



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/SDWP

September 25, 2006

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I urge your strong support for key provisions of H.R. 6142 that will stimulate economic growth and combat poverty in Haiti. This important legislation is part of our moral imperative to care for the least among us and reflects the deep-rooted humanitarian concerns of the American people. It also offers a meaningful path for many vulnerable people in Haiti to become true partners in their own future.

In H.R. 6142, USCCB wishes to draw your attention to Part III, the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act of 2006. In light of my personal experience working with the Haitian immigrant community in Florida, and my many visits to Haiti, I would like to offer some insight into the importance of offering preferential access to Haitian exports contained in H.R. 6142.

During my most recent visit to Haiti, I listened to many voices concerned about securing Haiti's progress on the path of stability and reconstruction. There are reports of improved security and a commitment to tackle the stubborn violence that plagues Haiti's people. The United States continues to be a key partner in promoting peaceful initiatives aimed at stemming the violence and promoting an atmosphere of trust and opportunity for all Haitians.

Haiti is at a critical point on its path of reform. President Préval has taken bold steps in this direction and merits our support. Efforts are being undertaken to combat drug transshipment, lawlessness and violent crime. These initiatives are essential if Haiti is to avoid becoming a stubborn failed state, located a couple of hundred miles from the US mainland. Generating employment in Haiti is essential to this process of reform and development. The HOPE Act contained in H.R. 6142 will help this happen.

As Haiti continues to rebuild essential services, democratic institutions and effective law enforcement, those communities that know only daily violence and fear need meaningful opportunities to build a different future for themselves and their children. The HOPE Act contained in H.R. 6142 will offer important investment incentives for the one remaining sector that can offer employment opportunities for Haiti's poor. These opportunities are vital in helping Haitians battle instability and build a hopeful future. They merit your full support.

With on-going esteem for your efforts on behalf of the least among us, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski

Bishop of Orlando

Chairman, Committee on International Policy