



Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.

# VOTE FOR WELCOME

Making a Difference for  
Refugees during the 2018  
Midterm Elections

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## INTRODUCTION

The Midterm Elections on November 6, 2018 present an important opportunity for us to elect leaders who represent our values and priorities. Midterm elections are general elections that happen every four years, and take place about midway through a sitting president's four-year term. This November, 435 House seats and 35 Senate seats will be determined through the midterm elections. Additionally, there are 36 gubernatorial races, and many state and local races as well. This year midterm elections are especially important because they are a moment in which we can show that we stand against unconscionable policies, specifically those that slam the doors on refugees, and elect leaders who can begin to shift the tide back toward compassion and protection.

The American Jewish community, in partnership with other faith communities, is raising a moral voice for refugees all across the country. This election season, we must reach out to candidates running for office in all political parties, at all levels of government, to stand with us, as we stand with refugees.

The Vote for Welcome campaign has **three core strategies**. Additional ways to get involved this election season can be found starting on page 4.

You can visit the Vote for Welcome campaign at [www.hias.org/election-campaign](http://www.hias.org/election-campaign).

## STRATEGY OVERVIEW

### **Strategy 1: Candidate Education**

Directly contact candidates, both new candidates and incumbents, who are running for office in your area, to talk to them about your support for refugees, and to ask them to support refugees publicly through a statement, social media, or another platform. You can do this by setting up a meeting, speaking with them at a public event, and more. To learn more, review the **HOW TO: Election Outreach** and **HOW TO: Candidate Outreach** sections in this toolkit.

### **Strategy 2: "Missing Neighbors" Poster Campaign**

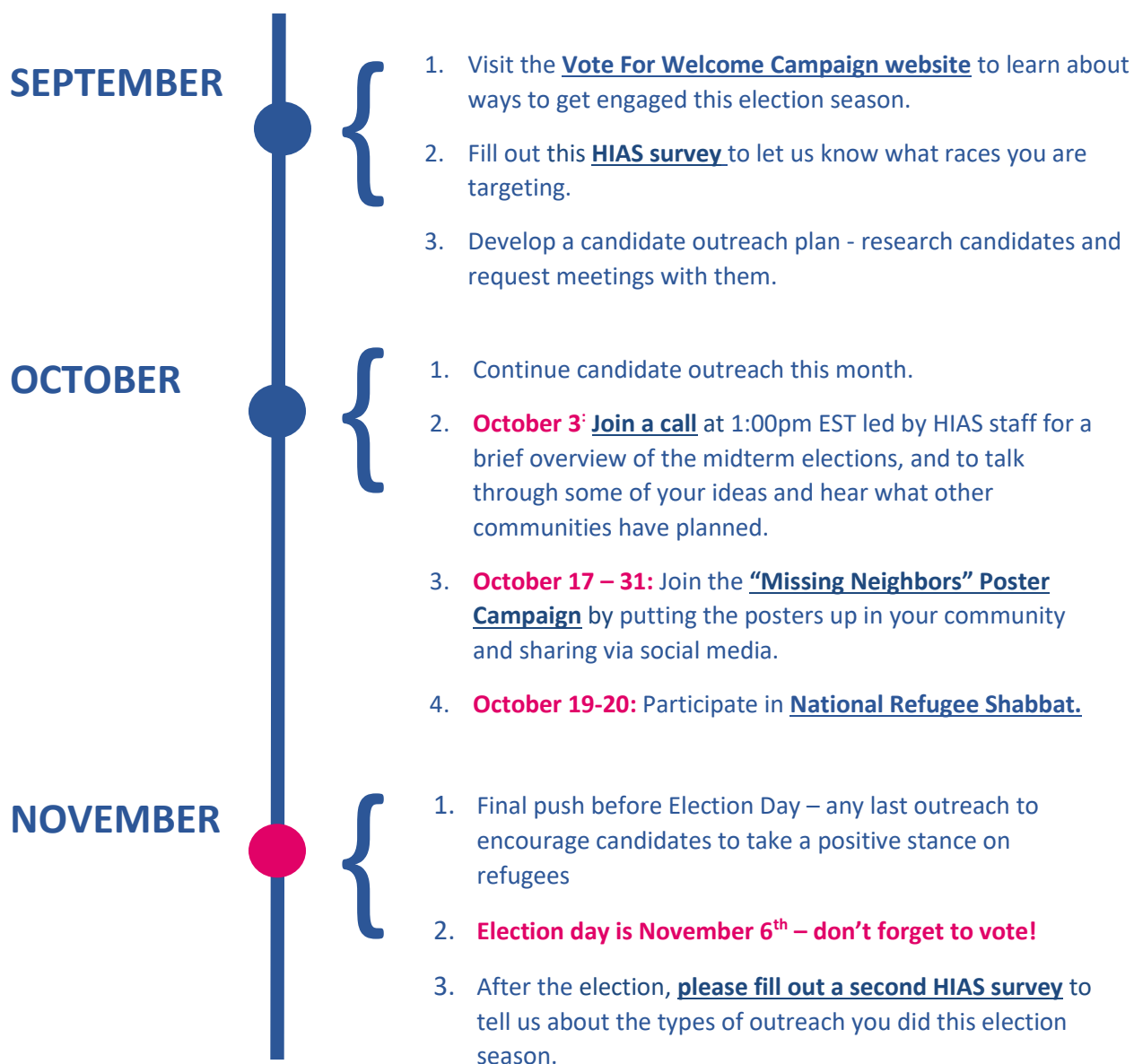
The number of refugees currently being admitted into the country is the lowest it has ever been. Make sure that candidates, your neighbors, community members, and fellow voters understand this with the **"Missing Neighbors" poster campaign**. We're asking you to hang posters around your neighborhood during the last week of October, then broadcast them as much as possible through your social media channels. For directions and to download posters, go to [www.hias.org/missing-neighbors](http://www.hias.org/missing-neighbors) or [click here](#).

