

# Refugee Council USA

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## **Toolkit for Local Congressional Visits: Increasing Resources for Refugee Protection & Resettlement November - December 2016**

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## **Current Update: Refugee Funding for 2017 & The Need for Action**

### **Global Context & The Need for Advocacy**

Over 65 million people are displaced globally, the largest recorded displacement crisis in recorded history. The Syrian conflict alone has left 8 million Syrians internally displaced and caused nearly 5 million Syrian refugees to seek safety in the region and in Europe. While resettlement is not the solution to global conflicts, it remains one of the key ways that the U.S. can demonstrate leadership and leverage international support for refugees. Resettlement shows clear support to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and other countries that are hosting large numbers of refugees.

### **Increased Funds Are Needed to Protect Refugees Internationally and Resettle Refugees in the U.S.**

President Obama announced that the United States plans to resettle 110,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2017, an increase from the 75,000 refugees on whom last year's federal budget was based (85,000 were admitted but without an increase in funding). While an improvement from the 70,000 refugees resettled in Fiscal Year 2015, it is critical that even this relatively small increase in refugee admissions is accompanied by both increased international assistance and robust funds to ensure local communities in the U.S. have the resources they need to help refugees rebuild their lives. The Office of Refugee Resettlement has been chronically underfunded for years, and an infusion of resources is needed to meet both the increase in refugee admissions and the need for all refugees to have the opportunity to succeed in their new communities.

### **Window of Opportunity: Now until December 2016**

From now until December, Congress is considering a new set of funding bills for Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17), which runs from October 1, 2016 - September 30, 2017. In September, Congress passed a short term "continuing resolution" that began funding the government at Fiscal Year 2016 levels on October 1 and will go through December 9, 2016. A new set of bills under consideration that would fund the government from December 10 through September 30, 2017 would flat line funding for refugee assistance overseas and refugee resettlement in the United States through the end of FY17. Under these bills, the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) would remain at FY16 levels, despite the fact that the FY16 budget was calculated to resettle 75,000 refugees and in FY17 we anticipate serving 110,000 refugees. We seek robust increases for these accounts in the FY17 appropriations bills that match the increased need. Now is a crucial time to share information about the refugee crisis and let your Senators and Representatives know that you care about displaced people overseas and refugees resettled in the United States. It is critical that refugee related accounts are commensurately increased in to assist and resettle this larger number of refugees. It is time to act with historic leadership and compassion and stand with those seeking safety and opportunities to build new lives and contribute to their new communities in the US.

### **Anti-Refugee Sentiment**

Utilizing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric, individuals who oppose refugee resettlement are making their voices heard the loudest and most frequently to policy makers. Groups like Refugee Resettlement Watch are calling for an end to resettlement altogether, and are fostering hostile atmospheres for newcomers. Some governors have opposed resettlement to their states and various state legislatures have proposed legislation that would enact harmful policies. It is critical that policy makers learn about the importance of resettlement 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.

### **Positive Reforms to Help Refugees and Communities**

There are positive pieces of legislation that have been introduced in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives that would help refugees reunite with family members, better integrate into their communities, and succeed in their new lives. These bills can only pass if more Members of Congress are knowledgeable about resettlement and held accountable by constituents who want to see pro-refugee reforms.

### **The Power of Advocacy**

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, and supportive community members are constituents of Members of Congress who regularly make policy decisions that impact refugees. When policy makers know that their constituents care about refugees, they will increasingly vote for increased funding for refugee protection and resettlement, as well as productive policies that help refugees.

## **Meet with Your Senators and Representatives**

Members of Congress will be in their states and local offices at times between now and December 2016. Calendars of in-district time can be found at [here](#) and [here](#). These are great opportunities to meet with them and/or their staff. Schedules tend to fill up very quickly for these recess periods, so reach out as soon as possible.

Establishing close relationships with your Members of Congress is crucial to enacting policies that support successful refugee resettlement, and can make the pivotal difference in votes regarding refugee funding or specific bills that impact refugees. At these meetings, resettlement staff and clients can discuss the challenges and triumphs that new arrivals face, and how important it is for those who have fled violence and persecution to find a safe home. Because the process of change takes time, advocacy visits should be viewed as part of a continuing process of gathering information, building relationships, and developing advocacy strategies.

