

After Recent Country Condition Reviews, Temporary Protected Status Benefits for Citizens of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone to End May 20, 2017

Wednesday, October 5, 2016

On Sept. 22, 2016, Secretary of *Homeland Security* Jeh Johnson extended the temporary protected status (TPS) designation for Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone through May 20, 2017. The TPS designations for these countries were extended for six months to allow for the “orderly transition” of its citizens back home. Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone were originally granted TPS designation for 18 months because of the Ebola virus outbreak in late 2014 in West Africa. After reviewing country conditions and consulting with appropriate U.S. government agencies, Secretary Johnson “determined that conditions in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone no longer warrant TPS designation,” since the Ebola virus outbreak has ended.

To facilitate the orderly transition, the TPS for citizens of these countries will be automatically extended until May 20, 2017, without the need for filing a Form I-821 with **U.S.**

Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The work authorization (EAD) for these citizens will be automatically extended until May 20, 2017, as well.

While TPS benefits will end effective May 21, 2017, citizens of these countries will be allowed to retain any other lawful immigration status that they obtained while holding TPS status. If any citizens of these countries currently do not hold another immigration status, these individuals have the additional six-month extension to prepare for their departure from the United States or to apply for and obtain alternative immigration benefits. Employers that employ citizens of these countries who are working on a TPS-related EAD should consider using this time to determine whether these individuals may be eligible for an employment-based visa. If eligible, employers can then submit petitions on behalf of these individuals as soon as possible in an attempt to avoid any interruption in employment authorization since USCIS is taking several months to review and approve employment-based visa petitions.

Finally, employers should consider alerting all company representatives responsible for the completion of the I-9 process about this development, as employers may often be unsure about how to complete and/or reverify the I-9 form for individuals holding TPS work authorization. Employers must accept a TPS-related EAD that is expired on its face if it nevertheless remains unexpired based on an automatic extension of the EAD by Department of Homeland Security.

For a link to the applicable Federal Register outlining the extension of TPS benefits and employment authorization for citizens of these countries, please click here: [Guinea](#); [Liberia](#); [Sierra Leone](#).

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