### Strategy 3: National Refugee Shabbat

There is deep support for the refugee program in the American Jewish community, and we will demonstrate that in over 100 communities around the country on October 19-20 - right before the election. Ask your synagogue or community to join [National Refugee Shabbat](#) or participate as an individual.

### ELECTION OUTREACH TIMELINE

Below you will find a guide for when to do election outreach. Participation in the Vote for Welcome campaign does not require involvement with all of these tactics – choose what makes sense for you and your community. You can choose one of the tactics or try to do them all. With the critical midterm election season upon us, anything and everything you can do to encourage candidates to take a positive stance on refugees is helpful.



## **KNOW THE RULES: Election Outreach Rules and Best Practices**

Before you do any candidate, field, or media, outreach, be sure to familiarize yourself with the rules of your state election board, the commission that oversees election procedures in your state and ensures that candidates and advocates follow the rules. Please read through these carefully and always ask questions if you are unsure. To find this information, you can visit your state's Secretary of State website. You can also visit your local election board and ask questions about appropriate election outreach. Note that the rules below apply to organizations. **If you are working on behalf of an organization or a group that is a registered 501(c)(3), these rules apply to you.**

### **IF YOU ARE DOING ELECTION OUTREACH FOR AN ORGANIZATION OR 501(C)(3), YOU CAN:**

- Reach out to all candidates, regardless of political party. All contact with and materials sent to campaigns should be the same for every candidate running for a particular elected position. You **must** send the same information to **all** candidates. If a candidate or campaign asks for additional materials, you can send them, but never tailor materials to a specific candidate's needs. This goes for speaking engagements as well. If you invite one candidate to speak at an election event, you must invite all candidates running for that position.
- Documenting your Outreach: Keep a calendar and a check-list of each time you reached out to the candidate, what you sent, and what was discussed. Do this for candidates reaching out to you as well. The more information you record, the better. This will help you with your outreach efforts and relationship building.
- Promote civic engagement in your community: You can help register voters as long as it is designed to educate the public about the importance of voting, and does not show any bias for or against a specific political party or candidate.
- Issue Advocacy: During an election you can provide information to candidates and the community on your issue, but stick to talking about refugees and promoting refugee protection, not candidates.

