



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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February 24, 2006

The Honorable William M. Thomas
Chairman, Ways and Means Committee
Room 1102 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

FAX: 202-225-2610

Dear Chairman Thomas,

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to commend you, Ranking Member Charles Rangel and Trade Subcommittee Chairman Clay Shaw for your efforts in crafting legislation to provide preferential trade treatment for the poorest country in the hemisphere, the Republic of Haiti. We ask for your support in introducing and securing passage of meaningful trade preference legislation for Haiti as soon as practicable.

Last week, the Haitian people took important electoral steps toward a more open and democratic society. In light of this significant development, we believe enacting meaningful trade legislation will offer Haiti genuine hope for economic recovery and political stability. Progress on the political front can be secured only if there is genuine progress in achieving a decent living for the masses of the Haitian people. And this in turn depends heavily on foreign investment so that the once vibrant apparel industry might return.

We were encouraged last year with efforts in both houses to provide for some trade preference legislation for Haiti. However, we were disappointed that the first session of the 109th Congress ended without any of the bills being brought forward for floor consideration. We earnestly hope for a different outcome this spring.

The Haitian bishops tell us that their people are longing for the opportunity to work and to build a solid future for themselves and their children. During a visit last summer, I spoke with many Haitians concerned with their countries' long-term political and economic recovery, including leaders in the business community, the interim Prime Minister, members of the *Conseil des Sages* and representatives of the principal political parties. All agreed that support for the struggling apparel industry is essential for the Haitian economy to grow.

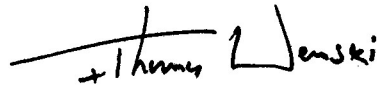
Over these past few years, the people of Haiti have had to endure extraordinary civil unrest and violence. They have suffered as well the devastation of torrential rains and hurricanes. As a new government will shortly be installed, I hope that Congressional initiatives that offer trade preferences for Haiti will bring real encouragement to the long-suffering Haitian people.

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We look forward to working with you in the future to explore further measures that offer the hope for the long-term stability that Haiti's people so desperately need and truly deserve.

With thanks for your leadership in this matter and with best personal wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T" and "W".

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International
Policy

cc: Representative Charles B. Rangel
Representative E. Clay Shaw, Jr.