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FEATURED Q&A

Is the U.S. Right to End Temporary Protected Status?



Hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the United States face an uncertain future as the Trump administration decides on Temporary Protected Status. An immigrant rights protest outside the White House is pictured above. // File Photo: Answer Coalition.

Q The U.S. Department of Homeland Security on Nov. 6 ended Temporary Protected Status for some 2,500 Nicaraguans living in the United States, giving them until Jan. 5, 2019 to either obtain legal immigration status through a different category or leave the country. The department extended the deadline for roughly 57,000 Hondurans to July, and is still expected to decide the fate of about 195,000 Salvadoran and 46,000 Haitian TPS recipients whose legal residency under the program is set to expire early next year. Is this decision fair to the immigrant groups affected by the policy, and do they have adequate time and resources to make the proper arrangements? Are the home countries of the affected immigrants prepared to reabsorb potentially thousands of their citizens? What will be the likely decisions for the immigrant groups still under review by the Department of Homeland Security?

A Dan Stein, president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) in Washington: "Temporary Protected Status was established to allow citizens of countries affected by some unforeseen event to remain here temporarily—hence the T in TPS. It was designed to eliminate the abuse of 'mass parole.' The program and the generosity of the American people have been abused repeatedly, as beneficiaries, advocates and their own governments plead for an endless extension of TPS. In the case of Hondurans, the triggering event occurred in 1998. Beneficiaries of TPS are now posing the absurd demand that they to be allowed to remain here permanently. Having abused the program for so long, they claim that being asked to return

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Colombian Senate Approves Special Tribunals

Former rebels convicted of war crimes will be subjected to alternative sentences such as clearing landmines.

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Mexico Eyes Alternative to NAFTA 'Sunset Clause'

As the fifth round of negotiations began in Mexico City, Mexican negotiators said they would propose that NAFTA be "rigorously reviewed" every five years, rather than automatically terminated unless it is renewed.

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POLITICAL

Peru's Kuczynski Denies Consulting for Odebrecht

In a televised speech, Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski denied working as a consultant for the Brazilian construction firm, which is embroiled in a multi-country bribery scandal.

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Kuczynski // File Photo: Peruvian Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Peru's Kuczynski Denies Consulting for Odebrecht

Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in a televised address Wednesday reiterated his denial of allegations that he was previously a consultant for Brazilian construction company Odebrecht, which is enmeshed in a massive multi-country bribery scandal, Reuters reported. "I did not receive any support from

“It is fundamental that we all fight against corruption, and I am committed to that fight.”

— Pedro Pablo Kuczynski

that company in either of my two electoral campaigns,” said Kuczynski. “It is fundamental that we all fight against corruption, and I am committed to that fight.” The president’s remarks came a day after local newspaper El Comercio reported that Odebrecht hired Kuczynski a decade ago, before he took office as president. The newspaper reported that Marcelo Odebrecht, the construction firm’s jailed former chief executive officer, told Brazilian prosecutors that his company had hired Kuczynski after he served in former President Alejandro Toledo’s cabinet, and he added that the company may have funded Kuczynski’s failed 2011 campaign for president. Via Twitter, Kuczynski had earlier denied any professional links with Odebrecht and denied receiving any campaign donations from the company. A year ago, the Brazilian company acknowledged in a plea deal with U.S. prosecutors that it paid Peruvian officials \$29 million as part of a multi-country bribery scheme. It and affiliated petrochemical company Braskem agreed to pay a combined \$3.5 billion in fines to settle charges in the United States, Brazil

and Switzerland in connection with the scheme to pay \$788 million in bribes to officials in 12 countries, mainly in Latin America.