### **IF YOU ARE DOING ELECTION OUTREACH FOR AN ORGANIZATION OR 501(C)(3), YOU CANNOT:**

- Promote any particular candidate: You cannot support or oppose a declared candidate or promote one candidate for an office over another. You also cannot contribute time or money to one candidate, or encourage anyone else to do so.
- Ask a candidate to sign a pledge or public endorsement of support for refugees
- Write a speech or op-ed, or create materials specific to a candidate's message
- Explain or discuss that one candidate is better for their views on refugee protection than another

## CHART A COURSE OF ACTION

Engaging candidates and community members in a conversation about refugee protection is a perfect way to educate people about this critical issue. Below you will find some ideas on how you can help raise the profile of refugee issues during election season.

- Step 1: EDUCATE
  - **YOU CAN** help register local voters.
  - **YOU CAN** meet with candidates and provide information on refugee issues, including talking points and social media content they can easily use.
  
- Step 2: ENGAGE
  - **YOU CAN** hang up #MissingNeighbors posters in your community
  - **YOU CAN** invite all candidates to an event you host where community members and refugees come together.
  - **YOU CAN** ask candidates questions at events to get them on the record stating their position on refugee protection issue.
  - **YOU CAN** contact campaigns and work with community partners to propose refugee issues as a topic for debates, issue forums, and town hall meetings.
  - **YOU CAN** participate in National Refugee Shabbat on October 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>.
  - **YOU CAN** Request meetings with editorial boards and local print media outlets to provide them with fact sheets and information on refugee protection, and urge them to write about these issues.
  - **YOU CAN** be active on social media about your support for refugees, and can use these platforms to urge candidates to do the same.
  
- Step 3: ACTIVATE
  - **YOU CAN** gather high-profile supporters, or refugees to write op-eds for local publications.
  - **YOU CAN** bring your network together to attend events and speak to voters about refugees. Look to the networks of other organizations working on similar issues to promote and support each other's events and get candidates to attend.
  - **YOU CAN** meet directly with campaign staff to begin educating them on refugee issues, with an emphasis on the refugee community in your area.

## HOW TO: PREPARING TO DO ELECTION OUTREACH

### CHOOSING WHO TO CONTACT

Visit [this link](#) to find out who is running for office in your area. **Then fill out [this survey on the Vote for Welcome site, to let us know what races you are targeting.](#)**

Candidates running for office at all levels of government will benefit from learning about the history of, and current policies around, refugee resettlement in the U.S. It is important to remember that your job as an advocate is not to express support for one candidate over another, but to educate potential elected officials about U.S. refugee protection issues. It is about issue-education, which means that **you should be reaching out to candidates in all viable political parties and providing them with educational materials.**

