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[Home](#) > Liberians Called Upon to Organize Immigration Outreach Programs Across the US

Liberians Called Upon to Organize Immigration Outreach Programs Across the US

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Washington, D.C. – 3-18-17: In the wake of reports of fear and confusion within the immigrant and refugee communities in the United States due to immigration policies being pursued by the new U.S. government, Liberian community organizations in the US have been called upon to organize immigration outreach programs to inform, educate and assist fellow Liberians who are seeking to regularize their American immigration status.

The need for Liberians in the US to organize and seek their collective interests in dealing with the immigration challenges was expressed by Hon. Gabriel I H Williams, Minister Counselor for Press and Public Affairs at the Embassy of Liberia, when the Mayor of the City of Brooklyn Park,

Minnesota, Jeffrey Lunde, and City Councilmember Susan Pha, paid a courtesy call at the Embassy of Liberia near Washington, D.C. on March 13, 2017.



According to a dispatch from the Liberian Embassy, the Mayor and Councilmember said they were in Washington to meet with relevant Members of the U.S. Congress and officials of the new Trump administration to advocate for issues related to Brooklyn Park, including challenges facing the large immigrant community of their city.

Mayor Lunde and Councilmember Pha said they decided to use the opportunity of their visit to Washington to pay a courtesy call at the Liberian Embassy for consultation, in the wake of fear, anxiety, and confusion within the immigrant community of the City of Brooklyn Park, of which Liberians constitute a large number.

The Mayor indicated that given the large immigrant and refugee populations of Brooklyn Park, the city authorities have decided to take a proactive approach in dealing with the new challenges facing the immigrant community by working collaboratively with those that have been affected.

Welcoming the city officials, Hon. Williams, who is temporarily serving as Charge' d'Affaires at the Embassy of Liberia, appealed to Liberian individuals and groups, as well as friends of Liberia and the Liberian communities across the U.S. to lobby their local, state and federal government officials, noting that there is strength in number and much can be achieved through proper organization.

Hon. Williams assured that the Liberian Government will continue to explore every avenue, in keeping with the spirit of the special historical relations subsisting between both countries, to advance the interest of Liberia, including seeking the respective extension of the Deferred Enforcement Departure (DED) and the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) that have benefitted many Liberians residing in the U.S. The Liberian diplomat recalled that during visits of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to the United States, the President has always discussed the

issue of Liberians on DED, TPS and those awaiting deportation with relevant U.S. officials, which is a manifestation of the government's effort to seek the welfare of this segment of the Liberian population in the Diaspora.

Mr. Williams recalled that President Sirleaf has always been keen to highlight the significant role Liberians in the Diaspora, especially in the US, are playing in the reconstruction of Liberia and support of families back home through their remittances that have amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars. He added that the President recognizes that the wellbeing of Liberians in the Diaspora is equally as important as the welfare of the people in Liberia.

Hon. Williams also highlighted some of the initiatives the Embassy has undertaken in recent years, including participation in a number of immigration-related Congressional hearings and conferences, among other advocacy initiatives that resulted to successful extension of the DED and TPS.

On September 28, 2016, President Barak Obama announced an extension of the DED, which benefits approximately 3,600 eligible Liberians living in the US through March 31, 2018. On September 22, 2016, the Obama administration also extended the TPS benefits for an additional six months. The TPS termination will become effective May 21, 2017. The DED covers Liberians who came to the US during the Liberian civil war, while the TPS covers Liberians who came to the US during the Ebola epidemic in Liberia.

