

## 1,000 Liberian refugees under deferred enforced departure status

Written by

Wednesday, 06 April 2011 16:08

---

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Al Franken (D-MN), and Jack Reed (D-RI), along with five other senators, have introduced legislation that would allow Liberians who have been residing in the United States legally under Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) status to apply for permanent residency. More than 30,000 Liberians reside in Minnesota, and an estimated 1,000 are currently living under DED status as refugees from a devastating civil war in Liberia.

“Liberians are our neighbors, our co-workers, and an important part of our communities,” Klobuchar said. “Many Liberians have made a home in our country, and we should help ensure that those who are here legally can continue to call Minnesota home.”

“Minnesota has been home to one of the country’s biggest Liberian communities for more than two decades,” said Sen. Franken. “It’s simply unfair to send more than 1,000 Liberians who for years have legally lived in Minnesota back to a country still facing many challenges.”

In 1989, a civil war in Liberia displaced over half the country’s population, and many Liberians sought refuge in the United States. Since 1991, these refugees have been granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or DED status by both Democratic and Republican administrations.

In 2006, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced the termination of TPS for Liberians. President Obama has extended DED for Liberians, but it is set to expire on September 30, 2011.

Last year, Klobuchar and Franken sent a letter to the President and helped lead the successful effort to extend DED for Liberians. Eliminating DED status and not allowing Liberians to apply for permanent residence status would force thousands of Liberian refugees to return to Liberia and could easily overwhelm and reverse the advances that Liberia has made in recent years.

Senators John Kerry (D-MA), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Ben Cardin (D-MD), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) also cosponsored the bill.