### PREPARING FOR OUTREACH

- Doing your research is **critical** for being an effective advocate. Before a meeting you should determine where a candidate stands on refugees - have they spoken out on refugees in the past? Some examples of things you will want to research, are:
  1. *What have they said about refugees?* Has the candidate discussed the refugee resettlement program? If they have spoken out in favor of refugee resettlement, you can thank them. If they have a record for not supporting refugee resettlement, plan to find out why. Have they cited reasons for not supporting the program? If so, build your talking points to address their concerns in a respectful manner.
  2. *What did they do before they ran for office?* A candidate's profession impacts their perspective. It is your job as an advocate to discuss topics and frame issues in a way that will resonate with them. For instance, a candidate who is a local businessman may respond most positively to information about the economic contributions of refugees in your community.
- Choose a strategy: Determine what type of outreach you want to do by exploring the ideas in this toolkit. You can also contact HIAS staff to help you plan, or join a call at [this link](#) to talk through some of your ideas and hear what other communities have planned. There are three major types of outreach you can do, including:
  1. Candidate Outreach: You always want to start by reaching out directly to all campaigns, utilizing the results of your research.
  2. Field Outreach: You can host events, or encourage others in your network to host, as well as doing "get out the vote" work.
  3. Media Outreach: You can contact local publications or use social media to raise the issue of refugees.
- Gather your team: When choosing who will help you, consider your research. Based on what you have learned about the candidate(s), ask yourself who in your community could be the most influential. This could include religious leaders, business owners, or community leaders who can speak to the benefits of a robust refugee resettlement program in your community. You may also decide to engage in this outreach on your own.

## #1: CANDIDATE OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

### CANDIDATE EDUCATION

One of the best ways to get a Candidate talking about refugees is to meet with them directly or attend campaign events.

Each Candidate should have a website or a social media page where contact information and campaign events can be found. If you have trouble finding an official site, you can always search their name on Twitter, or Google their name to find out more information.

### SETTING UP A MEETING

Once you find the contact information, call or email the office to request a meeting with the Candidate, or to find out about upcoming events.

- Where you work, and what you do:** Keep this part short, but do give them some background and make it known that you are a constituent. If you are requesting a meeting on behalf of your organization, attaching hyperlinks to your email is a useful way to provide more information. If you are requesting a meeting as an individual, make sure to include whether others will join you.
- What date you would like to meet:** You want to be flexible and offer multiple dates and times if possible.
- What you would like to discuss in the meeting:** This could be as simple as saying you want to discuss refugee resettlement in the district, or the future of the refugee resettlement program.

### THE MEETING

Setting up a meeting is the easy part. Now that you have a time and date to meet with the Candidate, think about what you will say in the meeting. You should tell the Candidate:

- Who you are, why you care about refugees, and why they should care about refugees:** Keep this part concise, but do give them some background on why you would like to meet, and make it known that you are a potential constituent. Think back to your research and choose talking points (Found in Appendix #2) that will appeal to them. If you are requesting a meeting on behalf of your organization, attaching hyperlinks to your email is a useful way to provide more information. If you are requesting a meeting as an individual, make sure to include whether others will join you.
- What Your Ask Is:** Be sure to always include a clear and concise ask when meeting with candidates. This election season ask your candidate to: **make a public statement in support of refugee resettlement.** You can even give them some of the sample statements and social media posts found in Appendix #3.

### FOLLOW-UP

After meeting with or speaking to a Candidate you should send a proper follow-up. Be sure to:

- Say thank-you:** Always thank them for their time or for appearing and answering questions
- Reiterate the asks:** Be sure to reiterate the asks from the meeting.



- Send additional information:** Send along documents or information that you think they could use like talking points or example social media. You can also strengthen yours asks by sending along any supplementary information (one-pagers, news articles, event invitations).

## MAINTAIN THE RELATIONSHIP

The work of an advocate doesn't end with the follow-up email. **Successful advocates maintain relationships.** Keeping the lines of communication open can help you in the future – especially if the candidate wins the election. The best way to continue building relationships is to keep engaging them. You can do this by:

- Invite them to any refugee related community events.
- Keep them updated on policy or legislative changes
- Thank candidate if they put out a statement in support of refugees, attend an event, or discuss refugees in a public forum.

## #2: FIELD OUTREACH

Another way to do outreach during election season is by hosting public events, helping increase civic engagement, or by participating in national campaigns to bring refugee issues to the attention of candidates and communities.

### THE MISSING NEIGHBORS CAMPAIGN

One way to build awareness about the positive impacts and contributions that refugees make to your neighborhood and community is to participate in our Missing Neighbors Campaign.

