

## **2017 Toolkit: Visits with Local, State, and National Leaders to Welcome Refugees**

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# **The Power of Advocacy**

## **Be an Advocate**

Developing relationships and educating your policy makers are necessary steps to welcoming policies and attitudes toward refugees. A powerful constituent visit involves impacted communities and allies who jointogether. Having a team of refugee leaders, resettlement staff, volunteers, employers, faith groups, and other community members who meet regularly is essential in building meaningful relationships with policy makers. It is important that policy makers understand that their constituents care about refugees, and that refugees are their constituents — they live, work, and contribute in their communities, obtain U.S. citizenship, and vote. As our [local](#), [state](#), and [national](#) leaders consider proposals that will impact refugees, the time is now to urge them to stand with those seeking safety.

## **Your Voice Matters**

Your story as a refugee, staff member, or supporter of refugee resettlement is your most important qualification as an advocate. Talk about the way your community welcomes refugees and the positive contributions refugees make to your community. Refugees, resettlement staff, faith leaders, employers, military veterans, and supportive community members are constituents of local, state, and national elected leaders who regularly make policy decisions that impact refugees. When policy makers know that their constituents care about refugees, they will increasingly vote to support refugee protection and resettlement, as well as productive policies that help refugees. It's important to note that 501(c)3 organizations can confidently educate policy makers about who refugees are and how policy proposals will impact their community. The IRS holds that 501(c)3 organizations can take positions on public policy issues, and that lobbying is acceptable, as long as it is not a substantial part of the organization's work and/or is less than 20% of a non-profit's budget. There are also special permissions for religious groups.

## **Engaging National and State Elected Leaders**

At the national and state levels, individuals who oppose refugee resettlement are making their voices heard loudly and frequently to policy makers. These groups utilize anti-refugee, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim rhetoric and draft legislation to engender fear and foster hostile atmospheres for newcomers. More than [80 bills](#) have been introduced in the U.S. Congress that would dismantle or significantly damage the U.S. refugee resettlement program. In 2015, [31 governors](#) voiced opposition to resettling Syrian refugees and more than [50 anti-refugee proposals](#) were introduced across 19 state legislatures in 2016. (Only one of these proposals passed, thanks to everyone's hard work.) In 2017, we are facing at least 29 anti-refugee proposals across 16 states, but we have also seen 26 pro-refugee proposals introduced in 15 states. It is critical that policy makers hear from refugees themselves and supportive community members. We want policy makers to support positive legislation and oppose proposals that would turn our backs on refugees and violate our values of welcome and hospitality.

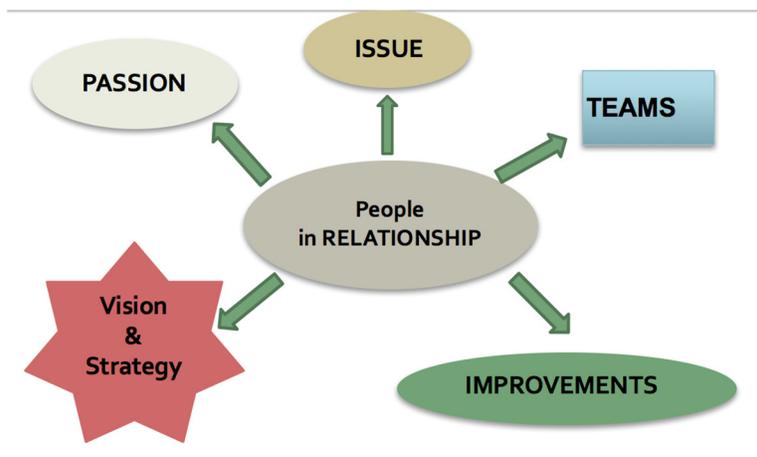
## **Engaging Local Policy Makers**

Efforts to stop refugee resettlement in certain communities have been gaining traction, making it critical for local policy makers to hear from us and affirm that they welcome refugees. There are positive proposals that local elected officials can adopt to affirm the importance of resettlement and foster communities of welcome. City, municipal, and other local councils and commissions need to hear that their communities stand ready to help refugees integrate and thrive. Cities and counties across the nation have passed resolutions affirming they are welcoming, inclusive, and ready to accept refugees of all backgrounds, countries of origin, and faiths. Urge your local leaders to adopt welcoming resolutions that extend hospitality to refugees and all newcomers. Organizing community members around a welcoming resolution reflects a core American belief in the dignity of every person, lifts up diversity as a community's strength, and cultivates an environment of inclusion. Local officials can also write supportive public letters to the White House, Department of State, and Congress. Click [here](#) for to see a framework one community developed to assess itself and facilitate welcome and inclusiveness of refugees and immigrants.

## Where to Start: Teambuilding

The art of teambuilding is a critical component to advocacy. Teambuilding brings together diverse voices – such as resettlement staff, refugee leaders, faith leaders, and others – who speak to the importance of welcome and helping refugees integrate and thrive from several perspectives. This is how you can get started in creating and sustaining teams of people who can take action together for change.

### Visualizing Teambuilding



### How Do I Build a Team?

#### **Step 1: Internal Assessment**

What are you passionate about? Why? What in your life journey has brought about this passion?  
What policy changes (national and local) would you and your community like to see?  
How could you see your community working to be part of bringing that change about?  
What does being an “advocate” mean to you?

#### **Step 2: One on One Relationship Building**

Face to face meeting in a mutually preferred location  
Intentional conversation, not an interview  
Listening for passion, vision, stories  
Work together to identify other people who would be interested in joining you  
Each agree to reach out to people who share your vision and help build / energize a team

#### **Step 3: Grow Your Team**

Who else might care and be interested?  
Ask each person to reach out to 3-5 more people and have one-on-one meetings  
Set a timeline for a team meeting

#### **Step 4: Bring the Team Together**

Goal: bring together a solid group of 8-20 people  
Create a common vision: what are our hopes and expectations?  
Create an action plan: How do we build toward bringing that vision to life?  
Who are natural allies who can be energized into being advocates and champions?  
Identify next steps, including ways to engage with policy makers and other influential people.

*For more information on how to engage in organizing and teambuilding, click [here](#).  
Connect with refugee and immigrant rights group near you: [www.informedimmigrant.com/organizations/](http://www.informedimmigrant.com/organizations/).*

## **Refugee Community Advocacy Week: April 10-21**

### **Who You Are. Why You Care. What You Want.**

It is more important than ever to meet with your local, state, and national policy makers to educate them about the vital role that refugees and all newcomers play in your communities. Because the process of change takes time, meetings with policy makers should be viewed as part of a continuing process of gathering and sharing information, building relationships, and developing and carrying out advocacy strategies.

