



For Immediate Release

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National Coalition to Launch Campaign for Permanent Residency for Central American Immigrants in Washington, DC

Washington, DC, March 29th, 2012 – On Monday, April 2nd, at 10:00 AM CARECEN DC and its allies, representatives of community, religious, labor, and civil rights groups from around the U.S. will hold a press conference to announce the campaign seeking permanent residency for the approximately 270,000 Central Americans living in the United States under Temporary Protected Status (TPS). CARECEN is leading the local efforts of this national campaign and continues its work/mission of the past three decades of seeking justice and fair treatment for Central Americans who have left their countries of origin which have been ravaged by civil wars and natural disasters.

Our campaign beneficiaries are exemplary immigrants who came to the United States in search of a safe haven, have legally lived and worked here for more than a decade, but continue to be under a temporary and unstable immigration status. They have paid fees to the government to maintain their status, paid taxes, demonstrated that they are persons of good moral character by undergoing criminal background checks each time they have renewed their status, have done everything else required by the law, and most importantly, have come forward to register into conditional programs when the US government gave the opportunity to those who were undocumented to gain temporary status. Our coalition firmly believes that they have earned the opportunity to become permanent residents of the United States.

Although the TPS program has offered relief in times of uncertainty, the temporary nature has kept people in an indefinite limbo that has affected their ability to integrate into U.S. society, and has undermined the stability of their families. In the last decade, they have established deep roots and have enriched our communities. They are dedicated workers, who pay taxes and have made important economic contributions to this country. They are owners of homes and businesses, workers in the construction and service industries, community leaders and activists, and extraordinary students, with a strong desire to help secure a better future for their families and communities. They are maintaining their families in their countries of origin through remittances. They are the spouses and parents of American citizens, who each day fear separation from their family if this program ends. Finally, they have not visited their families in their countries of origin in more than a decade because traveling outside the U.S. might put them in serious jeopardy.

Currently, this group consists of approximately 64,000 Hondurans, 200,000 Salvadorans, and 3,000 Nicaraguans. Very recently, they have all had to renew their TPS status for another 18 months. The Secretary of Homeland Security determined the extension was justified because the conditions that prompted the original designations remain poor and are unfit for mass returns of their nationals.

Since comprehensive immigration reform seems unlikely in the near future, and the current administration has taken a slow and fragmented approach to change the broken immigration system, community organizations from across the country have formed this coalition and have been launching the campaign in various cities throughout the U.S.. The coalition will advocate for legislative action for a common purpose. "Permanent residency is the only viable solution to ensure progress for our families, communities and nation, and to end the uncertainty that these thousands of families are living every day," said Raquel Guerricagoitia, Executive Director of CARECEN.

The coalition will hold a press conference on Monday, April 2nd at 10:00 AM at CARECEN, located at 1460 Columbia Road, NW Suite C1, Washington, DC 20009.

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