

## Evangelical Immigration Table

Council for Christian Colleges  
and Universities

Ethics and Religious Liberty  
Commission of the Southern  
Baptist Convention

Korean Churches for  
Community Development/Faith  
and Community Empowerment

National Association of  
Evangelicals

National Hispanic Christian  
Leadership Conference

The Wesleyan Church

World Relief

January 4, 2018

Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Secretary Nielsen,

As leaders serving and representing millions of evangelical Christians through our respective denominations, churches, colleges, universities, and ministries, we are writing to respectfully ask you to extend the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation that has been granted by past administrations for nationals of El Salvador, which requires your decision to renew or terminate the status within the coming week. **We believe that reform of the TPS program is needed and warranted. Accordingly, we urge you to extend the TPS designation for El Salvador to provide Congress time to provide needed reforms to the TPS program.**

Our concern is driven by our Christian faith and our commitment to the Scriptures, which speak clearly and frequently to God's concern for those who are vulnerable, specifically including immigrants and the poor. Each of these individuals, from a biblical perspective, is endowed with inherent dignity as a person made in God's image, and each is a neighbor whom Jesus commands us to love. The Bible also teaches us that God has established families as the fundamental building block of healthy societies, and we are concerned with the separation of families that withdrawing TPS at this time would likely entail.

The roughly 200,000 individuals from El Salvador who currently are lawfully present under TPS protections each voluntarily came forward at the invitation of the federal government, passed a criminal background check (and multiple subsequent background checks with each renewal), and have demonstrated that they are economically self-sufficient, as they do not qualify for federal means-tested public benefits. They contribute significantly to our national economy, including paying roughly \$4.8 billion in Social Security and Medicare taxes over the past decade and much more as consumers, employees in critical sectors of our economy, and entrepreneurs.

These individuals are now firmly established parts of our communities, including many who are members of our local churches and students within our colleges. Most Salvadorans granted TPS have been present in the United States for twenty years or more, and they have put down roots here. Most are parents of one or more U.S. citizen children; if these parents were to be deported or simply no longer authorized to work, it would create a significant strain on these U.S. citizen children and other immediate family members—and on both public and private social support systems for which these citizen children would qualify.

Withdrawal of TPS at this time—without a long-term, legislative resolution of these individuals' situation—would also have a significant impact on the country of El Salvador, which is ill equipped to receive and integrate a large number of

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returnees. Several of our organizations operate or support ministries in Central America, and our colleagues there are deeply concerned about the impact of a withdrawal of TPS on the country as a whole, which is facing serious challenges of violence and poverty.

While El Salvador was initially designated with TPS because of a natural disaster more than 15 years ago, in recent years the country has competed with neighboring Honduras for the ignominious title of the highest civilian homicide rate of any country in the world. El Salvador also faces chronic unemployment and underemployment, dynamics that would likely be exacerbated by a sudden insertion of residents who have lived abroad for many years, harming the poorest of the poor.

When Congress created the TPS program in 1990, it was envisioned as a way for the federal government to provide safe haven on a temporary basis in situations when returning individuals to a country devastated by natural disaster or manmade violence would be inhumane. Regrettably, many of these countries remain unsafe even after many years. We are working with Congress to make needed reforms to the TPS program. The situations of long-term recipients of TPS status are complex and demand a legislative solution. We urge you to renew the TPS designation El Salvador to allow Congress to develop such a solution.

Sincerely,

Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Scott Arbeiter, President, World Relief

Shirley V. Hoogstra, President, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Hyepin Im, President & CEO, Korean Churches for Community  
Development/Faith and Community Empowerment

Jo Anne Lyon, Ambassador, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan  
Church

Russell Moore, President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern  
Baptist Convention

Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership  
Conference