### **Building Power for Refugee Resettlement**

A good time to meet with your Members of Congress and/or their staff is during Congressional recesses when they are in their states and local offices. Calendars of in-district time can be found here: [Senate](#) and [House of Representatives](#). Schedules fill up very quickly for these recess periods, so reach out as soon as possible.

### **Steps to Prepare and Organize Your Meeting**

**1. Create an advocacy team:** An ideal team consists of different stakeholder voices such as refugees, case workers, faith leaders, business leaders, military veterans, and community leaders who can all share in the planning, outreach, and coordination of advocacy actions and speak to the diversity of support for refugee resettlement. Convene in advance to discuss current relationships with policy makers, goals, asks for the meeting, what you want to learn, and an agenda for a successful meeting.

**2. Learn about your elected officials:** Are your Members of Congress in Congressional leadership, or on the [Senate](#) or [House](#) Appropriations Committees; [Senate](#) or [House](#) Judiciary Committees; [Senate](#) or [House](#) Homeland Security Committees; or [Senate](#) or [House](#) Foreign Relations Committees? If so, they have jurisdiction over various aspects of the refugee program. Even if they aren't in leadership or on these committees, their vote is still important, and they can still be champions for refugees. *Note: To learn more about your governor, state legislators, mayor, and local officials, click [here](#).*

**3. Have a plan:** Before you enter an advocacy visit, meet with your group beforehand to assign roles:

- *The Facilitator* starts the meeting, introduces the group, explains the purpose for the meeting, and provides time for each person to briefly introduce themselves and their organization and/or connection to refugees, to show that the group represents thousands of community members. The facilitator will also jump in if the meeting goes off-track and redirect the conversation.
- *The Personal Story* is key to every meeting. A refugee should tell their story to show how peoples' lives are changed through refugee resettlement.
- *Specific Issue Points* - It will be helpful to bring handouts, copied and linked near the end of this toolkit Additional handouts with information on refugees by state can be found [here](#).
- *The Ask for All Leaders* - The critical part when you ask "Will you be a champion for refugee protection and resettlement and oppose any and all anti-refugee proposals?"
- *The Ask for Local/State Leaders* – "Will you champion a welcoming resolution to declare our community a city/state of welcome?" A sample resolution and a sample letter to the White House and Department of State supporting resettlement are below.

**4. Debrief:** It's important to debrief as a team in a separate location following the meeting. As a group, ask: What did we hear and learn? Did we get what we wanted? How did we work together as a team? What are the next steps? How can we engage this policy maker in the future, perhaps through event invitations, etc.? Share your reflections with your organization's advocacy staff (see last page for contact information).

**5. Follow-up:** Send a thank you email to the staff after the meeting with any information they asked for and any other relevant information you think would be helpful. Inviting the staff and/or official to an upcoming event to meet with refugees is an excellent next step!

## **Five Ways That Refugee Communities Can Rise Up for May 1st National Day of Action**

**Background:** May 1st is International Worker's Day: a historic day to respect the contributions of workers, organize in support of workers' rights, and demonstrate solidarity with immigrants. This May 1st, immigrant leaders of the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM) will Rise Up! to demonstrate the power, resilience and strength of immigrant communities in America. Many groups are organizing marches, rallies, protests and town hall meetings to resist President Trump's anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, and anti-Muslim policies and call on Congress and local policy makers to support a vibrant and diverse future for our country.

**Why May 1st is Important for Refugees:** Refugees are workers, business owners, neighbors, community leaders and proud residents of this country. Recent anti-refugee policies impact many refugee families, and many refugees have been victim of hate and discrimination. Immigrants, U.S. citizens and allies went to airports to show opposition to the refugee and Muslim ban. We need to stand together again on May 1st to support each other and claim our rights as people who deserve equal treatment. Building a coalition of allies is how we can build power and fight back against these anti-immigrant policies. When we rise up together, our voice is strongest. May 1st is not specific to a particular group, but for all those who have been unjustly targeted.

### **Here Are Five Ways that Refugee Communities Can Take Part in May 1st Actions:**

#### **1. Be a "Torch Bearer" & Show Up to May 1st Actions and Rallies**

- Refugees and resettlement offices can mobilize people to show up to marches, rallies and legislative visits in your area. Find events near you [here](#). Provide transportation and encourage carpooling.
- Connect with local immigrants' rights groups and ask how you can help lift up refugees' voices. State-by-state lists: [informedimmigrant.com/organizations](http://informedimmigrant.com/organizations) and [ndlon.org](http://ndlon.org).
- If a May 1st event is not already being planned in your city, you can work with resettlement offices, immigrants' rights groups, and community partners to organize an action. Add your event [here](#).

#### **2. Call for Economic Justice Through Strike Solidarity & Support**

- Take the day off and don't buy anything. Encourage local business to give their employees the day off to participate in events. This will help demonstrate the economic power of the immigrants' rights movement.

#### **3. Forge New Relationships with Immigrants, Refugees, Muslims and Faith Communities**

- The foundation of effective organizing efforts is based on building relationships. The current political climate creates new opportunities for immigrants, refugees, Muslims and faith communities to work together.
- Connect with local faith groups to plan and mobilize around May 1st events and host Know Your Rights Workshops for refugees. Find resources at [greateras1.org/learn/information-materials/](http://greateras1.org/learn/information-materials/).

#### **4. Tell Congress: Do Not Pay for Trump's Immigration Executive Orders!**

- Call your Senators and Representatives at (866) 961-4293 and urge them to reject funding for Trump's wall and DHS's expanded deportation force, and detention centers and to do everything they can to rescind the immigration and refugee executive orders. Action alert at [interfaithimmigration.org/fundingexecutiveorders/](http://interfaithimmigration.org/fundingexecutiveorders/).
- Encourage everyone to sign [this petition](#) urging Congress to refuse to fund Trump's deportation plans. You can also send postcards to Congress at [riseupmay1.org](http://riseupmay1.org).
- Meet with your Members of Congress in person when they are home during April's "in district" time (April 10-21)! Resources at [interfaithimmigration.org/neighbor](http://interfaithimmigration.org/neighbor) and [www.rcusa.org](http://www.rcusa.org).

#### **5. Let Your Voice be Heard!**

- Promote May 1st actions through social media and share photos, videos during and after the event with #RiseUP and #GreaterAs1

LEARN MORE AT [www.riseupmay1.org](http://www.riseupmay1.org).

## **ACTION ALERT: Urge Congress to Support Refugee Resettlement**

**Background:** As Congress makes decisions about refugee funding and responds to President Trump's executive order impacting refugees, it is critical that our Senators and Representatives hear from us as constituents who care about refugees. While the executive order impacting refugees and Muslims is on hold due to a federal court order, it is likely that the President's 2018 budget proposal will include cuts to refugee assistance and resettlement. Congress must robustly fund the Office of Refugee Resettlement (within Health and Human Services) and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (within the State Department), at least at the levels they have been funded so far this year. Resettlement, saves lives, encourages other countries to keep their doors open to refugees, and promotes regional stability and global security. We must ensure that resettlement remains a strong public/private partnership.

