



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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November 2, 2006

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

As chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I urge you to schedule the *Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006* (S. 2125) for formal consideration on the House suspension calendar as soon as Congress returns this month.

Our Conference of bishops strongly supports S. 2125 because it would address some of the most urgent concerns arising from the longstanding conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). With an estimated 4 million people dead and another 1.6 million displaced, this conflict has been one of the deadliest since the Second World War. S. 2125 would establish a partnership between the United States and the DRC to encourage a fair and representative electoral process, lay the groundwork for multi-party democracy, ensure transparent management of natural resources, engage regional governments to promote peace and respond to the basic human needs of the Congolese people.

This past weekend, the DRC completed the second round of its first democratic national elections in over four decades. The Catholic Church there provided non-partisan civic education to voters and trained election monitors. Just last month, the National Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Congo congratulated the international community for its efforts and requested its "continued support for the young democracy and its program of national reconstruction." The impending announcement of second-round election results and subsequent installation of a legitimate, democratically elected government provide the United States with a unique opportunity to advance the building of peace and stability.

Passage of S. 2125 would be an important step towards a better future for the Congolese people, as well as a significant U.S. contribution to greater peace and security for the entire region. As the new National Security Strategy of the United States clearly indicates, the resolution of regional conflicts also serves to enhance the security of the American people here at home. Please ensure that S. 2125 receives full and timely consideration by the House of Representatives. Solidarity with the people of the DRC, and a commitment to human life and dignity, must move our nation to act.

Thank you for your assistance in placing S. 2125 on the House suspension calendar.

Sincerely yours,

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy