



The Episcopal Church



## Call Today: Urge Congress to Support Haiti Trade Preferences

December 5, 2006

### TAKE ACTION NOW!

Call and fax your Senators and Representative TODAY urging passage of trade preference legislation for Haiti before the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourns. Trade preferences for Haiti, as defined in the *Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act of 2006*, are vital for a strong Haitian economy that will allow the people of Haiti to lift themselves out of crippling poverty and ensure political stability.

Visit the Action Center to contact your Member about Haiti today (<http://actioncenter.crs.org>)

When you call the Washington office of your elected officials, you will speak to a staff assistant who is responsible for recording the issues constituents call about, which helps to inform the Senator/Representative on how to vote on particular issues that come before the Congress. Making a call is simple and will only take a few minutes. It is important that you call your Representative in the House as well as both of your Senators today.

Dial 1-800-711-0053 which will connect you to the Capital switch board. Ask to be connected to your Member's office. Got to <http://actioncenter.crs.org> to insert your zip code and receive a complete list of your Representative and your Senators.

### Basic Call Script:

**Staff Assistant:** Good morning/afternoon, Representative/Senator X office, how may I help you?

**YOU:** Hello, my name is XX and I am calling from [city]. As a person of faith, I am calling to urge Representative/Senator X to support passage this week of trade preferences for Haiti. Specifically, I support the trade preferences included in the HOPE Act of 2006 (H.R. 6142). Trade preferences will help Haiti rebuild its economy and help the people of Haiti lift themselves out of poverty. Does Representative/Senator X support trade preferences for Haiti?

**Staff Assistant:** [Three potential scenarios]:

1) **Staff Assistant:** "Yes, he /she does support trade preferences for Haiti"

**YOU:** Great, please urge him/her to ensure that the preferences are passed in legislation this week.

2) **Staff Assistant:** "No, he/she does not support trade preferences for Haiti"

**YOU:** Please let him/her know that his/her constituents support this initiative and I would appreciate a letter explaining Representative/Senator X position in detail.

3) **Staff Assistant:** Representative/Senator X has not taken a public position on this issue, but I will be sure to inform him/her of your support.

**YOU:** Okay, thank you. I would appreciate you communicating my support to him/her for passing Haiti trade preferences this week. I would also appreciate a written response.

**Staff Assistant:** Ok, thank you for calling and I'll be sure to let Representative/Senator X know of your support for this issue.

**YOU:** Thank you. Goodbye.

**WHY THIS ISSUE IS IMPORTANT:** As communities of faith, we have urged Congress to pass trade preferences for Haiti. Our advocacy efforts have now reached a critical stage. See <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/20061031Ecumenicalhaitiltr.pdf>. See also <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/20061013Tradepreferenceshaiti3aa.pdf>

Trade preferences, as defined in the *Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act of 2006* will attract investment in Haiti and create jobs for thousands of Haitians. While it remains unclear at this stage what a final piece of legislation will look like, it is vital that you tell your Member of Congress that you want trade preferences for Haiti to be included.

**BACKGROUND:** Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, with 80 percent of the population living in abject poverty as a result of decades of suffering in the face of political unrest and social instability. Per-capita yearly income stands at just \$440 and the inflation rate is 20 percent. More than seven in ten people are unemployed, and 55 percent of the population is illiterate. Forty-two percent of children under the age of five are malnourished, and the health-care system is inadequately equipped to address the destabilizing effects of increasing HIV/AIDS rates.

Trade preferences, as defined in the *Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act of 2006* give Haiti preferential access to the U.S. market, a critical step that will attract investment in Haiti, create jobs and help tackle Haiti's crippling poverty and instability. Stability will not take root in Haiti without economic development. Reviving the textile and apparel sector – the segment of the economy that would benefit most from the *HOPE Act* – offers the best opportunity for job creation.

A recent study by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the *HOPE Act* would have no adverse impact on US manufacturers. In fact, Haiti is an important importer of American products ranging from rice and chickens to automobiles and computers. For every dollar sent to Haiti, one dollar and thirty-four cents comes back.

**TAKE ACTION NOW!** Once again, visit the Action Center (<http://actioncenter.crs.org>) today to call and write to your Member and urge him or her to support trade preferences for Haiti.

**For more information, contact:**

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