### **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, 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 and ideas, and to plan the agenda for a successful meeting.
- 2. Learn about your Members of Congress:** Is your Member of Congress on the [Senate](#) or [House](#) Appropriations Committees? These committees make decisions about funding levels for refugee accounts, specifically the subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services; State Department / Foreign Operations; and Homeland Security. If your Members of Congress do not sit on an appropriations committee, they can still write letters and urge appropriators to increase funding for refugee protection and resettlement.
- 3. Have a plan:** Before you enter an advocacy visit, meet with your group beforehand to assign roles:
  - *The Facilitator* will kick off the meeting by introducing your group, explaining the purpose for the meeting, and providing time for each person attending to briefly introduce themselves. Make sure each participant introduces the organization they represent or their connection to refugee issues. The facilitator will also jump in if the meeting goes off-track and redirect the conversation.
  - *The Personal Story* is key to every meeting. Someone should be present who is either a refugee or has worked closely with and been impacted by refugees. Telling this story will show how peoples' lives and communities are enriched through refugee resettlement.
  - *Specific Issue Points* - It will be helpful to bring the refugee funding handouts found [here](#) and [here](#) (also found on pages 7-13) to the meeting, and to have one person cover funding for ORR and one person cover funding for PRM. Someone else may want to cover the positive legislation as well.
  - *The Ask* is the critical part when you ask "Will you be a champion for refugee funding as Congress works on fiscal year 2017 appropriations?" Listen carefully and ask for clarification if the response is vague.

### **Suggested Leave-Behind Documents**

It will be helpful to bring the refugee funding handouts found on pages 5 and 7. Additional handouts with information on refugees by state can be found [here](#). Contact your organization's advocacy staff (see last page) for other timely materials.

**4. Debrief:** It's important to debrief after the meeting. As a group, ask: What did we hear? Did we get what we wanted? How did we work together as a team? What are the next steps? Share your reflections with your organization's advocacy staff (see last page).

**5. Follow-up:** Make sure to 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 Member to an upcoming event to meet with refugees is an excellent next step!

## **URGENT ACTION NEEDED: Stop Congress from Cutting Refugee Resettlement Funds**

**Background:** Congress is proposing funding bills for Fiscal Year 2017 that would flatline refugee resettlement funding at last year's levels. President Obama committed to resettling 110,000 refugees in 2017, in contrast to the 75,000 planned for in the 2016 budget. As we are facing the worst displacement crisis in recorded history, resettlement is one of the key ways that the U.S. can lead by example and encourage other countries to help refugees. It is critical that this increase in refugee admissions is met with increased funds to ensure local communities have the resources they need to help refugees integrate and thrive.

These proposed flat funding levels would turn our backs on the 110,000 refugees we have pledged to welcome, damage integration efforts, and negatively impact communities that welcome refugees. Please call the below Representatives and Senators, who serve key leadership roles in the appropriations process, as they consider these proposals.

### **Take Action TODAY: Tell House and Senate Leadership to Increase Refugee Funding**

Here's a sample of what to say: *"As Congress considers Fiscal Year 2017 funding, I urge them to increase resources for the **Office of Refugee Resettlement** and the **Migration and Refugee Assistance** accounts to increase refugee assistance overseas and refugee resettlement in the United States, over and above last year's levels. Resettlement is one of the ways the U.S. can lead by example and leverage international support for refugees. My community welcomes refugees, and I urge Congress to increase funding for refugee protection and resettlement."*

**Connecticut:** Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT-3): (202) 225-3661 / @rosadelauro

#### **Kentucky:**

- House Appropriations Chair Harold Rogers (R-KY-5): (202) 225-4601 / @RepHalRogers
- Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY): (202) 224-2541 / @SenateMajLdr

**Maryland:** Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD): (202) 224-4654 / @SenatorBarb

**Mississippi:** Senate Appropriations Chair Thad Cochran (R-MS): (202) 224-5054 / @SenThadCochran

**Missouri:** Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO): (202) 224-5721 / @RoyBlunt

**New York:** Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY-17): (202) 225-6506 / @NitaLowey

**Oklahoma:** Representative Tom Cole (R-OK-4): (202) 225-6165 / @TomColeOK04

**South Carolina:** Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC): (202) 224-5972 / @LindseyGrahamSC

**Texas:** Representative Kay Granger (R-TX-12): (202) 225-5071 / @RepKayGranger

**Vermont:** Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT): (202) 224-4242 / @SenatorLeahy

**Washington:** Senator Patty Murray (D-WA): (202) 224-2621 / @PattyMurray

**Wisconsin:** House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI-1): (202) 225-3031 / @SpeakerRyan

You can also tweet your Senator/Representative: *"@SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE, show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting increased funds to resettle #refugees! #RefugeesWelcome"*

Please spread the word and send this email to your networks! Follow [@RCUSA\\_DC](#) on Twitter and "like" [Refugee Council USA](#) on Facebook for up-to-date alerts.