### **CALL YOUR SENATORS & REPRESENTATIVES TODAY: 1-866-940-2439**

*Please call three times to be connected with your Representative and both of your Senators.*

Sample Script: *"I'm your constituent from [CITY/TOWN], and I urge you to support the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Please provide robust funding for the Office of Refugee Resettlement and the Migration and Refugee Assistance account. Resettlement is a core American legacy that allows refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. My community welcomes refugees, and I urge you to reflect the best of our nation by supporting the refugee resettlement program."*

Feel free to also share a personal story about the importance of refugees to you, your faith, your community, your business, etc. Let them know the specific ways that refugees benefit and are welcomed into your community, and why refugee protection is so important to you.

You can also tweet at your [Senators & Representatives](#):

- .@[SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE] Don't stop welcoming refugees. Resettlement demonstrates the best of our values #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1
- .@[SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE] Keep America welcoming. Refugee resettlement is a proud American legacy with bipartisan support #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1
- .@[SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE] #Refugees are the most vetted group to enter US #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1

Please spread the word and send this alert o your networks!

[Please tell us if you take action \(opens a new webpage\)!](#)

Follow [@RCUSA\\_DC](#) on Twitter and "like" [Refugee Council USA](#) on Facebook for up-to-date alerts.

THANK YOU for taking action at this critical time! Spread the word!

## **ACTION ALERT: Urge Your State and Local Leaders to Welcome Refugees**

**Background:** Right now, it is more important than ever for **all** of our elected officials to hear that their communities welcome refugees. Refugee resettlement saves lives, encourages other countries to keep their doors open to people needing protection, and promotes regional stability and global security. We cannot turn our backs on the refugees we have pledged to welcome. Nor can we discriminate against individuals based on where they're from or what religion they practice. Refugee resettlement must continue to be a cornerstone of U.S. global leadership. More than 65 million people have been persecuted and forced from their homes and are seeking safety. As a nation, we must uphold our values of generosity, hospitality and compassion. Our actions must match gravity of this displacement crisis and live up to our welcoming legacy. Please spread the word and have everyone you know share this alert!

### **Call your State & Local Officials: Tell Them Your Community Welcomes Refugees**

Find your governor, state legislators, mayor, & local officials: [www.usa.gov/elected-officials](http://www.usa.gov/elected-officials)

Here's a sample of what to say: *"I am a constituent from [CITY, STATE], and I urge you to welcome refugees and support the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Resettlement is a core American legacy that extends hospitality and offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. My community welcomes refugees and I urge you to reflect the best of our nation by supporting refugee resettlement in the United States."*

Feel free to share a personal story about the importance of refugees to your community and why refugee protection is so important to you.

You can also tweet your state and local officials. Click to find the twitter handles for your [governor](#) and [state legislators](#). Here's a sample tweet: *"@[ELECTEDOFFICIAL], my community stands #WithRefugees! Show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting U.S. refugee resettlement! #RefugeesWelcome"*

**Reach out to partners in the business, health, educator, law enforcement, and faith community!** Urge them to sign onto these sector-specific letters supporting resettlement:

- [bit.ly/Business4Refugees](http://bit.ly/Business4Refugees)
- [bit.ly/Educators4Refugees](http://bit.ly/Educators4Refugees)
- [bit.ly/LawEnforcement4Refugees](http://bit.ly/LawEnforcement4Refugees)
- [bit.ly/Health4Refugees](http://bit.ly/Health4Refugees)
- [bit.ly/FaithLeaders4Refugees](http://bit.ly/FaithLeaders4Refugees)

Please spread the word and send this alert to your networks!

[Please tell us if you take action \(opens a new webpage\)!](#)

Follow [@RCUSA DC](#) on Twitter and "like" [Refugee Council USA](#) on Facebook for up-to-date alerts.

## **Sample Letter to Send to Your Members of Congress**

[Date]

The Honorable [Senator/Representative] (find this information at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov))  
[room number] [name of congressional office building]  
Washington, DC [20510/20515]

Dear [Senator/Representative] [last name]:

As your constituent from [city, state], I urge you to welcome refugees and support the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Resettlement is a strong American legacy that extends hospitality and offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Every day, more community members than ever before are volunteering with resettlement offices around the country to help refugees integrate and thrive.

The United States has a long history of providing protection to persons seeking safety from persecution. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. led humanitarian assistance efforts to help displaced persons, including resettling hundreds of thousands of Europeans to the United States, including Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. During the Cold War period, the U.S. welcomed refugees from Vietnam, Cuba and the former Soviet Union. Today, we resettle Darfuri refugees fleeing genocide, Bhutanese refugees forced out of their country, Syrian refugees who have fled mass violence and human rights atrocities, Iraqi and Afghan refugees who served alongside the U.S. military, refugees from Burma fleeing religious and ethnic persecution, and many other populations in need of lifesaving protection. Refugee resettlement is a public / private partnership that celebrates the hospitality, resilience, and freedom that our communities hold dear.

Refugees are forced to flee their homes because they face persecution on account of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Over 65 million people are displaced globally, the largest displacement crisis in recorded history, including over 21 million refugees. Resettlement offers a chance for less than 1% of the world's refugees to reach safety in a third country when no other options remain. Resettlement to the United States is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection and takes place after eligible refugees undergo rigorous selection, security vetting and medical screening processes.

The U.S. State Department facilitates the admission of each refugee to the U.S. after they have been granted refugee status and following individual interviews by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials, extensive inter-agency background checks with multiple national security and intelligence agencies, and health screenings. According to national security experts, refugees are the most thoroughly vetted, rigorously screened people to come to the United States. The entire process typically takes 18-24 months, and sometimes longer, before a refugee even steps foot on U.S. soil.

[Local agency name] helps refugees who have been resettled in [state] by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, English-language classes, and community orientation. Refugees are resilient, hard workers whose innovative skills have contributed greatly to our state. [Describe positive impacts refugees have on your community—can include examples of refugees creating jobs, starting businesses, opening restaurants, bringing cultural diversity, buying homes, paying taxes, etc.]

Please stand with our community as we welcome refugees. We invite you to come visit our office and meet with refugees [perhaps include event information]. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me if you have any questions about refugee resettlement in our area.

With appreciation,  
[your signature and contact information]

## **Sample Letter to Send to Your State and Local Leaders**

[Date]

[Title] [To find your governor, state legislators, mayor, and local officials, click [here](#)]

[room number] [name of office building]

[City, State Zip Code]

Dear [TITLE Last Name]:

As your constituent from [city, state], I urge you to welcome refugees, support the U.S. refugee resettlement program, and declare our [city/county/state] a “Welcoming City.” I would also urge you to write the State Department to show your support for resettlement. Resettlement is a strong American legacy that extends hospitality and offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Every day, more community members than ever before are volunteering with resettlement offices around the country to help refugees integrate and thrive.

