

## **World Refugee Day 2017: Demonstrating Welcome for Refugees**

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## **The Power of Advocacy**

On Tuesday, June 20, we celebrate refugees' courage in overcoming adversity and the many gifts they bring to our communities. As refugees and friends of refugees, we know the challenges newcomers face and the need for improved policies to help refugees rebuild their lives in the United States.

### **Be an Advocate**

Developing relationships and educating your policy makers are necessary steps to winning welcoming policies and attitudes toward refugees. A powerful constituent visit involves impacted communities and allies who join together. 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 34 anti-refugee proposals across 18 states, but we have also seen 29 pro-refugee proposals introduced in 18 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.

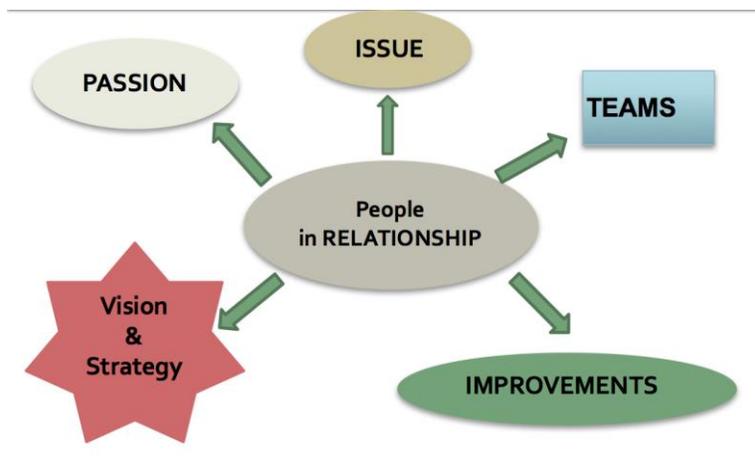
### **Engaging Local Policy Makers**

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 immigrants’ rights group near you: [www.informedimmigrant.com/organizations/](http://www.informedimmigrant.com/organizations/).*

## Refugee Community Advocacy Week: May 29-June 2

### **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. Members of Congress will be in their states and local offices a few weeks before World Refugee Day—May 29 – June 2.

### **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— copies available for print are linked [here](#). Stories of welcome by state are available [here](#) and [here](#). 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 on pages 14 and 15.

**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!

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

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 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. We simultaneously face this displacement crisis and current events and proposals that threaten the future of refugee resettlement. Our actions must match the need and live up to our welcoming legacy. Please spread the word and have everyone you know share this alert!

### **Call your Senators and Representatives: 1-866-940-2439 Tell Them Your Community Welcomes Refugees**

Please call the same number three times to be connected with your Representative and both of your Senators.

Here's a sample of what to say: *"I am a constituent from [CITY, STATE], and I urge the 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. My community welcomes refugees and I urge you to reflect the best of our nation by supporting refugee resettlement in the United States."*

You can also tweet your policy makers: *"[@SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE](#), my community stands #WithRefugees! Show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting U.S. refugee resettlement! #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1"*

### **Share This Message with Your State and Local Officials!**

Your state and local leaders need to hear the same message. Tell them that your community welcomes refugees. To contact your state and local officials, visit: [contactingcongress.org/local](http://contactingcongress.org/local) and [usa.gov/elected-officials](http://usa.gov/elected-officials). To tweet your state and local officials, click to find the twitter handles for your [governor](#) and [state legislators](#).

It is more important than ever for **all** our nation's lawmakers to represent the hospitality that communities across the country are demonstrating. Take action today to stand with refugees.

For more tips on how to make your voice heard with Members of Congress, click here: <https://twitter.com/i/moments/798297193559904258>

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.

## **World Refugee Day: Media & Outreach Resources**

### **Writing & Pitching Your Event and Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)**

When drafting an opinion piece, research the outlet you are submitting to. Many have a word limit between 750-1200, though some can be as low as 300 or 500. Please feel free to use the points in the draft op-ed below as you write your own opinion article, or feel free to write directly from the heart - what you have to say deserves to be heard!

