

# What to know about Refugee Resettlement

*Platform, Talking Points, and Policy Asks*



Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.

## Platform

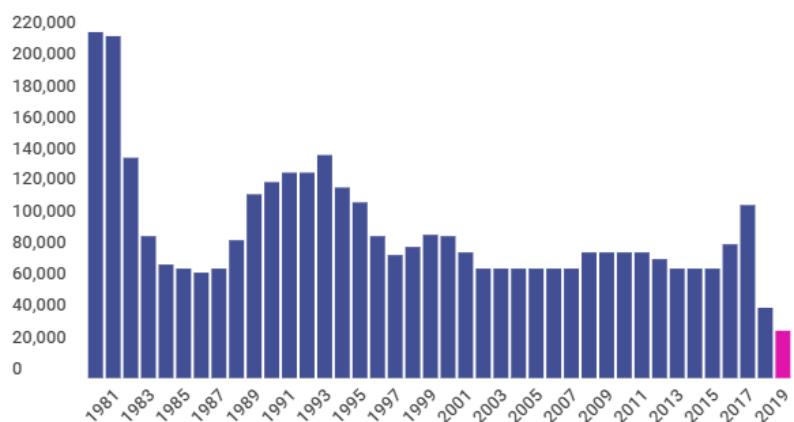
The necessity of a robust U.S. refugee resettlement program is perhaps now more important than ever. With global displacement numbers growing, the U.S. commitment to refugee resettlement is critical in order to meet the protection needs of some of the world's most vulnerable populations. Today there are over 79 million individuals, 26 million of whom are refugees, displaced from their homes worldwide. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1.4 million refugees are in immediate need of resettlement. These refugees often have specific safety, medical, or other vulnerabilities that make it impossible for them to successfully integrate in the country they have fled to or return home.

For decades, the U.S. was the global leader in refugee protection, proudly resettling over three million refugees in 40 years and resettling the largest number of refugees globally per year. Today the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) looks much different. The program is being dismantled, with historically low resettlement numbers, and a series of executive orders aimed at completely halting refugee admissions, reducing the annual refugee admissions goal, and prohibiting the entry of foreign nationals from seven (later changed to six) Muslim-majority countries. In September 2019, the Administration issued its latest executive order targeting the USRAP, allowing governors and local elected officials to veto resettlement in their states and cities - an unprecedented move that has been temporarily halted by the courts.

### PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION

Since the formalization of the USRAP in 1980, the refugee admissions goal, known as the Presidential Determination (PD) has averaged 95,000 per year, with actual annual admissions averaging 85,000 refugees. In January 2017, the Administration lowered the PD to 50,000. In each year since, the PD has been slashed: 45,000 in FY2018; 30,000 in FY2019; and 18,000 in FY2020 - a new historic low, which will likely not be met due to the COVID pandemic.

### Presidential Determination 1980-2019



For decades a robust PD provided protection and security to the world's most vulnerable refugees, it signaled the United States commitment to supporting refugees, and encouraged other countries to participate in resettlement and expand their protection programs.

After over 40 years of bipartisan support and dedication to refugee protection, the United States is no longer the global leader in refugee resettlement. This has had a profound impact on refugee protection around the world. Increasing the PD would allow the United States to assist more of the world's most vulnerable refugees, and would set the tone for other countries around the world.

## FUNDING

A commitment to admit more refugees must be matched with increased funding to rebuild resettlement infrastructure and to ensure that refugees have access to the services and support that they need to integrate quickly and successfully upon arrival to the U.S. Providing a safe haven for refugees means adequately funding the USRAP to provide assistance for newly arrived refugees as they become self-sufficient, and assisting the local communities that welcome them.

Adequate funding is critical to assist with the integration, health, and self-sufficiency of refugees once they arrive in the United States. Funding helps to maintain programs that help refugees to enter the workforce, ensures health promotion, financial literacy, and other programs that serve survivors of human trafficking and are critical to the successful integration of refugees into communities across the country.

In addition to funding the USRAP, the U.S. needs to recommit to responsibility sharing by providing robust overseas assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons for whom durable long-term solutions may not be readily available.

## Talking Points

When speaking with candidates, always have a few key talking points on hand. Start with these:

1. Today, we are facing the worst refugee crisis in recorded history. There are over 79.5 million forcibly displaced people in the world, with 26 million refugees worldwide.
2. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) predicts that 1.44 million refugees will be in need of resettlement in 2020. However, fewer than 1% of refugees will ever be resettled to a third country.<sup>1</sup>
3. The U.S. has been resettling refugees for decades. In the aftermath of World War II, Congress enacted the first refugee legislation, providing refuge to over 650,000 displaced Europeans. Since the U.S. resettlement program was formalized through the Refugee Act of 1980, the U.S. has been the global resettlement leader has resettled over 3 million refugees.

---

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Figures at a Glance, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

4. Since the program's inception, the United States has set an average refugee admissions goal of 95,000 refugees and on average, has resettled 80,000 refugees annually. In some years, the U.S. resettled up to 200,000 refugees. This year, the administration set a refugee admissions goal of 18,000, the lowest in the history of the 38-year resettlement program.
5. 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.
6. Resettlement provides a safe haven where no other durable solution for safety is 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.
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 facilitate successful transition to life in the U.S. and help to attain swift self-sufficiency.

#### **ECONOMIC BENEFITS/GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF REFUGEES TALKING POINTS**

1. 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.
2. Refugees across the country have brought their skills and their devotion to helping communities fight the spread of COVID-19. For instance, about one-third of New York State's health care workers are immigrants and refugees.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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 more than \$100 million to state and local government through the tax system and contributed \$21 billion in taxes overall.<sup>2</sup>

### **REFUGEES ARE NOT A SECURITY THREAT TALKING POINTS**

1. 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, and sometimes longer, from the time a refugee is referred to the USRAP to the time of arrival.
2. 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.
3. Resettlement is critical to 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 around the world, while also offering a strong counter-weight to the anti-American narratives of terrorist organizations.

## **Policy Asks**

When speaking with candidates, always make a few direct asks.

1. **Restore U.S. leadership in refugee protection by setting** the FY2021 Presidential Determination at 100,000.
2. Rescind all refugee bans that have kept refugees from finding safety in the U.S., including Executive Order 13888 that will allow governors and local elected officials to stop resettlement in their states and cities.
3. Robustly fund U.S. refugee resettlement and overseas refugee processing to ensure that refugees are provided the support they need while abroad and once they have been resettled in the U.S.

---

<sup>2</sup> New American Economy (2017). *From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America*.