The United States has a long history of providing protection to persons seeking safety from persecution. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. led humanitarian assistance efforts to help displaced persons, including resettling hundreds of thousands of Europeans to the United States, including Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. During the Cold War period, the U.S. welcomed refugees from Vietnam, Cuba and the former Soviet Union. Today, we resettle Darfuri refugees fleeing genocide, Bhutanese refugees forced out of their country, Syrian refugees who have fled mass violence and human rights atrocities, Iraqi and Afghan refugees who served alongside the U.S. military, and many other populations in need of lifesaving protection. Refugee resettlement is a public / private partnership that celebrates the hospitality, resilience, and freedom that our communities hold dear.

Refugees are forced to flee their homes because they face persecution on account of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Over 65 million people are displaced globally, the largest displacement crisis in recorded history, including over 21 million refugees. Resettlement offers a chance for less than 1% of the world’s refugees to reach safety in a third country when no other options remain. Resettlement to the United States is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection and takes place after eligible refugees undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting and medical screening process.

[Local agency name] helps refugees who have been resettled in [state] by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, English-language classes, and community orientation. Refugees are resilient, hard workers whose innovative skills have contributed greatly to our state. [Describe positive impacts refugees have on your community—can include examples of refugees creating jobs, starting businesses, opening restaurants, bringing cultural diversity, buying homes, paying taxes, etc.]

Our community is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants, adding to the economic strength and cultural richness of our community. We have been an example of a hospitable and welcoming place to all newcomers, where people thrive and the contributions of all are celebrated and valued. As cities across the United States have declared themselves to be welcoming to refugees and immigrants, we urge to adopt a resolution declaring [City/County/State] a “Welcoming City,” one in which all are welcome, accepted, and appreciated.

Please stand with us as we welcome refugees and affirm the richness of our community. We invite you to come visit our office and meet with refugees [perhaps include event information]. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me about how we can be supportive of moving a welcoming resolution forward.

With appreciation,  
[your signature and contact information]

## **SAMPLE LOCAL WELCOME RESOLUTION**

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE CITY/COUNTY OF [NAME] AS A WELCOMING CITY/COUNTY THAT CELEBRATES THE GROWING DIVERSITY OF ITS RESIDENTS AND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS, AND ALL NEWCOMERS ENHANCE THE CULTURE AND THE ECONOMY

WHEREAS, there are more than 65 million displaced people have been forced from their homes, more than any time in recorded history, including over 21 million refugees;

WHEREAS, millions of refugees – regardless of faith or country of origin – are making life and death decisions to flee their homes and neighboring countries because they are unable to access shelter, health care, education, or protection, and neighboring countries have either closed their borders to new arrivals or violence persists in those countries as well;

WHEREAS, resettlement is available to a very small portion of the most vulnerable refugees and provides safe haven in a third country when no other options for safety are available;

WHEREAS, resettlement to the U.S. is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection – such as unaccompanied and other at-risk children, female-headed households, victims of torture, the physically disabled, members of the LGBTI community, and members of minority groups that are experiencing oppression in the host country – and takes place after eligible refugees undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting, and medical screening process;

WHEREAS, the [City/County] of [Name] is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants, adding to the economic strength and cultural richness of our community;

WHEREAS, organizations responsible for resettling refugees in our community, as well as numerous other community organizations and religious institutions, have declared their support for resettling refugees in [CITY];

WHEREAS, the [City/County] of [Name] has been an example of a hospitable and welcoming place to all newcomers, where people, families, and institutions thrive and the contributions of all are celebrated and valued;

WHEREAS, cities across the United States have declared themselves to be welcoming to refugees and immigrants, joining a national movement for creating an inclusive community;

WHEREAS, residents of [City/County] of [Name] aspire to live up to our highest societal values of acceptance and equality, and treat newcomers with decency and respect, creating a vibrant community for all to live in;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY/COUNTY OF [NAME], that the [City/County] of [Name] is hereby declared a Welcoming City, and one that affirms the beauty and richness of our diversity, and one in which all are welcome, accepted, and appreciated.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the [City/County] of [Name] hereby urges other local and state communities to join us in a stronger national effort to resettle the most vulnerable refugees worldwide and help them integrate and thrive.

Adopted this the X day of [Month Year].

## **Draft Letters for Local Officials to Send the White House & State Department**

[Date]

Dear President Trump and Secretary of State Tillerson:

Welcoming refugees shines a light on Americans' most cherished common values. As a community in [CITY, STATE], we believe in the strength of the U.S. refugee resettlement program and welcome refugees from all backgrounds, faiths, and countries of origin. This commitment reflects a core American belief in the dignity of every person, lifts up diversity as a community's strength, and cultivates an environment of inclusion. Resettlement is a strong American legacy that extends hospitality and offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Every day, more community members than ever before are volunteering with resettlement offices around the country to help refugees integrate and thrive.

Refugee resettlement is the living embodiment of the religious commitment to "welcome the stranger," a bedrock upon which much of America's strength rests. In our community, churches, synagogues, mosques, and other communities of faith stand in partnership to help refugees of all faiths find safety and hope as they start their lives as new Americans. The United States has a long history of providing protection to persons seeking safety from persecution. In our community, we have welcomed refugees from [describe where refugees in your community have come from and the struggles they faced on their journey to the United States.]

Refugees are forced to flee their homes because they face persecution on account of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Over 65 million people are displaced globally, the largest displacement crisis in recorded history, including over 21 million refugees. Resettlement offers a chance for less than 1% of the world's refugees to reach safety in a third country when no other options remain. Resettlement to the United States is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection and takes place after eligible refugees undergo rigorous selection, security vetting and medical screening processes.

The resettlement program is a prime example of a public/private partnership between the federal government, the state government, and local communities and their agencies and volunteers. [Local agency name] helps refugees who have been resettled in [state] by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, English-language classes, and community orientation. Refugees are resilient, hard workers whose innovative skills have contributed greatly to our state. [Describe positive impacts refugees have on your community—can include examples of refugees creating jobs, starting businesses, opening restaurants, bringing cultural diversity, buying homes, paying taxes, etc.]

Please stand with our community as we welcome refugees. We invite you to come visit our office and meet with refugees [perhaps include event information]. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me if you have any questions about refugee resettlement in our area.

With appreciation,  
[your signature and contact information]

\*Your local policy makers will know how to send correspondence to the White House and State Department. Encourage them to also send the letter to your Senators and Representative, and also please share a copy with your agency's advocacy staff, contact information on last page, so we can see how many have been sent and ensure that Administration officials and members of congress see them.

## REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

### WHO IS A REFUGEE AND HOW MANY ARE THERE?

Under international and U.S. law, a refugee is someone outside his or her own country with a well-founded fear of persecution in that country based on: (1) race; (2) religion; (3) nationality; (4) membership in a particular social group and/or (5) political opinion.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of the end of 2016 there were over 65 million refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced person—the highest number than at any time on record. Over 21 million are refugees, more than half under the age of eighteen, and 1.19 million in need of resettlement in 2017.

### WHAT IS RESETTLEMENT?

Available to a very small portion of the most vulnerable refugees, resettlement provides safe haven in a third country when no other options for safety are available. Resettlement, the last of the three "durable solutions" for refugees, is only considered when refugees are neither able to return home nor be integrated into the country to which they fled. Resettlement to the U.S. is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection and takes place after eligible refugees undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting and medical screening process.

#### *Did you know?*

*Resettlement provides a life-saving solution for less than 1% percent of the world's refugees, though many more are in need.*

### WHO DO WE RESETTLE?

Each year, the President, after consultation with Congress, determines the processing priorities and sets an annual target number for refugee resettlement for the upcoming year. In Fiscal Year 2016, 84,995 refugees of the 85,000 target were resettled, mostly from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, and Syria.

### HISTORY OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE U.S.

The U.S. has a proud history of admitting refugees of special humanitarian concern. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. Congress enacted the first refugee legislation, providing refuge for over 650, 000 displaced Europeans. Since refugee resettlement was codified in the Refugee Act of 1980, the U.S. has provided safety and new beginnings to over 3 million people through its public-private partnership model.

The U.S. has been a leader in refugee protection and resettlement around the world. Resettlement to the U.S. lessens the burden of refugee-hosting countries and encourages other countries to keep their borders open to refugees fleeing conflict and persecution.

### REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES

There are nine national U.S. refugee resettlement agencies with over 350 local offices and affiliates throughout the country that help newly arrived refugees settle into local communities. These organizations receive refugee families at the airport, help them settle into a new home, and provide case management services – including access to medical care, school enrollment, English as a Foreign Language classes, and job readiness and employment services. The services and support provided to refugees are designed to facilitate successful transition to life in the U.S. and help to attain swift self-sufficiency through employment, so refugees receive cash assistance for a very limited period.

## ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY ROLES IN THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

### BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION (PRM), DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

- Directs U.S. admission policies
- Coordinates the overseas processing of refugees
- Is responsible for the transportation, initial reception, and integration of refugees in the U.S.
- Administers U.S. funding to UNHCR and other overseas programs that assist refugees

### U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS), DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS):

- Refugee Officers in USCIS' Refugee Affairs Division conduct admissions interviews to determine whether refugee applicants qualify for resettlement
- Manage the security clearance process
- Adjusts status of refugees to permanent resident and citizen

### OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT (ORR), DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS):

- Administers federal funding to state and local programs that assist refugees, including social services, English language training, and employment services
- Funds and/or oversees programs for assisting unaccompanied minors, children in detention, asylum seekers, and victims of torture and trafficking

## SECURITY

Extensive security checks are performed by the FBI, Department of Defense, National Counterterrorism Center, Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of State, consisting of:

- Security checks for applicants, including additional checks for certain nationalities
- Examination of biographic and biometric data
- Extensive interviews and many lines of questioning before Department of Homeland Security officials
- Medical screening
- Consultation between a broad array of law enforcement and intelligence databases, including the FBI, DHS, and the National Counterterrorism Center

Only after all checks are completed and cleared is a refugee eligible to travel to the U.S.

***FACT:** Since 1975, the U.S. has resettled over 3 million refugees, with annual admissions figures ranging from a high of 207,000 in 1980 to a low of 27,110 in 2002.*

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF REFUGEES

Resettled refugees are eager to give back to the country that has welcomed them and make significant economic and cultural contributions to their communities. Newly-arrived refugees have been the driving force behind the rejuvenation of many cities across the United States -- for example, helping to create jobs and opportunities through small-business development in once-strained rust-belt communities, and helping to reverse population decline. Those granted refuge in the U.S. successfully support their families, pay taxes, and contribute to the country in a myriad of ways. Refugees are employed in a wide range of sectors in the U.S. economy, from the hospitality and food service industry, to the teaching profession, to the fields of engineering, nursing and medicine. Many refugees give back by volunteering as interpreters or mentors to other newly-arriving refugees and immigrants. Albert Einstein, Henry Kissinger, Madeleine Albright, and Sergey Brin, the founder of Google, are former refugees whose accomplishments demonstrate what the U.S. has to gain from welcoming refugees.

*More information and examples: <http://www.rcusa.org/contributions-of-refugees-to-the-us>*

## COMMUNITY WELCOME OF REFUGEES

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is a longstanding public-private partnership with government funding strengthened by the private resources of nonprofit agencies, community donors, and volunteers. In each city and town where refugees are resettled throughout the U.S., faith groups, neighbors, mentors, employers, businesses, community groups, philanthropies, and local organizations play an important role in helping to foster welcome for refugees every day and in assisting resettled refugees as they start their lives in their new homes and communities. *More information and examples:*

*<http://www.rcusa.org/community-welcome-of-refugees/>*

**The Rigorous Process of Screening Refugees for Resettlement to the United States**

Refugees being considered for resettlement by the United States must pass through a series of security screenings aimed at ensuring they will not pose a security risk, including biographic and biometric checks. The information examined to confirm a refugee’s identity is checked against law enforcement, intelligence community, and other relevant databases, including those administered by the National Counterterrorism Center, Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of State, and Department of Homeland Security. If there is doubt about whether an applicant poses a security threat, he or she will not be admitted to the U.S.

***What is Refugee Resettlement?***

*Resettlement, to the U.S. or one of the other 27 resettlement countries, is the last resort durable solution for refugees who cannot return to their countries of origin and face protection risks in the country to which they fled. It presents a life-saving solution for less than one percent of the world’s refugees.*

**REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROCESSING AND SECURITY STEPS**

*Information provided by U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, a Refugee Council USA member.*

1) **Registration & Refugee Status Determination:** The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) registers individuals and collects identifying documents, biographic information, and biometric data. UNHCR or the country of asylum interviews the applicant to determine if the individual qualifies as a refugee under international law. A refugee is someone who has fled from his or her home country and cannot return because he or she has a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

2) **Referral to a Resettlement Country:** A refugee who meets one of the criteria for resettlement can be referred to one of the 28 resettlement countries, including the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Refugees do not get to choose where they are referred. Additionally, under legislation passed by the U.S. Congress, Iraqi and Afghan nationals who have been employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government can apply directly to the USRAP without being referred by UNHCR. This process is called the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Program. All referred refugees and SIV applicants undergo the same rigorous security screening process which, on average, takes 18 to 36 months.