## Sample Letter to Send to Your Members of Congress

[Date]

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

Dear [Senator/Representative] [last name]:

As your constituent, I urge you to support increased funding for refugee protection internationally and refugee resettlement in the United States. It is my understanding that Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations for the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) will remain at Fiscal Year 2016 levels, despite the fact that the FY16 budget was calculated to resettle 75,000 refugees and in FY17 we anticipate serving 110,000 refugees. I urge you to increase these accounts in the FY17 appropriations bills.

Refugee resettlement is a public / private partnership that celebrates the hospitality, resilience, and freedom that our communities hold dear. On the private side, resettlement offices are seeing more volunteers and community support than ever before. But we need our policy makers to stand with us and ensure the public side of the program remains strong. ORR funds are critical to local schools and non-profit organizations that help refugees integrate and rebuild their lives. Without additional funds, refugees and the communities that welcome them will be at a severe disadvantage as we seek to demonstrate the best of who we are as a nation. I am also opposed to bill language that would drastically limit the resources that PRM can allocate for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, which is a life-saving program.

[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.]

Resettlement is part of the implementation of U.S. foreign policy and key to diplomatic efforts to promote regional stability and international security. Especially as we face the largest global refugee crisis in generations, America must lead by example and provide meaningful welcome to the world's most vulnerable, both to remain true to our values and in order to credibly encourage our international partners to do the same. As Americans committed to the wellbeing of our community members as well as our global impact, we know that the United States of America can protect this country against those who wish us harm and simultaneously welcome well-vetted, bona fide refugees through the thorough, orderly process and stable resettlement program we have operated for decades.

I urge you to stand with our community as we welcome refugees by increasing funds for the following accounts:

**Labor / Health and Human Services:** *Refugee and Entrant Assistance:* \$3.027 billion to ensure local communities have the resources to help refugees integrate and thrive as they rebuild their lives.

**State Department / Foreign Operations:** *Migration and Refugee Assistance:* \$3.6 billion to assist refugees abroad, and process and provide initial integration assistance to refugees resettled in the United States

I urge you to support increased funding for these accounts, and to meet with refugees next time you are in your home office. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me if you have any questions.

With Appreciation,  
[your signature and contact information]

## **Legislation that Would Impact Refugees**

### **Increase Funding for Refugee Assistance Abroad & Resettlement in the U.S.**

The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account in the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (LHHS) appropriations bill funds the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which helps states and local communities welcome and support refugees and other vulnerable migrants on their path to self-sufficiency and integration. In order to adequately serve refugees, asylees, SIV recipients, unaccompanied children, victims of torture and trafficking, and all of the populations within its mandate, we urge Congress to appropriate \$3.027 billion for ORR in FY 2017.

The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account in the State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill funds the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), which provides overseas assistance to displaced refugees, supports refugee admissions, and funds lifesaving services in humanitarian emergencies. The crisis in Syria continues to escalate dramatically, adding strain to a program already addressing serious humanitarian needs in Iraq, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan. We urge Congress to fund the MRA account at \$3.6 billion in FY 2017 to ensure that the U.S. can continue to serve currently displaced populations while responding to numerous emerging humanitarian crises.

### **Support Pro-Refugee Legislation**

The *Domestic Refugee Resettlement Reform and Modernization Act (H.R.2839 and S. 1615)* is a zero-cost bill that would improve the lives of refugees and the communities that welcome them. It would elevate the Office of Refugee Resettlement within HHS to improve stability and coordination; require an annual report on secondary migration and its impact on states; and improve data collection on the needs of refugees and their integration successes.

The *Refugee Protection Act of 2016 (S.3241 and H.R. 5851)* would significantly improve the refugee resettlement program and protections of refugee families. The bill calls for expedited family reunification, annual updates of the reception and placement grant, steps to modernize the system for allocating refugee resettlement funds to states and communities welcoming refugees, and increased protections for refugees identified at sea. It would also substantially improve the treatment of asylum seekers and make asylum case processing more timely and efficient.

