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Contact: Tola Thompson
202-225-4506

MEEK LAUDS SENATE'S APPROVAL OF BILL TO HELP HAITIAN IMMIGRANTS

Representative Carrie P. Meek (D-Fl) applauded the U.S. Senate's approval today, by voice vote, a bill to give "green cards" to Haitian immigrants who were in this country prior to 1996. The Senate approved the bill as part of the fiscal year 1999 appropriations bill for Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government. The House of Representatives version of that appropriations bill, passed on July 16, has no comparable provision. The House and Senate versions of the bill must now be reconciled. Meek is a Member of the Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations.

"This vote gives hope to Haitians in Miami and around the country that they will be treated fairly by Congress. It is a major step in providing Haitian immigrants the same relief that Congress gave last fall to immigrants from Nicaragua and Cuba. I am especially pleased that the Senate expanded the scope of the original Senate bill by giving permanent residency to Haitian children," Meek said. "I will continue to urge the House of Representatives to approve this bill before Congress adjourns this fall."

The original bipartisan Senate bill, S. 1504, was introduced in November 1997 by Senator Graham (D-Fl). It gives permanent residency to Haitian immigrants who before December 31, 1995 had either filed for asylum or been paroled into the United States.

Representative Meek introduced a bill, H.R. 3033, in November 1997 which gives permanent residence to all Haitian immigrants who were in the country before December 31, 1995. Meek's bipartisan bill, which has 90 cosponsors, has been referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

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