Colombian Senate Approves Tribunals to Try Former Rebels

Colombia’s Senate on Wednesday approved the creation of special tribunals to try former members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, for war crimes, Reuters reported. The tribunals were approved as part of a system of transitional justice that the FARC and President Juan Manuel Santos’ government agreed upon in the peace accord they signed a year ago, ending the country’s more than five-decade armed conflict. The transitional justice measures still must win approval in the lower house of Colombia’s Congress before they can take effect. The lower chamber is expected to vote on the legislation next week. The special courts created in the system will mete out sentences such as landmine removal for former guerrillas who are convicted of war crimes. The peace accords between the



Santos // File Photo: Colombian Government.

government and the FARC spare rebels who are convicted from serving their sentences in traditional prisons. The transitional justice system can also apply to members of the military as well as civilians who gave funding to illegal armed groups, such as paramilitaries. Colombia’s Congress has until the end of this month to approve the measures in a fast-track system that is intended to reduce the number of debates involved in the legislation’s passage in an effort to implement the peace accords as soon as possible.

NEWS BRIEFS

Former Argentine Soccer Official Commits Suicide Following Bribe Allegation

Jorge Delhon, a former Argentine soccer official who was accused Tuesday in a U.S. court of taking bribes, committed suicide by throwing himself under a train in a Buenos Aires suburb, La Nación reported. Sports marketing executive Alejandro Burzaco testified that he paid Delhon and another Argentine official bribes in exchange for soccer broadcast rights between 2011 and 2014.

Mexico Proposing Alternative to NAFTA ‘Sunset Clause’

Mexican negotiators on Wednesday said they will propose that the North American Free Trade Agreement be “rigorously reviewed” every five years rather than the U.S. demand for a “sunset clause,” essentially an automatic expiration, Reuters reported. Officials are in the fifth round of talks between the United States, Canada and Mexico to update the pact. For the first time since the talks started earlier this year, the trade ministers this week decided not to participate directly in the NAFTA meetings “so negotiators can continue to make important progress on key chapters,” the three governments said.

Volkswagen to Unveil New Compact Sedan in São Paulo

Volkswagen is aiming to grow larger than rivals Fiat and Chevrolet in Brazil within the next five years, Reuters reported Wednesday. The German automaker announced it will unveil its new “Virtus” compact sedan in São Paulo today, a move that follows other recent new product launches. VW aims to introduce 20 new models in South America by 2020, when it wants to be profitable again in the region, according to the report.

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home would represent a hardship. These pleas are being aided by their own governments that, shamefully, prefer the remittances TPS recipients send home to the return of their own citizens. Conditions in the home countries may not be ideal, but frankly, they never were. The immediate crises have long since passed and, for the most part, the home countries are no worse off today than they were before the triggering events. The fierce resistance to terminating TPS demonstrates the urgent need to either reform the program or abolish it. Endless demands for extensions and, ultimately, permanent status represents bad faith on the part of beneficiaries. If the American people do not have the assurance that the T in TPS truly stands for temporary, then it will be difficult, if not impossible, to provide temporary relief to others in the future who may need it. The American people have more than fulfilled their obligation; it is time for our guests to do the same."

A **Adam Blackwell, vice president for international at Development Services Group and former Canadian ambassador to the Dominican Republic:** "TPS is not a temporary, political or immigration issue, but rather a humanitarian one. Any solution needs to address the underlying quality-of-life realities that many of these communities and people face. TPS was created in the 1990s with bipartisan support to temporarily protect people from life-and-death situations such as natural disasters, civil war and violence. This temporary goodwill has morphed into an almost permanent political football, ensuring that there are no quick and easy fixes. There is a bipartisan bill being proposed called ASPIRE that could offer a partial solution; it would allow TPS recipients to apply to change their status while in the United States, rather than having to return to their country and then apply to change their status. It would also allow those who had been in the United States for more than five years

to receive protected status for six years rather than 18 months. It is also clear, looking at the development indexes, homicide rates and hurricane responses, that many of the original TPS countries do not have the governance and institutional capabilities to

“ Rather than forcibly separate families, there needs to be an integrated response.”

— Adam Blackwell

deal with these existential issues, let alone resettle large numbers of returning citizens. Rather than forcibly separate families, there needs to be an integrated response. Whether it is ASPIRE or something similar, it is only fair to give those affected some sense of continuity and sustainability. We also need a higher level of awareness and international assistance to help these countries develop the necessary infrastructure, systems and institutions to build resilient and sustainable communities."

