

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Earlier this month, Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 31) and his colleagues in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus sent a letter to the president requesting that Temporary Protected Status for Salvadorans living in the United States be extended for another 18 months to March 9, 2005.

Last Thursday, July 10, the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services announced that it would grant the 18-month extension.

"This is a humanitarian act that makes economic sense," Rep. Becerra said. "It's not only cheaper than foreign aid, but it also boosts the economies of both this country and El Salvador. The dollars these migrants earn and spend here help us, while at the same time, the dollars they send in remittances help their families recover from the catastrophes of the last several years."

TPS provides nationals of countries that have been overwhelmed by national disasters or war protection from forced return to their home countries. It is provided only in cases where the return of large numbers of migrants would cause both further damage to the economic well-being of the nation and hardship to the migrants. El Salvador continues to suffer the effects of national disasters, specifically a pair of devastating earthquakes in 2001. Roughly 290,000 currently protected Salvadorans living in the United States since 2001 were facing expiration of their status as of September 9, 2003.

"It's good to see the administration has recognized that to force the return of so many people would jeopardize the recovery efforts already taken by the nation of El Salvador."

Congressman Becerra also called on the administration to improve the processing of the applications for work authorization documents by the Bureau of Customs and Immigration Services. After hearing that the process can take up to six months, Congressman Becerra said, "No business or other government agency would survive if it did business this way. TPS applicants are paying huge fees for the processing of their applications - they should not be forced to wait this long for service."