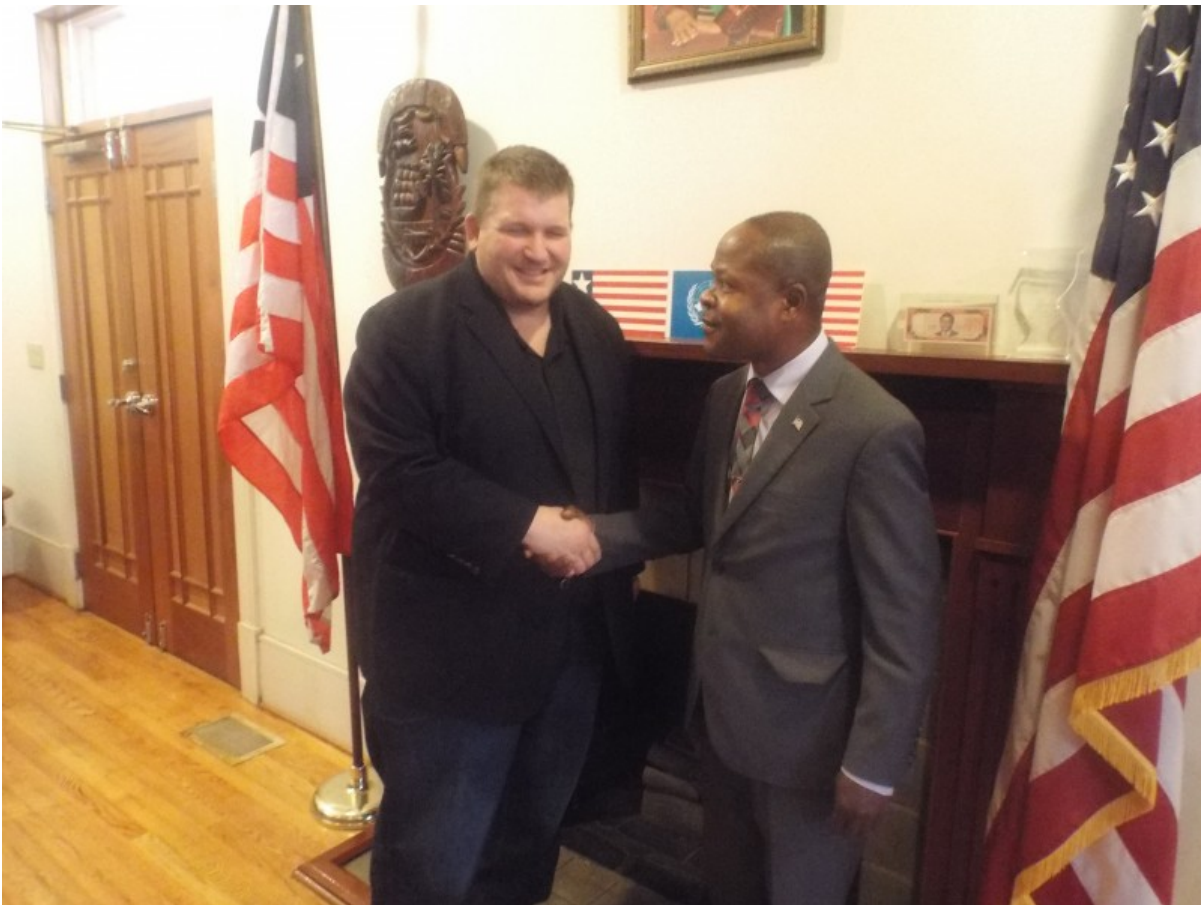
Hon. Williams noted that just as Liberians in the US along with friends and partners of Liberia came together and pulled their resources to help save Liberia during the Ebola epidemic, it is his hoped that a similar sense of togetherness and purpose would be harnessed by the Liberian community to address prevailing immigration challenges.

Mr. Williams lauded Congressman Donald Payne, Jr. of New Jersey and other Members of the US Congress, who have over the years championed the cause of Liberian immigrants at the U.S. Congress. Hon. Williams also praised the Mayor and leadership of the City of Brooklyn Park for the strong support to the immigrant population of the city, especially the Liberian community. He welcomed initiatives by the city to constructively engage and assist the Liberian and other immigrant communities in the city.

The City of Brooklyn Park has a sister-city relationship with Kakata, capital of Margibi County, Liberia. In 2013, Mayor Lunde led a delegation from Brooklyn Park to Kakata, which has benefitted from a fire truck donated by Brooklyn Park, among others.

Officials of the Embassy of Liberia at the meeting included Minister Counsellor for Economic Affairs Famatta Deline, Counselor for Immigration Affairs Nyanda Davies, and First Secretary for Financial Affairs, Doliakeh Quoimie.

Meanwhile, Liberians across the US have been called upon to contact the Embassy whenever they encounter problems that require the Embassy's intervention.



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