The *Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act (H.R.2798)* would provide refugees with green cards upon arrival and increase resources for refugees, including Matching Grant slots.

The *Secure the Northern Triangle Act (S.3106)* would strengthen protections for refugees, asylum seekers, human trafficking victims, and other vulnerable individuals fleeing persecution and violence by improving the identification and processing of unaccompanied children who arrive at the U.S. border; ensuring access to counsel, legal orientation programs, and post-release services for children; and expanding refugee processing in the Northern Triangle.

The *Fair Day in Court for Kids Act (H.R.4646 and S.2540)* would require the federal government to appoint counsel to unaccompanied children and other vulnerable individuals, such as those who are victims of abuse, torture, or violence. It would also ensure that the Department of Homeland Security makes legal orientation programs available at all detention centers, so that people know their rights and responsibilities under immigration law.

## **Change the Dialogue & Push for Change through Social Media**

Social media is a great way to spread the word about these issues and to get your friends, family, and other community members involved. Using popular social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, we encourage you to post information and pictures of events utilizing the signs found at <https://americawelcomes.us/>, <http://www.refugeesarewelcome.org/>, and using #RefugeesWelcome.

**Twitter** is one of the most used social media platforms for members of Congress. You can find your Senators' and Representatives' Twitter handles on their websites, or at <https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/members-of-congress/members>. See below for sample posts.

Sample posts:

- .@REPNAME stand with #refugee communities - up funds for refugee protection & resettlement!
- #Refugees bring unique experiences, talents, and skills to our communities. @REPNAME, help protect & resettle #refugees! #WelcomeWorld
- The US can do more to resettle & protect #refugees. Tell your Representative/Senator to increase funds for #refugee protection & resettlement! #WelcomeWorld (link to action alert)
- #Refugees are some of the most resilient people in our community. @REPNAME, increase funds to help #refugees integrate in our communities!
- .@REPNAME - help protect Syrian and Iraqi #refugees facing persecution. Cosponsor H.R. [insert bill number for pro-refugee bill listed above]!
- Visited @REPNAME's office to tell him/her to support policies that will welcome #refugees and assist their new communities. #WelcomeTogether #RefugeesWelcome (picture)
- [Organization name] stands with our neighbors of all faiths. @REPNAME, say NO to anti-Muslim rhetoric! #WelcomeTogether (picture)
- Our refugee brothers and sisters make our communities stronger. @REPNAME, vote NO on anti-refugee legislation! #WelcomeTogether #RefugeesWelcome
- This #WRD2016, we celebrate the diversity and resiliency #refugees bring to our communities! #RefugeesWelcome

**Facebook** is another great way to show your support—you can modify the Tweets above for posting on Facebook.

There is already an incredible awareness on social media around refugee issues. Starting in the fall of 2015, many international campaigns were launched to urge communities around the world to welcome refugees. Building off of those existing campaigns will allow us to connect with an already engaged audience and provide an established platform on which to issue new talking points, news clips, events, and social media graphics to further our message. Existing campaigns and hashtags include:

- #RefugeesWelcome
- #OpentoSyria
- #WelcomeWorld
- #refugeecrisis
- #WithSyria
- #WithRefugees

Creating a unique hashtag for our campaign will allow us to engage a new audience and track how many people are engaged online with our campaign specifically. Suggested unique hashtags for your campaign are:

- #United4Refugees
- #Together4Refugees/TogetherforRefugees
- #WorkingtoWelcome



- #LovesARefugeFromHate

Through the use of both unique and existing hashtags, our campaign can engage and mobilize both existing and new community partners. Additionally, providing a unique hashtag will provide members of the media to track our campaign's online presence.

Sample Refugees Welcome Graphics:

Feel free to also use photos, videos, or graphics from other supporting organizations. See the example graphics below. It is important to receive permission of all individuals in a photo or video before posting. Please see a draft media release below, or use one from your organization if available.





# Refugee Council USA

## LABOR-HHS APPROPRIATIONS FOR REFUGEES AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

*FY17 Funding Needs for Refugees, Unaccompanied Children, and Other Groups under the Care of ORR*

**OVERVIEW.** The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) Account is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services’(DHHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). While ORR was originally established to assist refugees resettled to the U.S., over the past three decades its mandate has grown and the populations it serves have become more varied, their needs more complex, and their numbers more difficult to predict. With the most displaced persons now in recorded history, providing robust funding for these vulnerable populations is critical.