During the last week of October, hang our #MissingNeighbors signs in your community, to show that not only does your community want to welcome refugees with open arms, but that your community is affected by the decline in refugee admissions, and notices that fewer refugees are coming to the United States.

Then take a picture of the sign in your neighborhood and post it on Facebook and Twitter. You can even put them in your neighborhood Facebook group or community forum. Make sure to use the hashtag #MissingNeighbors and tell us where you are.

This project can be done by an individual, hanging one or two signs on your block, or by a synagogue, campus, or community group. It can also be done with kids or teens.

Check [www.hias.org/missing-neighbors](http://www.hias.org/missing-neighbors) for information on the Missing Neighbors project, and for the posters themselves.

### HOST OR ATTEND A CAMPAIGN EVENT

Build public awareness about refugees in your community by hosting an educational event or program. You can use HIAS' educational programs and materials, or invite local experts and speakers.

You can also find candidate contact information online, and should invite them to speak, in effect encouraging them to make a public statement in support of refugees at the event. Events can take the form of:

- Town hall meetings:** Attend a candidate town hall. These are great opportunities to ask candidates questions and get them on the record about refugees. Bring signs or wear hats or stickers to visibly show your support for refugees.
- Candidate forums:** Sponsor a candidate forum with other community partners and invite all candidates or encourage community members to attend forums sponsored by other organizations.
- Debates:** You can sponsor a candidate debate in your community. Make sure that you have invited all candidates and provide them with equal opportunities to speak, that an independent panel has prepared the questions, and that broad range of topics are covered including, but not limited to, refugees.

### INCREASING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: VOTER REGISTRATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

If you are interested in other ways to encourage civic engagement in your community this election cycle, you can volunteer as a poll watcher or worker, or help register new voters.

Use these links to learn more about civic engagement opportunities and the voting laws in your state:

- [Voting ID laws by state](#)
- [Early and absentee voting by state](#)

### #3: MEDIA OUTREACH

A great way to disseminate your message and begin making the case for refugee resettlement to a wide community audience is to reach out to media sources who can write stories, ask questions, or include blurbs about refugees.

#### TRADITIONAL MEDIA

- Letters to the Editor or Op-Eds:** Sending a letter to the editor of your local paper, or working to get an op-ed by an influential community member, refugee, or yourself, in a paper, is a great way to disseminate your message about supporting refugees. Read the paper before submitting to get a feel for the types of letters they publish.
  - Send a copy of your letter to several different publications; it will increase your chances of having it picked-up.
  - If your local paper writes a good piece about refugees, use that as an opportunity to submit a letter. Thank them for their attention to refugees and reference their piece in your letter.
- Editorial Boards and Reporters:** You can also identify who at local papers covers refugee issues and begin sending them materials, such as: fact sheets, information on refugee resettlement in

the area, and other relevant data. If you reach out and provide information to the right people you are putting refugee issues on their radar.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media is a powerful tool and many people get their news directly from social media. It provides each and every person a platform and a public voice, which you can use to raise the volume of support for refugees. Consider using your platform to:

- Post positive stories about refugees and refugee resettlement, including your own personal story about why you care about the issues.
- Correct misinformation about refugees.
- Reach out to candidates with facts, data, or information about refugees.
- Point out when candidates running for office have made positive statements about refugees (and thank them for it)!
- Participate in (and amplify) the #MissingNeighbors poster campaign in the last week of office.

You should also consider directly providing social media guidance and content to candidates who are interested in speaking out for refugees, which can be found in Appendix #3.

