

May 17, 2018

ABOUT

Federal Action Threatens Safety of Thousands of Virginians from Honduras

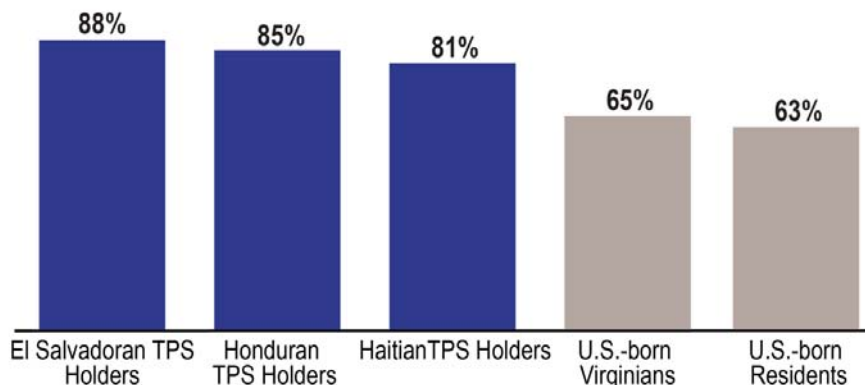
On May 4, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security made a cruel, shortsighted and dangerous decision to terminate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Hondurans at the start of 2020, meaning that they will have to leave the country voluntarily, somehow gain an alternative immigration status quickly, or be subject to deportation when their status expires.

TPS was created by Congress in 1990 with bipartisan support to protect vulnerable immigrant populations during events like civil wars and natural disasters. It has provided eligible foreign-born individuals who are not able to return home safely with a legal status to remain in the United States.

Virginians have a lot at stake if Honduran TPS holders and TPS holders from other countries were to leave. Honduran TPS holders have an estimated 2,000 U.S.-born children in Virginia and contribute \$112.5 million annually to Virginia's GDP. TPS holders from Honduras are much more likely to participate in the labor force than other residents – which is vitally important as Virginia's labor force participation rate mostly lagged over the past decade.

TPS Holders Boost the Labor Force

TPS holders from Haiti, Honduras and El Salvador are significantly more likely to participate in the labor force in the U.S. than U.S.-born Virginians or U.S.-born residents.



Source: American Community Survey, 2016 and Center for Migration Studies of New York, 2017

Many Honduran TPS holders came to the U.S. after a hurricane in 1998 devastated much of the country. Today, there are 57,000 Hondurans nationally and 2,000 in Virginia that are at risk of being sent back to a country that remains highly unstable – rife with deep poverty (above 60 percent), political unrest, food shortages, a severe



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three year drought, high unemployment (above 50 percent), gang violence and the second highest murder rate in the world (El Salvador has the highest and also has had its TPS status set for termination in September, 2019 – as we wrote about earlier).

Many TPS Families Live in Virginia



Source: Center for American Progress, 2017

Regardless of how unstable many TPS countries remain, the Department of Homeland Security has now set termination dates for the majority of TPS holding residents currently living in the U.S. A group of more than 600 faith leaders and organizations penned a letter to Secretary Nielson of the Department of Homeland Security calling her decision to end TPS for Hondurans “unconscionable... given the conditions.”

There are now multiple initiatives in Congress to provide certain TPS holders with a path to citizenship, but none have picked up significant traction thus far.

While Honduran TPS holders have met many of the requirements for lawful permanent residency and the vast majority are employed, paying taxes, and are integrating well into U.S. communities – taking out mortgages, volunteering and raising children (many of whom are U.S. citizens) – there is no path for them to gain permanent residency. The Safe Environment from Countries Under Repression and Emergency Act (SECURE) and American Promise Act of 2017 both present opportunities for TPS holders and family members to gain permanent resident status and eventually obtain citizenship. Neither of these bills would fully protect all TPS holders from deportation back to unsafe or potentially unstable living situations, but these are steps in the right direction and deserve serious consideration from our Virginia Congressional members.

– Chad Stewart, Research & Planning Analyst



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