Refugee Council USA (RCUSA) is a coalition of non-governmental organizations committed to protecting and assisting refugees and other forcibly displaced people. Adequate funding for the REA accounts ensures local communities have the resources they need to help refugees integrate and thrive as they rebuild their lives. The U.S. should commit to provide protection to 140,000 refugees in FY17. A commitment to admit more refugees must be matched with a level of resettlement funding which ensures that refugees have access to the services and support they need to integrate quickly and successfully upon arrival in welcoming American communities. A detailed description of the REA account and each program area listed below is provided in the pages that follow.

### **FY 2017 Office of Refugee Resettlement Funding Needs for the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) Account of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Programs**

<b>Program Areas</b>	<b>FY16 Enacted (75,000 refugees)*</b>	<b>FY17 OMB Request (100,000 refugees)</b>	<b>FY17 RCUSA Recommends (110,000 refugees)**</b>
Transitional & Medical Services	\$490,000,000	\$581,357,000	\$1,044,530,000
Social Services	\$155,000,000	\$176,927,000	\$423,890,000
Refugee Health Promotion	\$4,600,000	\$4,600,000	\$14,000,000
Targeted Assistance	\$47,601,000	\$55,601,000	\$90,740,000
Replenishment of Reprogrammed Funds			\$66,500,000
<b>Subtotal of Resettlement Services</b>	<b>\$697,201,000</b>	<b>\$818,485,000</b>	<b>\$1,639,660,000</b>
Foreign-Born Trafficking Victims	\$13,000,000	\$13,000,000	\$23,000,000
Domestic Trafficking Victims	\$5,755,000	\$9,000,000	\$16,000,000
Torture Survivor Assistance	\$10,735,000	\$23,000,000	\$23,000,000
Unaccompanied Children	\$948,000,000	\$1,226,000,000	\$1,226,000,000
Contingency Fund[ii]		\$95,000,000	\$100,000,000
<b>Total – All REA Activities</b>	<b>\$1,674,691,000</b>	<b>\$2,184,485,000</b>	<b>\$3,027,660,000</b>

\*FY16 funding allocations were based upon a presidential determination of 75,000. The PD was increased to 85,000 without a corresponding change in funding levels. The State Department has indicated that the PD for FY17 will be 110,000.

\*\*RCUSA FY17 funding request is based on the PD of 110,000 and an additional 90,000 vulnerable persons that are served by ORR who are not resettled refugees.

## **REA ACCOUNT DESCRIPTIONS AND RCUSA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FY17**

**SUMMARY.** The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) Account is funded through the appropriations for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Programs (LHHS). It is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). ORR was originally established in 1980 to assist refugees resettled by U.S. to obtain self-sufficiency. Today, the account has four major components:

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

The REA account provides vital services to some of the most vulnerable populations in the United States. Below you will find RCUSA's recommended funding levels for FY17, as well as a detailed description of the populations served during the last fiscal year for which there is comprehensive data, highlights of critical programming for these populations, and recommendations to strengthen ORR's fiscal stability.

**POPULATIONS SERVED BY ORR.** ORR estimates that it served over 202,000 newly arrived vulnerable individuals in FY15. This included 69,933 resettled refugees. It also includes 7,226 Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants who helped U.S. Government efforts during military conflicts in those countries, and 33,726 unaccompanied children from Central America. ORR also served 61,000 Cuban and Haitian Entrants, 21,000 asylees, 2,081 victims of trafficking, and over 6,000 torture survivors. Meanwhile, ORR continued to serve eligible refugees and other entrants who arrived in recent years. The U.S. Department of State has indicated that refugee resettlement arrivals are expected to be 85,000 in FY16 and 110,000 in FY17, in addition to an estimated 113,000 non-refugee arrivals to be served by ORR. Faced with the current global refugee crisis, RCUSA continues to advocate that the U.S. admit refugees at higher levels commensurate with global needs. *Unfortunately, ORR's budget has not kept pace with its growing mandate, its evolving challenges, or the cost of living increases and inflation.*

RCUSA not only urges Congress to increase crucial capacity that ORR needs to serve more refugee arrivals in FY17, but also to increase capacity for ORR to serve the other populations under its mandate. The number of Cuban Entrants continues to increase, and the number of Iraqi and Afghan SIV recipients more than doubled between FY14 and FY16, continuing to surpass ORR's yearly projection of needs. The number of unaccompanied children from Central America seeking protection is poised to surpass FY14 levels. Arrivals of all these groups are expected to remain high in FY17.