## APPENDIX 1 - MAKING THE CASE FOR REFUGEES

You want candidates to know that supporting refugees is important to your community and voters. Provide candidates with talking points, short statements, and social media posts, as well as data and reports on the contributions of refugees in your community. This could include:

- Numbers of refugees resettled in your community or state
- Polling data on your community's support for refugees
- Anecdotal examples of your community's welcome for refugees
- Letters or media showing your community's support for refugees
- Lists of local synagogues on the [HIAS Welcome Campaign](#), or local Rabbis who signed the [National Rabbinic Letter in Support of Welcome for Refugees](#)
- Partnering with other organizations who also care about refugees, and whose agendas fit with yours. Through the participants in your meeting/initiative, show that there is broad community support for refugees

When speaking with candidates, always have a few key talking points on hand, for example:

- There are 68.5 million people displaced across the globe, 25.4 million of which are refugees, half of whom are children.
- Resettlement is an option for less than 1% of all refugees; only those for whom no other alternative solution is available. In the U.S. we focus our resettlement efforts on the most vulnerable refugees, including, women and children, victims of torture, and religious minorities.
- The U.S. has historically been the global resettlement leader, helping more than 3 million people in the last 40 years.

## **APPENDIX 2 – TOOLS FOR ADVOCATES**

When you go into a meeting with candidates or their staff, you want to ensure that you are prepared to make the case for refugee resettlement. Use the following talking points as a guide for your meeting:

### **TOPLINE TALKING POINTS**

1. Today, we are facing the worst refugee crisis in recorded history. There are over 68 million displaced people in the world, with over 25 million refugees worldwide. Fewer than 1% of refugees will ever be resettled to a third country.
2. Last year, the Trump administration announced a refugee admissions goal of 45,000, the lowest in the 38-year history of the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Since the program's inception, the United States has set an average refugee admissions goal of 95,000 refugees and has resettled up to 200,000 refugees in certain years.
3. Despite the Administration's refugee admissions goal of 45,000, the U.S. only resettled about 20,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2018 (October 1 2017 – September 30 2018).
4. The resettlement program is a small, life-saving program. It protects the most vulnerable refugees and helps to unite families fractured by forced migration. It serves as a powerful foreign policy tool for the United States.

### **THE UNITED STATES REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM TALKING POINTS**

5. U.S. refugee resettlement was standardized by the Refugee Act of 1980, but the U.S. was resettling refugees long before that. 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 1980 the U.S. has resettled over 3 million refugees.
6. Based on 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.
7. There are nine national refugee resettlement agencies in the U.S. Their successful public-private partnership with the State Department allows them to resettle refugee families and help to facilitate successful transition to life in the U.S. and help to attain swift self-sufficiency.
8. The refugee admissions goal for each fiscal year is at the discretion of the President. After consultation with Congress, the President sets an annual admissions number, known as the Presidential Determination (PD)
9. Resettlement provides safe haven in a third country when no other options for safety are available. The U.S. has historically been the global resettlement leader, helping those who have no other options for protection, including, women and children, victims of torture, and religious minorities.

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS/GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF REFUGEES TALKING POINTS

10. Once resettled, refugees not only contribute to their new communities economically, but also play an active role in civic engagement, participate in the labor force, maintain a strong devotion to education, purchase homes, and become U.S. citizens.
11. Refugees generate economic growth for the country and create jobs in their local communities. Many industries, like hospitality and meatpacking, now rely heavily on refugee workers. Across the U.S., the low number of refugee arrivals is putting an unnecessary strain on businesses, especially so in rural areas.
12. In some communities, the rate of entrepreneurship among refugees is twice that of the general population. Refugees are more apt to invest in businesses, making them job creators in their local communities where they often operate businesses that offer everyday goods and services - key components of a strong economy.
13. Refugees contribute billions in taxes to the U.S. economy, and over a 20-year-period, contribute \$21,000 more in taxes than the initial investment to resettle them. In 2015, refugees contributed \$21 billion in taxes to the U.S.

