

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0104

November 16, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
Vice Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Colleagues:

In my capacity as Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest, I write to respectfully request that any upcoming appropriations legislation - including any Omnibus legislation - require Congressional approval for the President's refugee resettlement plans and the funds to carry them out.

In a formal notice to Congress, the administration announced its plan to increase refugee admissions for Fiscal Year 2016 to at least a floor of 85,000, with at least 10,000 of those refugees coming from Syria (all on top of the current historic immigration flow). Absent a change in the way in which Congress provides funds for refugee admissions, processing, and related matters, this ramp-up will occur despite both public and Congressional opposition.

In testimony before my Subcommittee, administration officials confirmed that our government has no access to Syrian government data to properly vet refugees and has no capacity to predict whether Syrian refugees are likely to join ISIS, as have many, for example, in Minnesota's Somali refugee community. On October 22, 2015, FBI Director James Comey confirmed this in testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, repeatedly stating that the government does not have the resources and lacks the necessary information to fully vet Syrian refugees, and could not offer any assurances that there is no risk associated with admitting these individuals to the country.

Our track record on screening is very poor. My Subcommittee has identified *at least* 26 foreign-born individuals inside the United States charged with or convicted of terrorism over approximately the last year alone.

The barbaric attacks in Paris - an assault on civilization itself - add immense new urgency. As the former head of the USCIS union warned in a public statement more

than a year ago: “as we know from the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, from the 9/11 terrorist attacks, from the Boston Bombing, from the recent plot to bomb a school and courthouse in Connecticut, and many other lesser-known terror incidents, we are letting terrorists into the United States right through our front door.”

Additionally, every cent of spending on refugee resettlement will have to be borrowed and added to the debt. The \$1.2 billion resettlement cost put forth by the administration represents only a minute fraction of the total un-offset cost. The \$1.2 billion figure is only the initial placement and start-up cost: it does not include the cost of federal welfare and entitlements, free healthcare, or state and local benefits – all of which will be paid out over the entire lifetime of the resettled individual. Indeed, a footnote in the administration’s report to Congress casually observes that the line item for the Office of Refugee Resettlement “does not include costs associated with the . . . Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, [or the] Supplemental Security Income programs[.]” Nor does it include long-term benefits like food stamps, or any other welfare programs that refugees will be able to collect for life. HHS’ own data shows that more than 90% of recent Middle Eastern refugees receive food stamps and approximately 70% receive cash welfare and government-funded healthcare.

Robert Rector, Senior Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, estimates the *net* cost of resettling 10,000 refugees averages out to \$6.5 billion over the lifespan of those refugees. With such a forecast, the President’s proposal to resettle 85,000 refugees this fiscal year alone will result in a net cost of approximately \$55.25 billion.

For the same cost of providing benefits to one refugee in America, vastly more refugees could be helped by establishing safe-zones in Syria or surrounding countries until displaced persons can be safely returned home. This is the strategy likeliest to produce long-term political reform in the Middle East. It is not sound policy to encourage millions to permanently abandon their homes. We have resettled 1.5 million migrants from Muslim nations in the United States since 9/11, and it clearly has not contributed to the stabilization of unstable regions. Under current admissions policies, we can be expected to resettle another nearly 700,000 migrants from Muslim countries over the next five years.

Regardless of one’s view of the best policy, it cannot be disputed that Congress must reassert control over our immigration system.

For the above reasons, I attached suggested language at the end of this letter that I request be included in any government funding bills that include funding for refugee resettlement operations. This language would accomplish four primary things:

- It would require Congress to hold a separate vote on the President’s refugee resettlement plan to unlock funding for the plan.

- It would require the Congressional Budget Office to produce a full cost score of long-term federal spending on refugee resettlement, including all welfare and entitlement spending.
- It would require the administration to propose offsets to fully pay for refugee resettlement.
- It would require the administration to identify aliens admitted to the United States as refugees since 2001 who subsequently engaged in criminal or terrorist conduct

Absent such basic requirements, the following is certain: the administration will dramatically increase the number of refugees admitted into the United States on top of our current historic immigration flow; the United States will begin resettling tens of thousands of poorly-vetted Syrian refugees who will eventually be able to bring in their relatives; all of the exorbitant long-term costs for this resettlement will be borrowed and added to our now \$18.4 trillion debt. The current proposal will amount to a blank check to President Obama to carry out his entire refugee resettlement plan.

Immigration policy affects every aspect of society. Our constituents are entitled to have their Congress consider the issue carefully, since the President's plan will take money directly out of American's Social Security and Medicare retirement trust funds - while adding substantially to our nation's long-term deficits.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Very truly yours,



Jeff Sessions  
Chairman,  
Subcommittee on Immigration  
and the National Interest

*Sec. \_\_\_\_ None of the funds made available by this Act or any other Act for any fiscal year may be obligated or expended to adjudicate or accept any application for the Refugee Admissions Program during this fiscal year, or to admit any refugee under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. § 1107) during this fiscal year, until a joint resolution is enacted into law that approves the number of refugees determined by the President to be admitted during this fiscal year.*

*Sec. \_\_\_\_ None of the funds made available by this Act or any other Act for any fiscal year may be obligated or expended to provide any benefits to refugees admitted during this fiscal year or in any future fiscal year, whether provided directly by the federal government or provided indirectly by any State or local unit of government or through any organization with the use of federal funds, until the Congressional Budget Office submits a report to the Judiciary Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives that identifies: (1) the total estimated cost of the Refugee Admissions Program, including, but not limited to, anticipated costs for providing benefits to new refugees such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, and any other benefits made available to refugees; (2) the total estimated cost of providing any benefits to individuals admitted as refugees who subsequently adjust to lawful permanent resident status; and, (3) the total estimated cost associated with admitting and resettling a single refugee over the average refugee's lifespan. Provided further, that after the submission of such a report, that none of the funds made available by this Act or any other Act for any fiscal year may be obligated or expended to provide any benefits to refugees admitted during this fiscal year or in any future fiscal year, until the submission of a report by the President that identifies offsetting cuts in other federal spending to account for the total estimated cost of admitting the number of refugees determined by the President under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. § 1107).*

*Sec. \_\_\_\_ None of the funds made available by this Act or any other Act for any fiscal year may be obligated or expended to adjudicate or accept any application for the Refugee Admissions Program during this fiscal year or in any future fiscal year, or to admit any refugee under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. § 1107) during this fiscal year, until the Secretary of Homeland Security submits a report to the Judiciary Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives that identifies: (1) the total number of individuals who were admitted to the United States as refugees, or who were granted asylee status, since 2001, who were subsequently identified as having an affiliation with terrorism in any manner; (2) the total number of children of individuals who were admitted to the United States as refugees, or who were granted asylee status, since 2001, who were subsequently identified as having an affiliation with terrorism in any manner; (3) the total number of individuals who were admitted to the United States as refugees, or who were granted asylee status, since 2001, who were subsequently arrested or convicted for any criminal offense in the United States; (4) the total number of individuals who were admitted to the United States as refugees, or who were granted asylee status, since 2001, who subsequently adjusted to lawful permanent resident status with a waiver granted under section 209(c) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. § 1109(c)); and (5) the total*

*number of individuals who were admitted to the United States as refugees, or who were granted asylee status, since 2001, who were subsequently removed from the United States for any reason.*