When pitching your event, op-ed, or other welcoming project, it is important to keep your pitch short and on message. You can pitch either in person, over the phone, or via email. It is important to keep your pitch as short as possible, as reporters are often on a deadline and receive many story pitches every day. Open your pitch with an interesting first line and relate the pitch back to another story the reporter has recently written to increase the likelihood of the reporter picking up your story. Please see the draft pitch below for an example email.

To further increase your chances of the media covering your story, set up an exclusive interview with an outlet for attendees at your event. Making your event exclusive to one reporter makes it more appealing to the journalist and outlet as they will be the first ones to “break” the story that ties into current events at a local level. When pitching an exclusive story, be sure to research the outlets and reporters in your area. Who are the top current event, immigration, or political reporters in your area? Have they written about refugees before? If so, how can you tie your event into their previous work? Answering these questions and using them to draft your pitch will help increase the chances of your welcoming event being covered and featured as an exclusive in a larger outlet.

#### *Draft Pitch Email for Media Invitation and Follow Up from Advisory*

Hello,

I hope you are well! I wanted to let you know of a potential story opportunity in regards to refugee resettlement in CITY/STATE. On DATE, ORGANIZATION will host a [EVENT TYPE, ie: welcoming dinner] with refugees from COUNTRIES. Joining together in a meal/discussion, community leaders including LIST, will join refugees to create a welcoming community and discuss refugee resettlement.

We would like to highlight the human stories behind the resettlement program, particularly how families and faith communities are impacted by the political debate and various policy proposals. Given your past articles highlighting refugees/immigrants, I would love to offer you an exclusive interview with the group next DATE if you are interested.

I have attached the invitation flyer to this email with a full list of individuals in the group, but please let me know if you are interested or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
NAME

#### *Draft Pitch Email for Op-Ed*

Hello,

As the global community faces the largest displacement crisis in history, our organization/congregation is preparing to resettle refugees and do our part to create a welcoming community. Serving as a leader with ORGANIZATION, I had the unique opportunity to host/attend EVENT, (include brief details).

The event inspired me to author the attached op-ed, detailing my experience and reaffirming the need for us all to work together and create an inclusive community. In light of recent anti-Muslim rhetoric in particular, this piece offers a timely response and highlights the urgent need to create a welcoming place for all people.

Please feel free to contact me at EMAIL or over the phone at PHONE NUMBER if you have any questions or would like to discuss the piece in greater detail. Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Sincerely,  
NAME

## Sample World Refugee Day Faith Leader Op-Ed

### Welcoming Refugees: It's a Matter of Faith

On World Refugee Day, I reflect how from the earliest days of [Sunday school/Hebrew School/Seminary], my faith has taught and called me to welcome the stranger, stand with the vulnerable, and love my neighbor. Now, as a **father, minister, and [Tennessean]**, I am proud to demonstrate these values in my daily life and weekly sermons at **[name of congregation]**. But it is also because of those values that I am deeply disturbed by recent anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiment espoused by some of our law makers. It sends an unwelcoming and mean-spirited message of exclusion to refugee families fleeing violence and persecution.

Last year, **[INSERT STATE CONTEXT]**. This **[BILL, RESOLUTION, PROPOSAL]**, as well as the recent executive order to stop refugee resettlement stands opposite to my beliefs as a person of faith. Refugees are also the most scrutinized individuals entering the United States. To claim that they are security threats to our community not only ignores the unimaginable circumstances they flee and heavily scrutinized path to safe haven in the United States, but also stokes fear rather than cultivating compassion, truth, and understanding.

**[INSERT RELEVANT SCRIPTURE – EX:** “Bring water to the thirsty, meet the fugitive with bread... For they have fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, and from the stress of battle.” - Isaiah 21:14-15; “And (as for) those who believed and fled and struggled hard in Allah's way, and those who gave shelter and helped, these are the believers truly; they shall have forgiveness and honorable provision.” (Quran 8:74); “And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 10:19)**]**

From the [earliest books] in the **[Bible/Torah/Quran]**, our faith calls on us to show mercy and hospitality to those fleeing persecution. We are called to treat them with dignity, respect, and love, providing the same welcome that we ourselves would hope for. As Americans, we live in a country built in part by the hard work, dreams, and determination of generations of immigrants and refugees -- many of whom were our ancestors. Sadly, it seems that our state legislators have forgotten these lessons and have acted with fear instead of compassion.