***UNHCR’s Use of Biometrics***

*Biometric checks enhance the integrity of UNHCR registration and contributes to greater accuracy of data. The collection of biometric data helps to mitigate risks regarding identity substitution and assists UNHCR in building a sustained and credible identity of refugees over time, including those referred to the U.S. for resettlement.*

*More information: [to.pbs.org/1YItNdW](http://to.pbs.org/1YItNdW)*

3) **Resettlement Support Center:** A Resettlement Support Center (RSC), contracted by the U.S. Department of State (DOS), conducts a preparatory interview and compiles the refugee’s personal data and background information for the security clearance process and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in-person interview.

4) **Security Screening - Consular Lookout and Support System:** DOS runs the names of all refugees referred to the U.S. for resettlement through the Consular Lookout and Support System (CLASS), which contains watch-list information.

5) **Security Screening - Security Advisory Opinion:** Certain refugees undergo additional security reviews called Security Advisory Opinions (SAOs). These cases require a positive SAO clearance from a number of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies in order to continue the resettlement process.

6) **Security Screening - Inter-Agency Check:** The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) conducts an Inter-Agency Check (IAC) on applicants within a designated age range. The IAC is a “recurrent vetting” process; thus, USCIS will be notified of any new derogatory information identified up until the applicant’s travel to the U.S.

7) **Security Screening - Syria Enhanced Review:** Syrian refugees referred to the U.S. for resettlement are flagged for an additional security screening (Syria Enhanced Review). Before USCIS schedules an interview with the applicant abroad, Syrian applications are reviewed by a Refugee Affairs Division officer at USCIS headquarters.

- **Fraud Detection and National Security Review:** If USCIS finds certain criteria to be met, the case is referred to the agency's Fraud Detection and National Security Division (FDNS) for further review. This review includes open-source and classified research which is compiled into a report for use by the USCIS interviewing officer.
- 8) **USCIS In-person Interview:** A highly trained USCIS officer will travel to an embassy or secure processing facility accessible to the refugee overseas to conduct a detailed, face-to-face interview with the applicant as well as accompanying family over age 14. The officer evaluates the applicant's credibility and considers whether his or her testimony is consistent with country conditions, other relevant interviews, and supporting information. Based on the interview and the information in the refugee's case file, the officer will determine whether the individual qualifies for resettlement and is otherwise admissible under U.S. law.
- 9) **Approval:** If the necessary criteria are met, the USCIS officer will conditionally approve the refugee's application for resettlement and submit it to DOS for final processing. Conditional approvals become final once the results of all security checks and the medical screening have been received and cleared.
- 10) **Security Screenings – Fingerprints:** With fingerprints and photographs collected by a USCIS officer at the time of the in-person interview (Step 8), USCIS coordinates three biometric checks on the applicant.
- **FBI Screening:** The applicant's fingerprints are run through the FBI's Next Generation Identification System.
  - **DHS Screening:** The applicant's fingerprints are screened against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Automated Biometric Identification System, which includes watch-list information as well as data on previous immigration encounters in the U.S. and abroad.
  - **DOD Screening:** The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) screens fingerprints of refugees within a certain age range against its Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS). ABIS contains a variety of data, including fingerprint records from Iraq.
- 11) **Medical Screenings:** All applicants approved for resettlement in the U.S. are required to undergo medical screenings conducted by the International Organization for Migration or a physician designated by the U.S. Embassy. This screening ensures that the applicant does not have any communicable diseases that could pose a public health threat, and, as such, prohibit his or her admission to the U.S.
- 12) **Matching Refugees with a Sponsor Agency:** As part of the USRAP's public-private partnership, every refugee is assigned to a resettlement agency in the U.S that assists them upon arrival. The agency places refugees with a local office or affiliate that meets them at the airport, sets up an apartment, and assists them with integration upon arrival to the U.S.
- 13) **Cultural Orientation:** In addition, refugees approved for resettlement are offered cultural orientation while waiting for final processing. This orientation prepares them for their journey to and initial resettlement in the U.S.
- 14) **Admission to the United States:** Upon arrival at a U.S. airport designated as a port of entry for refugee admissions, a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will review the refugee's documentation and conduct additional security checks against its National Targeting Center-Passenger program and the Transportation Security Administration's Secure Flight program. CBP ensures that the arriving refugee is the same person who was screened and approved for admission to the U.S.

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### **Additional Resources**

- **White House Infographic: The Screening Process for Refugee Entry into the United States** - [1.usa.gov/1OYqOfD](http://1.usa.gov/1OYqOfD)
- **U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants US Refugee Resettlement Program Refugee Journey Flowchart** - <http://tinyurl.com/hrpjc9q>
- **Letter from former Secretaries of the Department of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano (2009-2013) and Michael Chertoff (2005-2009), on the security of the refugee program**, November 19, 2015 - [bit.ly/1nfv2nw](http://bit.ly/1nfv2nw)
- **Letter to Congress from 20 Former National Security Officials on the security of the refugee program**, December 1, 2015 - <http://tinyurl.com/qd62mez>

# Refugee Council USA

## State and Foreign Operations Appropriations for Displacement Assistance & Solutions

The United States invests in lifesaving humanitarian assistance and permanent solutions for the displaced in accordance with our national values and strategic interests. Forcibly displaced people lack access to the most basic necessities of life, including food and nutrition, clean water, safe shelter, healthcare, education, livelihood, and protection from conflict, war, and violence. Beyond these grave humanitarian concerns, the presence of large populations of forcibly displaced persons is an urgent strategic and security concern for the regions in which they live. U.S. funding helps to meet the basic human needs of persons fleeing persecution while they are displaced, supports permanent solutions to their displacement, and assists the countries hosting them. The U.S. thereby helps to relieve pressures that have the potential to destabilize regions and that also threaten global stability and security.

These investments are focused on two primary functions:

- Overseas Assistance: Provides life-sustaining assistance to refugees, many of whom reside in countries of first asylum neighboring their home countries, and to internally displaced persons.
- Refugee Admissions: Funds activities for the admission of refugees to the United States.

### **FY18 Funding Needs for Refugees and Displaced Persons Pursuant to Certain Accounts of the Department of State**

Accounts for Refugees and Displaced Persons	FY16 Enacted Funding <sup>1</sup> and Related FY17 Funding	FY18 Request
Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)	\$3,059,000,000 <sup>2</sup>	\$3,604,000,000
FY17 MRA Anomaly Funds*	\$300,000,000	
<i>Total for MRA, including anomaly funds</i>	<i>\$3,359,000,000</i>	<i>\$3,604,000,000</i>
International Disaster Assistance (IDA)	\$2,794,000,000	\$2,794,000,000
FY17 IDA Anomaly Funds*	\$616,000,000	\$616,000,000
<i>Total for IDA, including anomaly funds</i>	<i>\$3,410,000,000</i>	<i>\$3,410,000,000</i>
Emergency Refugee and Migration (ERMA)	\$50,000,000	\$50,000,000

\*The FY17 Continuing Resolution (until April 28, 2017) extends FY16 funding levels with an anomaly authorizing \$300 million to be spent for MRA overseas refugee assistance, as well as an additional \$616 million for IDA, both covered by OCO.

