

## **Central American Organizations throughout the U.S. Launch Campaign to Push for Permanent Residency for Central Americans with Temporary Protected Status in the U.S.**

Houston, TX, January 26, 2012- On Monday, January 30<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 AM at the Mickey Leland Federal Building in Houston, Texas, community, religious, labor, and civil rights representatives from all around the country held a press conference to announce a campaign to push for Permanent Residency for the approximately 300,000 Central Americans with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in the U.S.

Nearly 14 years ago, Central America was hit with several devastating natural disasters which had a significant impact on entire communities throughout the region and led to hundreds of thousands of Central American families establishing roots in the United States. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch, one of the deadliest hurricanes in Central American history, ravaged Honduras and Nicaragua and resulted in the loss and displacement of thousands, as well as a collapse in the physical infrastructure. Due to this devastation, TPS was designated to both countries in 1999.

The 2001 earthquakes in El Salvador resulted in the loss of over 1,000 lives and resulted in the displacement of thousands more, in addition to extensive destruction of the physical infrastructure and severe damage to the country's economy. Reconstruction efforts have been slowed and hindered by subsequent Hurricanes, including Stan (2005), Felix (2007), Ida (2009), and most recently, Tropical Rain E12 (2011). Consequently, Salvadorans who were granted TPS status in 2001, continue to fall under this status.

Very recently, all of the countries were extended their designation for Temporary Protected Status for another 18 months. The Secretary of Homeland Security determined that an extension is warranted because the conditions that prompted the initial designation of TPS continue to be met, in particular inadequate or fragile infrastructure and weak economies which at this moment would be unable to adequately handle the return of its nationals from the U.S.

TPS has allowed its beneficiaries to remain in the U.S. since then with mandatory renewal every 18 months to maintain this status. The costs associated with this renovation are high and burdensome for many families. Thousands of families who have lived here nearly a decade or more are in a state of limbo, because they do not know what could happen to them after the 18 month period that their status is valid. The only way to secure a more stable and safe future for them is to enable them to become Permanent Residents and which will consequently, put them on the path to U.S. Citizenship. Currently, TPS beneficiaries from Central America include: approximately 64,000 Hondurans, 212,000 Salvadorans, and 3,000 Nicaraguans.

As a comprehensive immigration reform is not foreseeable in the near future and the current administration has adopted a step-by-step approach in tackling the broken and confusing immigration system, community organizations from all throughout the country have formed a coalition and are launching a campaign to promote Permanent Residency for TPS holders from Central America. We are here, as TPS beneficiaries and supporters, to advocate for legislative action that will allow them to stay in the U.S. as permanent residents. TPS, an important yet flawed immigration benefit, is not the path towards self-sufficient, stable immigrant communities. Permanent Residency is the only solution to ensure the progress of our families, communities, and nation, and end the uncertainty that these thousands of families are living every day.

We must come together to support vibrant futures for families that have not only contributed to our national economy, but have been a critical and positive force in the reconstruction of their home countries by sending

remittances to family members. TPS holders are productive members of our society with the same dreams and hopes as many of us, and have worked very hard to provide for their families, buy their first home here in the U.S., or open their own business. Every 18 months during the renovation process, they have gone through background checks and have proved that they are law-abiding and of good moral character and that they pay their income taxes every year.

The coalition held a press conference on Monday, January 30<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am in the Mickey Leland Federal Building in Houston, Texas, located at 1919 Smith Street. The press conference announced the launch of this campaign and will invite our TPS community, legislators, community organizations and activists, congregations, unions, and all those who support a fair and viable solution for immigrant families in the U.S. to participate and support this initiative.

The campaign is a joint effort of the following organizations:

The Share Foundation (Berkley, CA), Causa Oregon (Salem, OR), CARECEN-DC, CRECEN-Houston, CARECEN-LA, Centro Romero (Chicago, IL), Sunflower Community Action (Wichita, KS), East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (Berkley, CA), CEUS (Union City, NJ), Centro Hispano Cuzcatlan (Jamaica, NY), America para Todos (Houston, TX), Voluntarios por El Salvador (Houston, TX), Comité Amigos en Acción (Houston, TX), Comites de Oriundos Salvadoreños (Houston, TX), Centro Cívico Salvadoreño (Dallas, TX), Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights(ICIRR), North Carolina Latin American Coalition (Charlotte, NC), SALEF (Los Angeles, CA), and Immigrant Rights Program (Newark,NJ).