Refugees are mothers, fathers, and children. They are doctors, teachers, lawyers, business owners, craftsmen, and musicians. As the world searches for solutions to the largest displacement crisis in history, with more than 21 million refugees worldwide, we have a moral and legal obligation to refugees seeking a chance to rebuild their lives and create a better future for their families. These people are no different than our **[Biblical]** ancestors who were once refugees who found welcome and were called to do the same.

Today, on World Refugee Day, I urge our state lawmakers to ensure **[Tennessee]** is providing refugees a chance to live, work, and go to school in safety. To do otherwise would be to dishonor our legacy of welcome and hospitality and fall short of our values.

## Sample World Refugee Day Refugee Leader Op-Ed

### Take it From Someone Who Has Been in Their Shoes: We Must Welcome Refugees

My name is [name], and I'm [career, family, etc.] I came to the United States as a refugee from [country] [time] years ago. My family and I were forced to leave everything behind after [personal story].

Today, on World Refugee Day, I reflect on my journey and am so grateful to the United States and my new community for giving me another chance at life.

As with many refugees, I would have preferred to remain in my homeland. However, [share why you needed to move, and that the journey was difficult and long]. After experiencing such traumas, I faced other challenges while resettlement, such as [name a few of these challenges]. What made the biggest difference in overcoming these hardships--and in healing from past traumas--has been the welcome received when I joined my new community. [Name a few ways you were welcomed, and tell how that made you feel.]

As someone who understands the struggles of refugees firsthand, I am disheartened to see that my beloved new home is denying that same opportunity to others now facing similarly dangerous situations.

I always viewed America as a beacon of hope. The executive orders banning Muslim immigrants and refugees do not reflect that. In fact, they completely contradict the values America stands for: compassion, welcome, and resilience. The United States is a country where anyone should be able to pursue the American Dream and live in safety.

[Insert STATE specific context with regard to any refugee-related state proposals.] The fear, hate and xenophobia perpetuated by [IF RELEVANT: this state bill] and the executive order does not reflect the [STATE] and America I know. The [STATE] and America I know is compassionate in its acceptance of those seeking shelter from some of the worst conflicts in history.

I continue now to believe in the importance of welcoming others--for others have welcomed me. I seek, myself, to welcome other refugees who are new arrivals. I raise my voice to support the rights of refugees through my work as [INSERT YOUR STORY].

As someone who knows firsthand the horrors that refugees flee and the sense of hope finding a home brings, I urge our local leaders, state legislators, and national policy makers to stand with refugees--today and every day. Only then will we truly reflect the welcome our country stands for.

Together, we can inspire welcome across the country and around the world.

### 2017 World Refugee Day Tweets

#### Elected Officials

- [Senator, Representative, Governor, etc.], *my community stands #WithRefugees! Show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting U.S. refugee resettlement! #RefugeesWelcome*
- Thanks, [Senator, Representative, Governor, etc.] for your support of #refugees and policies that welcomes them to our communities! #WRD2017 #RefugeesWelcome

#### Contributions and Benefits of Refugees in Our Communities

- We say #RefugeesWelcome in my [city] community by [action]. #WRD2017
- [Name of group, family, etc.] is ready to welcome #refugees! #RefugeesWelcome #WRD2017 (insert photo)

- My community is better with refugees. They [pay taxes, create jobs, start businesses, bring cultural diversity, open restaurants, etc.]. #WRD2017 #RefugeesWelcome
- This #WRD2017, we celebrate the diversity and resiliency #refugees bring to our communities! #RefugeesWelcome
- Refugee [#resettlement](#) means not only saving lives, but also successful integration for [#refugees](#) in communities across the US. [#WRD2017](#)
- Making #RefugeesWelcome involves teamwork! NGOs, faith communities, community groups & others all chip in. #WRD2017
- [#Refugees](#) who get tools they need to succeed add real value to our communities as hard working tax payers [#WRD2017](#)
- Refugees across the US add value: working, learning English, paying taxes, opening businesses & becoming citizens. #WRD2017 #RefugeesWelcome
- Entire communities benefit from refugees, esp when we invest in welcoming early on, equipping them to thrive. #WRD2017
- Every year, [#refugees](#) open businesses, revitalize towns, become citizens & give back to the communities that welcomed them. [#WRD2017](#)
- #Refugees bring their resiliency & experiences to help make our communities better. We celebrate them this #WRD2017! #RefugeesWelcome
- This #WRD2017, join us in creating welcoming communities for all – join the #RefugeesWelcome initiative today! Visit [refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org)
- Want to help celebrate #WRD2017? Join the #RefugeesWelcome initiative & help welcome #refugees in your area! Visit [refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org)
- As we celebrate #WRD2017, join us in making sure the US continues its welcoming legacy and resettles #refugees. #RefugeesWelcome