<sup>1</sup> FY2016 Appropriation for MRA includes \$2.127 billion from the OCO account. FY 16 appropriation for IDA includes \$1.919 billion from the OCO account.

<sup>2</sup> FY2016 estimated for MRA in SFOPs Congressional Justification is \$3.066 billion after a \$7 million transfer from the FY16 Economic Support Fund.

### **Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)**

The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) Account is administered by the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) in order to help ensure that families fleeing life-threatening situations can find temporary protection in countries where they are displaced. This funding also supports the pursuit of the three durable solutions for refugees: voluntary repatriation back to their home country, integration in a host country of asylum, and third-country resettlement when the first two solutions are not viable.

Overseas Refugee Assistance helps maintain humane, stable conditions for refugees and host communities during the interim period until the refugee crisis can be resolved. It also covers some costs related to refugees' pursuit of durable solutions to their displacement. We are currently facing the worst displacement crisis in recorded history with over 65 million displaced persons worldwide, including over 21 million refugees. The Syria crisis alone has produced nearly 5 million Syrian refugees,<sup>3</sup> and there are other multiple, complex humanitarian emergencies involving displaced people from countries such as South Sudan, Central African Republic, and Iraq.

Refugee Admissions remains a hallmark of U.S. global leadership as out of more than 28 resettlement countries, the U.S. has resettled more than any other country. The resettlement program is a reflection of our American values of freedom, opportunity, and compassion. Providing protection to people seeking safety is one of our nation's proudest and longest standing traditions, including resettling Jewish refugees during World War II, Vietnamese refugees in the 1980s, and more recently refugees from Sudan, Burma/Myanmar, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. Refugees undergo rigorous vetting prior to arrival and contribute to American communities. Given the unprecedented scope of today's global refugee crisis and the urgent need for U.S. leadership, RCUSA recommends that the United States admit at least 75,000 refugees in FY2018.

### **Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA)**

ERMA, an emergency draw-down account that is also administered by PRM, provides an important "safety valve" during emergencies, allowing the United States to meet rapidly-occurring and unforeseen humanitarian needs. This funding allows the U.S. to respond quickly and effectively to unanticipated crises.

### **International Disaster Assistance (IDA)**

The International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account is administered by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) within the Department of State's U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). IDA funds humanitarian assistance to people displaced by disaster, conflict, and war. Longstanding humanitarian crises also continue in Afghanistan, Somalia, and Colombia, causing significant internal displacement and regional pressures. Meeting the needs of internally displaced persons is one way to prevent the need for them to leave their countries of origin and become refugees.

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<sup>3</sup> *Syria Regional Response*, UNHCR, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> [accessed March 10, 2017].

# Refugee Council USA

## Labor-HHS Appropriations for Refugee Integration & Survivor Success

The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) Account provides critical initial investments in the long-term integration and economic success of certain new Americans, including people who are building new lives after surviving persecution, torture, trauma, and human trafficking. It is funded through the appropriations for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Programs (LHHS), and is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). ORR was originally established in 1980 to assist refugees resettled by the United States to obtain self-sufficiency. Today, the account serves over 200,000 people annually and has the following major components:

- Integration services for refugees and asylees (including unaccompanied refugee minors), Cuban and Haitian Entrants, & Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) recipients.
- Special programs for victims of human trafficking and survivors of torture in the U.S.
- Care, placement, and post-arrival services for unaccompanied children (UCs) who are encountered in the U.S. or who present themselves at the U.S. border.

### **FY 2018 Office of Refugee Resettlement Funding Needs for the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) Account of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Programs**

Program Areas	FY16 Enacted Funding	FY18 Request
Transitional & Medical Services	\$490,000,000	\$490,000,000
Social Services	\$155,000,000	\$155,000,000
Refugee Health Promotion	\$4,600,000	\$4,600,000
Targeted Assistance	\$47,601,000	\$47,601,000
<b>Subtotal of Resettlement Services</b>	<b>\$697,201,000</b>	<b>\$697,201,000</b>
Foreign-Born Trafficking Victims	\$13,000,000	\$16,000,000
Domestic Trafficking Victims	\$5,755,000	\$16,000,000
Torture Survivor Assistance	\$10,735,000	\$10,735,000
Unaccompanied Children	\$948,000,000	\$948,000,000
<b>Total – All REA Activities</b>	<b>\$1,674,691,000</b>	<b>\$1,687,936,000</b>
FY17 Contingency Funds	\$500,000,000	\$500,000,000
<b>Grand Total – All REA Activities</b>	<b>\$2,174,691,000</b>	<b>\$2,187,936,000</b>

*The FY17 Continuing Resolution (until April 28, 2016) extends FY16 funding levels with an anomaly authorizing that up to \$500 million could be spent to care for increased numbers of unaccompanied children. RCUSA urges that such funds be available for all ORR populations. Note that an increase of \$13.2 million is requested to serve trafficking survivors, given the 872% increase in the number of victims identified and certified in need of comprehensive, trauma-informed, gender specific services since 2002.*

## **PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

Refugees strengthen our economy. As a result of minimal initial investments upon their arrival and their hard work, refugees are able to become self-sufficient and successful. Refugees pay taxes, support local commerce, and start their own businesses, providing jobs as well as filling jobs for welcoming employers.

- Six months after arriving to the U.S., over 80% of refugees are self-sufficient.
- Over time, refugees' income rise—approaching the median income of the U.S.-born in their first 10-20 years<sup>1</sup> and refugees make increasingly positive fiscal contributions.
- Studies show that people whom the United States welcomes as refugees are more likely to be employed than U.S. born citizens.<sup>2</sup> Refugees in the U.S. start businesses of their own and create jobs in the process. For example, in Cleveland refugees started more than 38 businesses from 2002-2012, with a total of 141 employees (including owners).<sup>3</sup>
- Refugees integrate<sup>4</sup> into American communities, with a large majority of refugees having learned English and becoming homeowners<sup>5</sup> after being in the United States for 10 years, while three-quarters or more become naturalized U.S. citizens after 20 years.
- One report in Tennessee found that refugees contributed almost twice as much in tax revenue as they consumed in state-funded services in the past two decades.<sup>6</sup>
- Refugees fill critical workforce gaps and fuel economic growth in American cities.<sup>7</sup>

## **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

The long-term integration and economic success of refugees are possible because of strong partnerships with the community, employers eager to hire refugees, and the limited but critical investments by the federal government through programs such as:

### **Matching Grant Program**

This public-private partnership is ORR's most successful employment program. It empowers refugees to become self-sufficient within six months without needing to access federal or state assistance programs. The program leverages public funds with private donations at a 2:1 ratio, requiring nongovernmental agencies to match federal government contributions.

