIRS, this Act would prevent families from making the painful decision of either leaving American-born children behind or bringing them to an unstable country; and

Whereas, The Liberian community is vital to the strength and well-being of New York City, particularly in Staten Island; and

Whereas, According to the Staten Island Foundation, Staten Island has the largest community of

Liberians living outside of Liberia; and

Whereas; Clifton is a neighborhood northeast of Staten Island which has been commonly known as “Little Liberia” because of its large population of Liberian residents, restaurants and supermarkets; and

Whereas, New York City has long been a refuge and safe harbor for people fleeing unstable conditions in their home countries and seeking better opportunities for themselves and their families, and this Act would continue this worthy tradition of protection and supporting vulnerable populations and giving them new hope; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2011, which would grant permanent residency to qualifying Liberian nationals who have been continuously present in the United States for a certain defined period of time, or are the spouse, child, or unmarried son or daughter of such an individual.

JSM
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