### Refugee Facts

- 51% of #refugees are under the age of 18. What if that was someone you know? #WRD2017
- 42,500 people a day are forced to flee their homes because of conflict & persecution. #WRD2017
- The number of #refugees and others forcibly displaced from their homes is over 61 million worldwide, the highest level since WWII [#WRD2017](#)
- Every minute, 24 people are forced to flee their homes because of war or persecution. #RefugeesWelcome #WRD2017
- The US has been a global leader in the protection of refugees and must continue to set an example as a safe haven. #WRD2017 #RefugeesWelcome
- Since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, over 3 million [#refugees](#) have found safe haven in America. [#RefugeesWelcome](#) [#WRD2017](#)
- Less than 1% of the world's [#refugees](#) are ever resettled. [#WRD2017](#)
- The US Refugee Resettlement Program is a lifesaving, public-private partnership for #refugees with no other means of finding safety. #WRD2017
- Fewer than 1% of the world's 21.3 million refugees will be resettled. #WRD2017
- #Refugees from all over the world do whatever it takes to try to bring their families to safety, often risking their lives. #WRD2017
- There are over 5 million #SyrianRefugees, mostly in #Turkey, but so many in Lebanon that 1 in 5 people there is a refugee. #WRD2017
- Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia, & Jordan are the top #refugee hosting countries. #WRD2017

Please click [here](#) for more sample social media posts.

## Sample Advocacy Flyer for World Refugee Day

# WORLD REFUGEE DAY TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2017

Today we celebrate refugees' courage in overcoming adversity and the many gifts they bring to our communities. As refugees and friends of refugees, we know the challenges newcomers face and the need for improved policies to help refugees rebuild their lives in the United States. We also stand in solidarity with 21+ million refugees all over the world who are in dire need of assistance.

**WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE** by letting our local, state, and national leaders know that we support protections for refugees and the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Our elected officials are making decisions that will impact the lives of refugees both in the United States and internationally. Please call your Senators and Representative and urge them to reflect the welcome you see in your community by supporting protection and resettlement for refugees – regardless of where they come from or what religion they practice.



**Call your Senators and Representative: 1-866-940-2439**  
**Tell them your community welcomes refugees.**

*Please call 3 times to be connected with your two Senators and your Representative.*

**Share This Message with Your State and Local Officials!**

*Contact information available at: [contactingcongress.org/local](http://contactingcongress.org/local) and [usa.gov/elected-officials](http://usa.gov/elected-officials).*

Here's a sample of what to say:

*"I am a constituent from [CITY, STATE], and I urge the 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. My community welcomes refugees and I urge you to reflect the best of our nation by supporting refugee resettlement in the United States."*

You can also tweet your policy makers: ". [@SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE](https://twitter.com/SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE), my community stands #WithRefugees! Show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting U.S. refugee resettlement! #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1"

For questions and more information, contact [ORGANIZATION'S ADVOCACY STAFF]

## Sample Invite to Policy Makers to Your World Refugee Day Event

[Date]

The Honorable [*full name of Policy Maker*]  
[*Address*]

Dear Senator/Representative [*last name*]:

I write to invite you to a celebration of World Refugee Day— [*name of the event*]. Our celebration of refugees will take place [*date, time, location*]. World Refugee Day, observed June 20 each year, is dedicated to raising awareness of the situation of refugees throughout the world. We want to invite you to celebrate the contributions of refugees in [*city*] with us. [*Describe the event*].