**CRITICAL PROGRAMMING SERVED BY REA ACCOUNTS.** The following highlights critical programs within the REA accounts for FY17, but does not include all program activities:

### **I. Resettlement Activities**

#### **A. TRANSITIONAL AND MEDICAL SERVICES (TAMS)**

**Matching Grant Program:** The Matching Grant Program, a public-private partnership, is ORR's most successful program to help refugees quickly achieve self-sufficiency. It empowers refugees and other eligible individuals to become self-sufficient without needing to access federal or state assistance programs. The program leverages public funds with private donations at a 2:1 ratio, requiring nongovernmental agencies to match federal government contributions. A funding level

1. of \$180 million for Matching Grant would increase the number of slots to 60,000 and increase the per capita grant to \$3,000 per eligible person, thereby helping newcomers find and keep jobs.
2. **Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM)**: Unaccompanied refugee minors (URM) arriving through the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program are being identified in high numbers within the Congolese, Eritrean, and Burmese caseloads. There are likely high numbers among refugees fleeing Syria and Iraq, and there will be additional children arriving through the new Central American Minor (CAM) resettlement program. Also, a subset of unaccompanied children arriving at U.S. borders are eligible for URM status and long-term foster care. They can become part of the URM program if they are judged to be asylees, victims of trafficking or serious crimes, or neglected, abused, or abandoned children. Given the growing number of unaccompanied children in need, RCUSA recommends \$157.1 million for URM in FY17.

## **B. SOCIAL SERVICES**

1. **Emergency Housing Assistance**: While federally-funded programs administered by local refugee resettlement agencies are highly successful in assisting refugees in securing employment and housing, the temporary assistance they receive upon arrival is often insufficient to cover their housing costs before they attain self-sufficiency. Safe and decent housing is central to successful integration for any newcomer. Providing an additional \$57 million to Social Services for housing assistance would help refugees pursue integration.
2. **School Impact Grants**: At least \$26 million dollars should be allocated to the highly impactful School Impact Grant program, which provides schools serving refugee children a range of training, resources, and support to help set them and the refugee students they serve up for success.
3. **Intensive Case Management**: The U.S. refugee program resettles refugees who are in urgent need of protection, such as women heads of households, victims of torture, those with significant physical or mental health vulnerabilities, and refugees from protracted refugee situations (e.g., refugees who have been in a camp for five or more years). Such refugees need further support toward integration and self-sufficiency. A funding increase of \$15 million for critical case management programs would build on funding now available for this purpose through the Preferred Communities Program.
4. **Community Outreach**: The proposed \$10 million in FY17 would fund local programs that increase direct volunteer engagement and cross-cultural exchanges and promote community integration of refugees. There is currently heightened interest in U.S. communities about refugee resettlement; offices report receiving at least double the number of volunteer inquiries than in previous years, and a large increase in speaking and information requests. This grant would establish dedicated staff to liaise with communities about refugee resettlement and harness the widespread support for refugees.

**C. REFUGEE HEALTH PROMOTION**: While needs for medical and mental health services have increased, funding for these services has been stagnant for more than a decade. Refugee Health Promotion should have a funding level of \$16 million for 230,000 people served and \$20 million for 290,000 people served to help ensure that victims of torture, trafficking, and trauma, refugees with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and those who have had little or no access to medicine can receive needed services. Such funding would also allow local offices to comply with the Affordable Care Act.

**II. Victims of Trafficking**: More funding is needed to combat human trafficking. Since 2002, there has been an increase of over 500% in the number of foreign national victims identified and certified as in need of care. The U.S. must increase education and prevention for at-risk groups, provide services to the increasing number of identified trafficking victims, and extend service periods to allow victims time to recover and attain self-sufficiency. A funding level of \$23 million for foreign-born trafficking victims will enable vital education and prevention for at-risk communities and access to comprehensive and specialized services for victims.