## REFUGEES ARE NOT A SECURITY THREAT TALKING POINTS

14. We recognize that our national security is of the utmost importance. Refugees are the most vetted individuals entering the United States, and undergo complex security checks through the Department Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, State Department, Department of Defense, the National Counterterrorism Center, and other U.S. intelligence agencies. It can take between 18-24 months for a refugee to be vetted.
15. National security experts have repeatedly said that the refugee resettlement program advances our national security interests and contributes to keeping our troops safe around the world. Abdicating our role as a global leader in refugee resettlement shows a neglect for our national security interests and moral responsibilities.

## ASKS FOR CANDIDATES:

- **We urge you to go on the record in support of refugee resettlement in your state/district/community.**
  - **Attend our community event and meet with refugees**
  - **Discuss refugees at a local town hall event or participate in a local debate or forum where refugees are being discussed**

## QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES ON REFUGEES

1. What are your views on the U.S. response to the global refugee crisis today?
2. How do you feel about refugee resettlement in our community?
3. If elected, will you press the Administration to restore the United States' role as a global leader in refugee protection by increasing the number of refugees resettled in the U.S.?

## APPENDIX 3 – TOOLS FOR CANDIDATES

### STATEMENTS FOR CANDIDATES

“At a time when our world is facing the worst refugee crisis in recorded history, the U.S. should be doing more – not less – to help refugees. Cutting the refugee admissions number any further would be a complete abdication of our commitment to protect the world’s most vulnerable. I believe that our community should welcome families fleeing war, violence, and persecution in their homes.”

“Refugee resettlement is critical in our ability to help alleviate regional instability, maintain relationships with important allies, and advance our national security and foreign policy interests. Refugee resettlement supports our allies in refugee hosting countries and reinforces stability and liberty around the world, while also offering a strong counter-weight to the anti-American narratives of terrorist organizations. “

The United States refugee resettlement system emphasizes early self-sufficiency through employment. Refugees not only contribute to their new communities economically through the creation of businesses and by purchasing homes, but also play an active role in civic engagement.”

“Historically, refugee policy has been bipartisan – even nonpartisan. Presidents from both political parties have spearheaded efforts to lead on refugee resettlement because it embodies the best of American ideals. It’s who we are. Republicans and Democrats have raised refugee admissions for populations fleeing communist uprisings, religious persecution and tyranny in countries like Vietnam, Cuba, the former Soviet Union, Kosovo, Myanmar, and Iran.”

“As the United States aims to put its values and interests first, it must not forget that offering freedom from oppression is a crucible of its founding. Resettling refugees is a way that the U.S. can live out its core values and ensure a more stable and democratic world.”

### SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CANDIDATES

- Every year, #Refugees open businesses, revitalize towns, become citizens & give back to the communities that welcomed them.
- #Refugees bring their resiliency & experiences to help make our communities better. #RefugeesWelcome
- Did you know that 51% of #Refugees are children? These kids miss out on school, safety, and the joys of childhood.
- The US has been a global leader in the protection of refugees and must continue to set an example as a safe haven. #RefugeesWelcome
- The US Refugee Resettlement Program is a lifesaving, public-private partnership for #refugees with no other means of finding safety. #GreaterAs1
- Every minute, 24 people are forced to flee their homes because of war or persecution. #RefugeesWelcome

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT REMINDER**

HIAS does not support, endorse, or oppose any candidate running for political office. Like many synagogues and organizations, we are a non-partisan 501c3 organization. Our goal is to educate candidates and voters about the refugee program – regardless of political party or affiliation.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

HIAS staff members are available for support and consultation on a wide range of tactics. Thank you for joining us in the important work to ensure that the U.S. can continue to welcome refugees.

For general guidance on election initiatives, or for guidance on the “Missing Neighbors” poster campaign, contact Rebecca Kirzner at [rebecca.kirzner@hias.org](mailto:rebecca.kirzner@hias.org)

For guidance on meetings with candidates, contact Liz Mandelman at [elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org](mailto:elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org)

For guidance on National Refugee Shabbat, contact Rachel Grant Meyer at [rachel.grant.meyer@hias.org](mailto:rachel.grant.meyer@hias.org)