Every year, the United States welcomes refugees who are fleeing persecution due to their ethnicity, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. They cannot return to their home country and do not enjoy basic rights in the country where they initially sought refuge. Our organization, [*agency name*], helps refugees who are resettled in [*state*] integrate quickly into our community by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, clothing, medical attention, education, English-language classes, and community orientation.

Our office in [*city/state*] has helped resettle [*X number of*] refugees in the past year alone. Since the office opened in [*date*], over [*X number of*] refugees from [*X number of*] countries have embarked on a path to reach their full potential and enjoy safety, security, and a second chance in life.

The USRAP was established by an Act of Congress in 1980 and is an integral part of U.S. foreign policy that is rooted in communities. The program is a highly successful example of a public-private partnership, where federal assistance is matched by funds raised by communities across the country. Refugees have opened businesses, revitalized towns, and become productive members of communities that welcomed them. Many become American citizens and see their children graduate from U.S. schools.

We would be honored for you to attend our event to celebrate and share time with refugees resettled in our community, including many who are now U.S. citizens. Refugees are a testament to the United States' long, proud history as a sanctuary for those who seek lives free from violence and oppression. Join us celebrating this great tradition!

Regards,

[*your name*]  
[*title, affiliation*]  
[*contact information*]

## 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 ACNOWLEDGES 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.*

## **Civic Engagement on World Refugee Day**

World Refugee Day is a great time to take one further step toward building welcoming communities that are inclusive and open to refugees, while also strengthening the ties within refugee communities. Integration is a key principle in our work, and this special day is an excellent opportunity to support refugees in civic engagement.

**Civic engagement** refers to the ways in which individuals participate in the life of their communities. Many refugees and immigrants are very active in the civic life of their own community, but there is greater need for participation in broader civic institutions, voting, and the process of policy making. This includes voting, understanding policy issues that impact their lives, educating and encouraging other individuals to vote and make their voices heard, and running for office. Civic engagement lifts up the voices and power of refugees and immigrants in our communities, thus educating policy makers and building champions across party lines at local, state, and national levels.

**Civic engagement is a key component of integration:** Voting and participating in civil society are key to the integration process. When immigrants and refugees become naturalized U.S. citizens and exercise their right to vote, they engage in an active process that goes beyond passive citizenship, empowering themselves to be full members of their new communities. Immigrants and refugees who are not yet naturalized, and therefore cannot yet vote, can contribute meaningfully by educating the public about the benefits that newcomers bring to their communities and helping with voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities.

**Civic engagement is part of our mission to build welcoming communities:** Refugees, resettlement offices, and supportive community members know first-hand the impact that policies have on the lives of refugees and entire communities. It is critical for policy makers to meet refugees and understand their struggles and the positive contributions that they make in communities. Civic engagement work can also energize volunteers and develop new leaders, as it brings communities together to engage with policy makers to build stronger communities.

**Civic engagement work is non-partisan, and does not endorse any candidate or political party:** RCUSA members are 501(c)3 organizations that promote non-partisan civic engagement as part of our joint mission to lift up the voices of refugees and build stronger, more welcoming communities. Neither RCUSA nor its member organizations endorse any party or candidate. You should never mention a political party or candidate while registering people to vote.

### **Voter Registration at Community Events for World Refugee Day**

World Refugee Day events are great opportunities to register naturalized citizens to vote. Have volunteers register new voters or distribute voter registration information or early voting cards. World Refugee Day events are also great opportunities for sharing stories about individuals who have not been able to vote in the past, or who are voting for the first time, which is a great way to motivate everyone to register to vote and show up on election day.

