

June 19, 2003

**Resolution in Support of HR 603, on the Status of Citizens
of Montserrat Residing in the United States**

Submitted to the Executive Council by Vera Weekes

Whereas the 40 square mile island of Montserrat, situated in the Eastern Caribbean, has been experiencing catastrophic volcanic eruption since July 1995; and

Whereas volcanologists and scientists involved in the disaster have predicted that it is unlikely that the volcano will cease to erupt in the near future, possibly continuing for at least 25 years in total; and

Whereas the Department of State reports that in the near future there is a significant risk of new eruptions caused by the sustained growth of the lava dome of the Soufriere Hills volcano. Continuous dome growth has increased the hazard of pyroclastic flows, explosions, volcanic mudflows, and fall of ash and small stones. The volcano spews hundreds of tons of sulphur dioxide daily, as well as numerous rockfalls and flows of super-heated rocks, ash and gas; and

Whereas the continuous catastrophic volcanic eruptions, the ongoing housing shortage, serious health risks from hazardous volcanic ash have rendered two-thirds of the Island uninhabitable, the remaining one-third impossible to house the population and future habitability uncertain; and

Whereas most of the Island's 12,000-13,000 inhabitants fled, dispersing throughout the other islands and the United Kingdom (8000) and caused disruption in the education of its students as all schools and churches in the safe zone were used as temporary housing for a period of months and all education therefore ceased for some length of time; and

Whereas this state of affairs created chaos and eventually migration of its students to a more stable environment and

Whereas the devastation of the two-thirds portion of the island reduced the number of Primary schools [K-8] grade from thirteen to two and the Secondary schools [Grades 9 to 12 and first year college] from three to one.

Whereas according to the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), a small number of Montserratians including students and teachers of the Montserrat Union of Teachers [MUT], 363, came to the United States and have been granted temporary protected status (TPS), renewable each year for a one-year period, by the Attorney General since August 1997; and

Whereas the Montserradians living in the United States cannot return to the island to live and to alleviate the temporary and precarious position granted them by the Attorney General; and

Whereas On February 5, 2003 Congressman Major Owens introduced into the House of Representatives HR 603 “to provide for adjustment of immigration status for certain aliens granted temporary protected status in the United States because of conditions in Montserrat; ” therefore be it

Resolved, that PSC support Bill HR 603 and urge Congress and the Committee on the Judiciary to pass into law.