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# Members of U.S. Congress Pledge Support for Liberia in Fight Against Ebola

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Washington, D.C. – September 11, 2014: Several Members of the United States Congress have assured that the United States will stand by Liberia in the fight to combat the Ebola epidemic. In separate remarks at the Liberian National Immigration Conference held at the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., on September 10, 2014, various members of the United States Congress in attendance assured that the U.S. would be fully involved in the effort to contain the Ebola epidemic and bring relief to the people in Liberia and other parts of Africa affected by the deadly disease. Held under the auspices of Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr., of New Jersey, the Liberian National Immigration Conference was intended to highlight the need for an immediate extension of the Deferred Enforcement Departure (DED) for several thousand Liberians residing in the United States. According to a dispatch from the Liberian Embassy in Washington, among the high-profile personalities at the well-attended conference were Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas, Congresswoman Karen Bass of California, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee also of California. The Members of Congress at the event, who have been strong advocates for Liberia and Africa over the years, pledged that they will continue to advocate for immigration reforms that will grant permanent residence status to several thousands of Liberians currently on DED in the United States. Other highlights of the conference, packed with Liberians of diverse background, included the following presentations: Alan Atkinson, Acting Chief of the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) Office of Legislative Affairs, briefed the conference on “Ebola Outbreak-related Immigration Relief Measures for countries affected by the Ebola Virus,” while Wade Warren, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), who is Co-Chair of USAID’s Ebola Task Force, also briefed attendees on “Ebola Response Management Efforts in Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, And Nigeria.” Dr. Margaret Stevens, Director of Essex County College Urban Issues Institute in New Jersey, briefed the conference on how young people can be used in their colleges and communities as a vehicle for an effective awareness campaign to inform and educate the general public about issues, for example, the Ebola epidemic. For his part, Liberia’s Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Jeremiah C. Sulunteh, underscored the danger of the Ebola epidemic, which threatens the existence of Liberia as a nation state. Ambassador Sulunteh lauded efforts of the United States and the international community in coming to the aid of Liberia and other West African countries affected by the virus. He, however, noted that more needed to be done in the fight to contain the disease, which is causing havoc in Liberia and other parts of West Africa affected by the disease. Ambassador Sulunteh joined in the appeal to the U.S. Government for the passage of necessary laws that would make Liberians on DED eligible for permanent residence status. In March 2013, U.S. President Barak Obama extended DED for Liberians for an additional 18 months, after a similar conference co-chaired by Congressman Donald Payne and Ambassador Sulunteh. The



**Congressman Donald S. Payne Jr**

DED will expire on September 30, 2014. Members of the Liberian communities in New Jersey, Rhode Island and the Liberian Pastors Association were involved in organizing the conference, which was attended by friends of Liberia and representatives of the Sierra Leonean Association in the United States, among others. Below are some pictures from the event. point mouse over picture to see description.

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