

# Americans weigh in on country's Haiti policies

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U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.) said the United States should be part of an international coalition to keep the peace in Haiti.

"Senator Dole believes the international community should be committed to the constitutional and democratic process in Haiti — but the first order of business is to restore the peace," he said. "She supports the United States working alongside international forces to restore order and stability to the country as soon as possible."

U.S. Rep. Mel Watt (D-N.C.) said the U.S. is sending mixed messages by allowing Aristide's ouster.

"I don't understand what our policy is," he said. "We say we want democratically-elected government by the people, but when that leader is someone we don't like or want anymore, we sit idly by and let the country turn into chaos."

Aristide, who was elected president in 1990, was removed from office in a 1991 coup. In 1994, then-president Bill Clinton ordered U.S. forces to Haiti to restore Aristide to office.

Since then, he has failed to deliver on campaign promises to bolster the economy and build democracy. Meanwhile, international support waned as allegations of government corruption and intimidation of Aristide's opponents led to the suspension of millions of dollars in aid.

"He has used the same thugs to terrorize his political enemies that his predecessors did," Eustache said. "The corruption he facilitates is completely out of control. Aristide wasn't governing like someone who respects the people of Haiti and democratic government. The people just got wise to him."

Dissatisfaction with Aristide shouldn't result a coup, Dixon insists. As a democratically-elected

leader, Aristide's fate should've been left to a political solution.

"People are upset with President Bush, but you don't see us going to the White House with pitchforks in hand," Dixon said. "We're waiting for the next election or for someone to write up papers of impeachment."

If a president's popularity was a criteria for remaining in office, Watt said, "I'd call for early elections in the United States. This is not about whether Aristide is doing a good job. This is about building democracy. This man was elected in a democratic election overseen by the United States, and we won't even take the step to preserve democracy in our own hemisphere."

Another issue that may

arise is the possibility of thousands of Haitians leaving for the U.S. American policy is been to return Haitian refugees to their homeland or confine them indefinitely, and the Bush administration reiterated that point this week. Critics, however, allege a double standard where Cubans are allowed into the country, a holdover from longstanding sanctions against the communist government of President Fidel Castro.

"While we continue to discourage Haitians to flee by way of the high seas, we do insist that Haitians who reach our shores be given immediate refugee status rather than being sent back to a nation in disarray and anarchy," NAACP President Kweisi Mfume said in a

statement. "Time is running out. Action has to be taken now. There is no difference between violence in Haiti and violence in Iraq. President Bush must end the double standard."

If the international community commits to building Haiti's economy, Eustache believes immigration and

governing will take care of themselves.

"If it's handled properly by the United States and the United Nations, I think there's a chance that it won't result in a mass migration, he said. "You'll have a few, but you won't have 20,000, 30,000 or 40,000 people leaving."



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## Immigration still a prickly issue for U.S.

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and prove that U.S. citizens refuse the jobs;

- Illegal immigrants would be matched with employers; then pay a fee and prove they are employed;

- Workers would receive identification cards to stay in the U.S. for three years. The cards could be renewable three more years and

- Guest workers could travel home and return and could move families to U.S. if they are able to support them.

Last year, 2.6 percent of hourly black workers and 2.7 percent of hourly Hispanic workers were paid at or below minimum wage, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A national poll conducted by Bendixen & Associates last month found Hispanics split over the Bush proposal. The result was 45 percent to 45 percent, with 10 percent undecided. But among Hispanic voters, 42 percent support Bush's proposal with 47 percent opposed to it and 11 percent remaining undecided. The poll has a margin of error of 3 percent.

"It's a good thing that the president finally came out and said something about immigration after two-and-a-half years of silence on the issue," says Michele Waslin, a spokeswoman for the National Council of La Raza, a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that represents Hispanics. "However, we were very disappointed with the proposal that he put forward. It creates a permanent class of workers who would have fewer rights, who would be very vulnerable, and who would be tied to their employer for their legal status here in the United States."

Under Bush's plan, illegal immigrants would become legal workers; they must leave the country once their visas expire in six years. A Congressional Hispanic Caucus plan that would give illegal workers a chance to earn permanent status and citizenship was supported by 85 percent of respondents to the Bendixen poll.

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