### **Voter Registration Table Checklist**

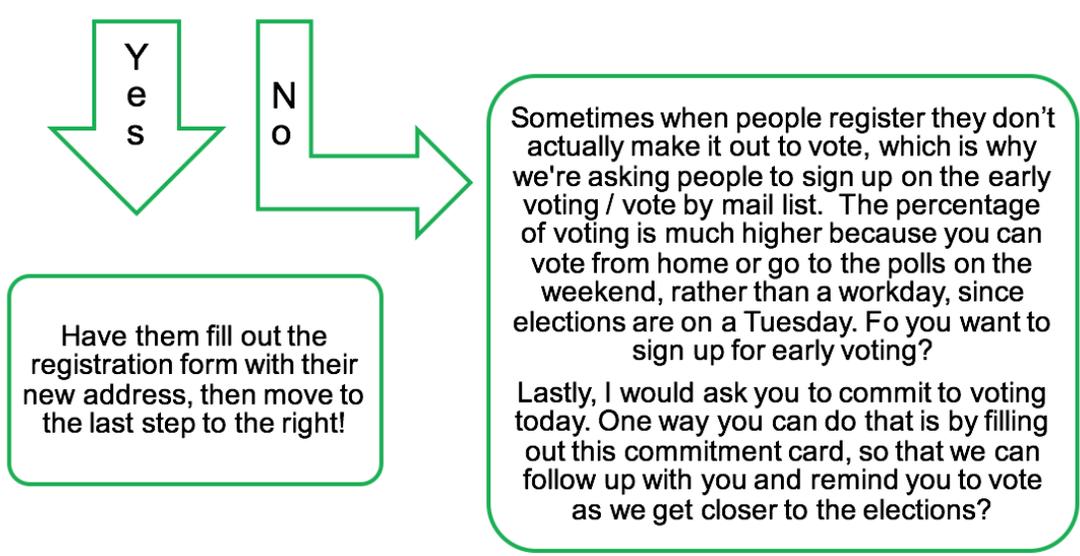
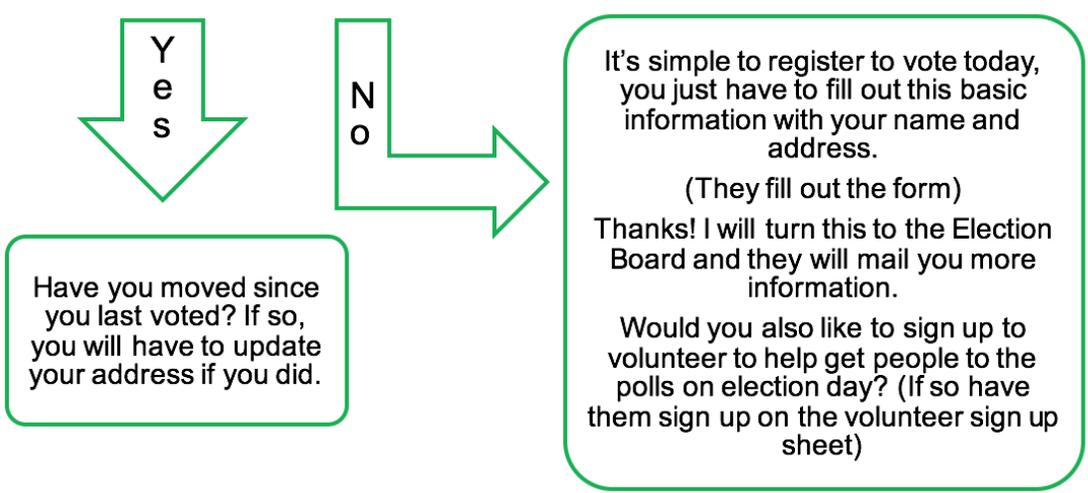
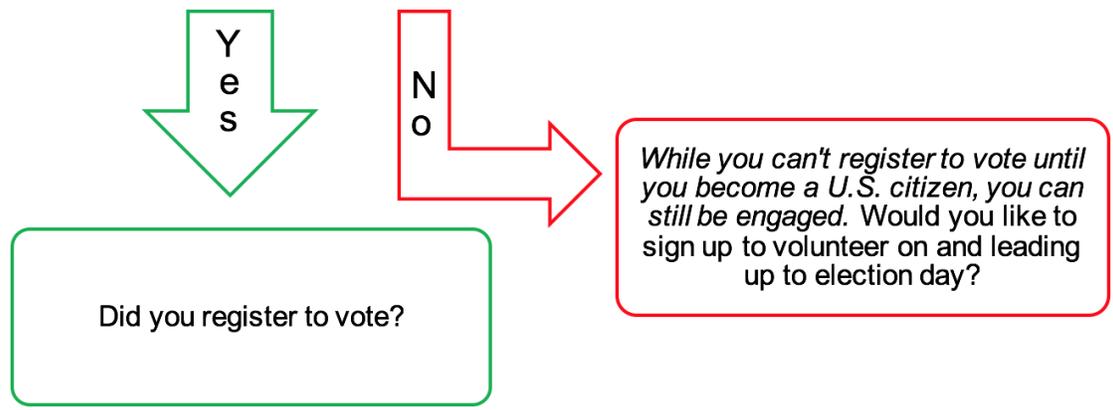
- ✓ Voter registration cards, absentee and early voting ballots, with relevant information on each
- ✓ Clip boards, a visual flow chart on voter registration, and sample scripts for volunteers (see next page)
- ✓ [Commitment cards](#) asking people to promise to vote on election day and a volunteer sign-up sheet
- ✓ State voter information from your Election Office, including a map of jurisdictions & polling places
- ✓ Signs: "Register to Vote Here!" & "Voter registration available without regard for the voter's political preference"
- ✓ Tally sheet for reporting your activity at the end of the day