- I. **Victims of Torture:** The Torture Victims Relief Act (TVRA) authorizes funding for domestic programs that address the physical, psychological, social and legal needs of torture survivors. Yet with an estimated 44% of refugees in the U.S. either primary or secondary survivors of torture, need far exceeds resources. RCUSA strongly supports \$23 million for survivors of torture to enable the expansion of current and new sites and to fill nationwide gaps in torture survivor rehabilitation.
- II. **Unaccompanied Children (UACs):** In 2016 arrivals of unaccompanied children reaching the U.S. border have continued to increase and are estimated to potentially reach FY14 levels. Robust funding is necessary to ensure ORR's ongoing ability to provide holistic, child-centered care for unaccompanied children (UACs) and ensure their safety. RCUSA encourages a funding level of \$1.3 billion for UAC services in FY17 (\$1.2 billion regular funding and \$100 million in contingency funding, as described below). Such funding will also provide those released from ORR custody with community-based, post-release services.

### **IMPROVED FISCAL STABILITY**

Over the last several years, continued funding instability, reprogramming, and threats of reprogramming have had destabilizing impacts on programs for refugees, children, and other vulnerable populations in ORR's care. RCUSA recommends that Congress take two steps in FY17 to improve ORR's fiscal stability. First, RCUSA supports the replenishment of resettlement funds that were reprogrammed in FY12 to care for unaccompanied children. Second, RCUSA recommends an ORR contingency fund of \$100 million for FY17 to prevent the need for future reprogramming.

- I. **Replenishment of Reprogrammed Funding:** In FY12, ORR reprogrammed \$115 million to unaccompanied children from the Transitional and Medical Services (TAMS), Social Services, and Targeted Assistance programs. While TAMS was replenished, the other two were not, and thus ORR programs are still negatively impacted. Grant cycles continue to be out of sync with state contract protocols and program capacity within a given fiscal year remains uncertain. To correct this ongoing negative impact, RCUSA recommends restoring the \$66.5 million lost in FY12, and allocating \$38.3 million to Social Services and \$28.2 million to Targeted Assistance.
- II. **Contingency Fund:** ORR notified Congress in June 2014 that it would reprogram \$94 million in ORR resettlement services funds to meet unaccompanied children's needs. While ORR released the full amount in late September 2014, school impact grants and other important programs suffered long-term harm. These two major shortfalls in three years demonstrate that ORR and the vulnerable populations it serves need stronger financial footing. To avoid future destabilizing reprogramming, RCUSA supports appropriating \$100 million in FY17 for an ORR contingency fund that could be used flexibly to meet unforeseen needs of the vulnerable populations it serves. As envisioned by RCUSA, this contingency fund would operate in a manner that is similar to the Department of State's Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account, in that it would serve as a vital "safety valve" allowing ORR to maintain critical services for all within its care – even during times of emergency. As an alternative, we support the Administration's proposed \$95 million contingency fund and potential access to \$400 million that was requested in FY17, but we urge that these contingency funds be flexibly available for all populations under ORR's mandate.

**For more information please contact RCUSA at [info@rcusa.org](mailto:info@rcusa.org) or 202-319-2102. <http://www.rcusa.org/>**

# Refugee Council USA

## SFOPS APPROPRIATIONS FOR REFUGEES AND OTHER VULNERABLE POPULATIONS Fiscal Year 2017 Funding Needs for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Concern

### OVERVIEW

Today, the number of forcibly displaced persons around the world exceeds 65 million, the largest number in recorded history. Among them are over 21 million refugees. Refugee hosting countries require support to meet the urgent needs of vulnerable populations and to relieve pressures that have the potential to destabilize regions and threaten global security. U.S. funding helps to ensure that persons fleeing from life-threatening situations can find temporary protection in countries where they are displaced. For refugees, U.S. funding also supports the pursuit of the three durable solutions: voluntary repatriation back to their home country, integration in a host country of asylum, and third-country resettlement when the first two solutions are not viable.

Refugee Council USA (RCUSA) is a coalition of non-governmental organizations committed to protecting and assisting refugees and other forcibly displaced people. RCUSA urges Congress to ensure that the United States does its part to protect at-risk persons and relieve geopolitical tensions around their displacement by admitting at least 100,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) and appropriating:

- \$3.604 billion for the Department of State’s Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account,
- \$100 million for the Department’s Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account, and
- \$2.8 billion for the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