A **Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies:** "It's time to restore the 'temporary' to Temporary Protected Status. Congress created this ostensibly short-term, emergency measure in 1990 as a way to provide amnesty for illegal aliens from El Salvador who had fled the civil war there. The real goal of the bill's sponsors was a permanent amnesty, but they settled for a temporary one, so long as it could be repeatedly renewed. So, even at its creation, the 'temporary' moniker was a lie. Since then, it has been used in the same way for other groups of illegal aliens lucky enough to be in the United States when disaster strikes their country, including additional Salvadorans here during the 2001 earthquake. Although a couple of small TPS grants have been allowed to expire (such as the one for

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ECONOMIC NEWS

Russia Agrees to Debt Restructuring With Venezuela

Russia on Wednesday restructured \$3.15 billion in debt it is owed by Venezuela, giving its economically wrecked ally badly needed breathing room as it struggles with a massive debt load, estimated to be at least \$120 billion, The Wall Street Journal reported. The debt to Russia will now be repaid over 10 years, with minimal repayments during the first six years. "Reducing the debt burden to the republic from the restructuring of liabilities will allow the funds that have been freed up to be allocated to the country's economic development, to improve the liquidity of the debtor, and to increase the chances of all creditors to recoup credits provided to Venezuela," the Russian finance ministry said. Venezuelan officials said the agreement would allow them to increase imports from Russia. Citizens wait in long lines to buy food and other necessities in Venezuela, where the average adult is estimated to have lost nearly 20 pounds over the past year. Last week, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro invited investors to meet with a government committee about debt restructuring, but critics noted the most important investors did not participate and that the committee, led by close political allies of Maduro, lacked the technical expertise for such talks. On Monday, Venezuela failed to make about \$200 million in loan repayments, and Standard & Poor's said the country is in "selective default," The Washington Post reported. The restructuring deal announced Wednesday does not cover \$6 billion in debt that Venezuela's state oil company, PDVSA, still owes Russia. China today made no offer of debt relief to Venezuela, but said it was confident the country can deal with the problem, the Associated Press reported. Venezuela owes China nearly eight times as much as Russia, with \$23 billion in debt. "We believe that the Venezuelan government and people are capable of properly handling the debt issue," ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

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about two dozen people from the Caribbean island of Montserrat), no one—not a single person—has ever been made to return home because his ‘temporary’ amnesty came to an end. The Trump administration is trying to restore TPS to its ostensible purpose. It is appropriate to give people time to settle their affairs and go home, as the administration has done for the small number of Nicaraguans whose TPS grant has been ended. The real test will come this month. In May, Haitians were given a six-month extension, specifically to allow them time to prepare to go home. If their TPS status is renewed yet again, then we’ll know the Trump administration isn’t serious about fixing this dysfunctional program.”

A **Wolfram F. Schaffler Gonzalez, director of the Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development at Texas A&M International University:** “After so many years in the United States some, if not most, of the TPS immigrants now have deep family or business ties in the country. If, or when, they are deported, this could represent a severe impact to their current local economies and communities. Some might have children or spouses who are U.S. citizens. Others might be business persons, students or valued

community members. Those who have legitimate incomes not only pay their U.S. taxes, but also remit part of their earnings to their families back in their native countries. In 2016, remittances from natives of Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua and El Salvador accounted for 18 percent, 24.8 percent, 9.65 percent and 17.10 percent respectively of the GDP of each country. While it is impossible to ascertain exactly how much of those remittances came from the 300,000 TPS beneficiaries, any reduction will severely hit the economies of those countries, where 17.9 percent, 61.7 percent, 11.9 percent and 9 percent of their respective populations live in extreme poverty. Considering the short time allotted before the TPS coverage ends, the four governments should prepare contingency plans regarding education, health and job creation, otherwise the unemployment rates of 5.9 percent in Nicaragua, 6.3 percent in Honduras and El Salvador and 13.2 percent in Haiti will grow, together with their already high poverty rates. Finally, let’s not forget the issue of violence and insecurity in Honduras and El Salvador, where 63 and 108 people out of every 100,000 were murdered in 2015, respectively. With over 252,000 possible returnees, their safety and well-being should be seriously considered in the final decisions and actions of all three governments.”

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