**Know Your State Voting Laws:** The best resource on your state's voting laws is your local county election board. There are Voter ID laws in 32 states, which can limit people's access to voting. Each state also has their own early voting policies. It is important to know the laws in your state and communicate them in conversations with new voters. If your State has a voting ID law, make sure you inform people so they can prepare to have the necessary identification when they vote. Use these links to customize information based on your state's requirements:

- Voting ID laws by state: [www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx](http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx)
- Early & absentee voting by state: [www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx](http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx)

**Collaborate Locally:** Registration forms and early voting applications can be picked up at your local board of elections office. Ask them if there are any rules about non-profits turning in registration cards or early ballot applications once they are filled out by new voters, as some election boards have deadlines or limits on the number of registration forms or applications turned in at once. Work with a local organization dedicated to voter registration to enter the information into the Voter Activation Network and follow up to ensure a successful voting experience.

Hello, I'm out registering people to vote today, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ with (Organization's name). Voting is one of the most important ways to add our voices to shape community and policy issues that impact our lives. Many refugees and immigrants first register at their naturalization ceremony.  
Are you a U.S. citizen - have you had your ceremony yet?



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

Urge your business, health, educator, law enforcement, and faith community partners to sign these letters!

- [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)

### **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://justiceforimmigrants.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**

- USCCB World Refugee Day 2017 Toolkit: <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/2016site/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/WRD-2017-Toolkit.pdf>
- Interfaith Immigration Coalition Neighbor-to-Neighbor Toolkit: [www.interfaithimmigration.org/neighbor](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/neighbor)
- 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/1UX73qwC7JH7i1DXeDREvqpE71o4h3NFso5az33Bt2uk/edit?usp=sharing>
- FAQs on President Trump's Refugee Executive Order: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JA\\_14yqO7Mi4SK3p-yqROpg2N13PEvhnfd-LpLeJTE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JA_14yqO7Mi4SK3p-yqROpg2N13PEvhnfd-LpLeJTE/edit?usp=sharing)

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

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- HIAS: Liz Mandelman: [elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org](mailto:elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org)
- International Rescue Committee: Kristen Aster, [kristen.aster@rescue.org](mailto:kristen.aster@rescue.org)
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: Ryan Mace, [RMace@lirs.org](mailto:RMace@lirs.org)
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: Matt Wilch, [mwilch@usccb.org](mailto:mwilch@usccb.org)
- U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants: Esmeralda Lopez, [elopez@uscrdc.org](mailto:elopez@uscrdc.org)
- Ethiopian Community Development Council: Solace Duncan, [sduncan@ecdcus.org](mailto:sduncan@ecdcus.org)
- World Relief: Jenny Yang, [jgyang@worldrelief.org](mailto:jgyang@worldrelief.org)
- Jesuit Refugee Service/USA: Giulia McPherson, [gmcpherson@jesuits.org](mailto:gmcpherson@jesuits.org)
- Refugee Council USA: Shaina Ward, [sward@rcusa.org](mailto:sward@rcusa.org)