### **School Impact Grants**

This highly impactful program provides schools serving refugee children a range of training, resources, and support to help set them and the refugee students they serve up for success. Because of this program, students participate in English classes, after-school and summer activities, and other programs that encourage high school completion.

### **Microenterprise Development Program**

This program helps refugees develop, expand or maintain their own businesses and become financially independent. To equip refugees to become successful entrepreneurs, the program provides training and technical assistance in a range of essential business skills.

### **Human Trafficking Survivor Programs**

Funding enables vital education and prevention for at-risk communities and access to comprehensive and specialized services for the increasing number of identified victims.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/ten-facts-about-us-refugee-resettlement>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/ten-facts-about-us-refugee-resettlement>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/clevelandrefugeeeconomicimpact.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://fiscalpolicy.org/analysis-of-refugee-groups-provides-evidence-of-high-levels-of-integration-across-indicators>

<sup>5</sup> <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/15112912/refugeeintegration.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/tn\\_report\\_federalcostshifting\\_refugeeresettlement.pdf](http://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/tn_report_federalcostshifting_refugeeresettlement.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://rscleveland.org/2016/12/13/local-refugees-fill-talent-gaps-fuel-economic-growth/>



## Fact Sheet: Special Immigrant Visa Program

March 2017

Since 2002, the U.S. Government has employed tens of thousands of Afghan allies to serve and protect alongside U.S. troops, diplomats, and other government employees. Regrettably, these allies and their families soon became the targets of anti-American violence. They continue to be threatened, abducted, and assassinated by our enemies for their allegiance to the U.S. mission.

The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program provides a path to safety for Afghans who worked with U.S. forces, diplomats, and other government personnel, and, as a result of that affiliation, suffer direct threats to their safety. Congress created the program in 2009 with broad bipartisan support. The SIV program has strong support from key military leaders including [Gen. David Petraeus](#), [Gen. Stanley McChrystal](#), and [Gen. John Nicholson](#), who noted that “[f]ailure to adequately demonstrate a shared understanding of their sacrifices. . . could have grave consequences for these individuals and bolster the propaganda [of] our enemies.”

In March 2017, SIV applicants were told that visa interviews were suspended because of a visa shortage. The most recent legislation passed in the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) reauthorized the program for four years, but provided only 1,500 additional visas for more than 13,000 applicants already in the pipeline. This means that all applicants who are not already in late stages of processing will now face indefinite delays until Congress authorizes additional visas.

A bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators have introduced the Keeping Our Promise to Our Afghan Allies Act, which would allocate an additional 2,500 visas to the Afghan SIV program. Congress must act immediately. Thousands of Afghans who served honorably with our troops and government personnel are waiting, facing danger from those who oppose the United States’ mission in Afghanistan.

For further information or inquiries, contact [policy@refugeerights.org](mailto:policy@refugeerights.org).

**Safe Passage. New Beginnings.**

40 Rector St., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10006

T 646.602.5600 • [refugeerights.org](http://refugeerights.org) • [twitter.com/RefugeeAssist](https://twitter.com/RefugeeAssist) • [facebook.com/RefugeeAssist](https://facebook.com/RefugeeAssist)

## **Advocacy Resources & Contact Information for Advocacy Staff**

### **National Sign On Letters Demonstrating Commitment to Refugees**

- Letter from 5,000+ religious leaders in support of resettling refugees of all faiths: [www.interfaithimmigration.org/5000religiousleaderletter](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/5000religiousleaderletter)
- Letter from the Evangelical Immigration Table in support of refugee resettlement: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/cms/assets/uploads/2015/12/EIT-Syrian-refugee-letter.pdf>
- Letter from more than 1,000 rabbis calling on elected leadership to support refugee resettlement: [www.hias.org/sites/default/files/1000\\_rabbis\\_support\\_refugees\\_160115.pdf](http://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/1000_rabbis_support_refugees_160115.pdf)
- Letter from 4,000 + Catholic sisters, priests, and brothers in support of resettling refugees of all faiths: <https://justiceformigrants.org/news/catholic-religious-sign-letter-support-refugee-resettlement/>
- Former National Security Officials Statement on America's Commitment to Refugees: [www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/STATEMENT-ON-AMERICAS-COMMITMENT-TO-REFUGEES.pdf](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/STATEMENT-ON-AMERICAS-COMMITMENT-TO-REFUGEES.pdf)

### **Security Screening and Refugee Processing Backgrounders**

- Department of Homeland Security Refugee Screening Fact Sheet: [www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Refugee,%20Asylum,%20and%20Int'l%20Ops/Refugee\\_Security\\_Screening\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Refugee,%20Asylum,%20and%20Int'l%20Ops/Refugee_Security_Screening_Fact_Sheet.pdf)
- Department of Homeland Security USRAP Flow Chart: [www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Humanitarian/Refugees%20%26%20Asylum/USAP\\_FlowChart\\_V9.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Humanitarian/Refugees%20%26%20Asylum/USAP_FlowChart_V9.pdf)

### **State-by-State Resources**

- RCUSA State Profiles on Refugee Resettlement: [www.rcusa.org/state-refugee-profiles](http://www.rcusa.org/state-refugee-profiles)
- Interfaith Immigration Coalition State-by-State Articles and Demonstrations of Welcome: [www.interfaithimmigration.org/2015/12/03/welcoming-refugees-state-by-state-resources/](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/2015/12/03/welcoming-refugees-state-by-state-resources/)

### **Additional Advocacy Toolkits**

- Interfaith Immigration Coalition Neighbor-to-Neighbor Toolkit: [www.interfaithimmigration.org/neighbor](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/neighbor)
- Justice for Immigrations (JFI) Easter Recess Congressional Meetings Materials: <http://bit.ly/2kpxF5u>
- Refugees Welcome Toolkit: [www.refugeesarewelcome.org/refugees-welcome-toolkit\\_final-8-5-16/](http://www.refugeesarewelcome.org/refugees-welcome-toolkit_final-8-5-16/)
- My Neighbor is Muslim Toolkit: <http://lirs.org/myneighborismuslim/>

### **Executive Order Against Refugees and Muslims**

- Talking Points, Section-by-Section, Asks for Members of Congress: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UX73gwC7JH7i1DXeDREvqpE71o4h3NFso5az33Bt2uk/edit?usp=sharing>
- FAQs on President Trump's Refugee Executive Order: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JA\\_14yqO7Mi4SK3p-yqROpg2N13PEvhnfpd-LpLeJTE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JA_14yqO7Mi4SK3p-yqROpg2N13PEvhnfpd-LpLeJTE/edit?usp=sharing)

### **The following advocacy staff represent organizations working with refugees:**

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