### FY17 Funding Needs for Refugees and Displaced Persons Pursuant to Certain Accounts of Department of State and USAID

Accounts for Refugees and Displaced Persons	FY16 Enacted Funding <sup>1</sup> (resettling 75,000 refugees)*	FY17 President’s Budget Request <sup>2</sup>	FY17 RCUSA Request (resettling 100,000 refugees) <sup>3</sup>	FY17 Senate Committee Proposed Funding	FY17 House Committee Proposed Funding
Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)	\$ 3,059,000,000 <sup>4</sup>	\$ 2,799,000,000	\$ 3,604,000,000	\$ 3,059,000,000	\$ 3,059,000,000 <sup>5</sup>
Emergency Refugee and Migration (ERMA)	\$ 50,000,000	\$ 50,000,000	\$ 100,000,000	\$ 50,000,000	\$ 50,000,000
International Disaster Assistance (IDA)	\$ 2,794,000,000	\$ 1,957,000,000	\$ 2,800,000,000	\$ 2,394,184,000	\$2,794,184,000

\*FY16 funding allocations were based upon a presidential determination of 75,000. The PD was increased to 85,000 without a corresponding change in funding levels.

RCUSA further recommends raising the ERMA cap to \$250,000,000 and authorizing the Secretary of State to be able to approve the draw-down of ERMA funds, so that resources can be made available more quickly in a displacement emergency.

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

<sup>2</sup> FY 17 Budget includes \$1.876 billion from OCO for MRA, \$40 million from OCO for ERMA, and \$1.832 billion from OCO for IDA

<sup>3</sup> While RCUSA’s funding request includes allocations for 100,000 refugees, to meet the worldwide refugee crisis we continue to encourage the Administration to approve and provide additional funding for the admission of 100,000 refugees as expeditiously as possible

<sup>4</sup> FY 16 estimated for MRA in SFOPs Congressional Justification is \$3.066 billion after a \$7 million transfer from the FY 16 Economic Support Fund.

<sup>5</sup> The House caps spending for refugee admissions at \$394 million—\$172.5 million below the \$567.5 million the administration estimates needing for FY17. The Senate does not delineate refugee admissions versus overseas assistance spending.

## **SFOPs ACCOUNT DESCRIPTIONS AND RCUSA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FY17 <sup>1</sup>**

### **SUMMARY**

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

The following SFOPs accounts fund life-saving aid to the some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

### **MIGRATION AND REFUGEE ASSISTANCE (MRA)**

The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account is administered by the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. The account has two major components: Overseas Refugee Assistance, which provides life-sustaining assistance to refugees and displaced persons, many of whom are residing in countries of first asylum that neighbor their home countries; and Refugee Admissions, which funds activities that result in the admission of refugees to the United States.

**Overseas Refugee Assistance:** U.S. Overseas Refugee Assistance helps maintain humane, stable conditions for refugees and host communities during the interim period until the refugee crisis can be resolved. It also covers some costs related to refugees' pursuit of durable solutions to their displacement. The Syria crisis has produced over 4.8 million Syrian refugees and 6.5 million internally displaced persons.<sup>2</sup> At least 5.5 million Syrian children have been affected.<sup>3</sup> The Syrian conflict has further expanded into Iraq where there are some 3.3 million internally displaced Iraqis and from which many have fled to neighboring countries.<sup>4</sup> In addition, there are multiple, complex humanitarian emergencies in several countries including South Sudan, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burma. Longstanding humanitarian crises also continue in Afghanistan, Somalia, and Colombia, causing internal displacement and regional pressures.

Meanwhile, a refugee and child protection emergency persists for many children and families in the Northern Triangle of Central America. RCUSA urges that increased U.S. funding to Central America in FY17 should address the protection needs of these at-risk children and families, address the root causes of their forced migration, and strengthen international protection in the region. Worldwide, the international community—and host countries in particular—are straining to respond to this dramatic and disturbing growth of forced displacement, making U.S. leadership more crucial than ever. The above funding levels recommended by RCUSA for FY17 would allow continued U.S. support for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), other UN bodies and intergovernmental organizations, and private non-governmental organizations providing essential services, and would support the United States in its leadership role in addressing humanitarian need and stabilizing the impacted regions.

**Refugee Admissions:** The United States is one of 28 resettlement countries. We admit refugees for resettlement (including unaccompanied refugee minors), asylum seekers, and Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. The Resettlement Program provides integration services through the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement

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<sup>1</sup> RCUSA and InterAction recommendations are the same for MRA, ERMA, and IDA figures, the Presidential Determination (the number of refugees admitted to the United States), ERMA cap increase, and new ERMA draw-down authority

<sup>2</sup> *Syria Regional Response*, UNHCR, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> [accessed July 18, 2016]



(ORR). ORR assists the above entrants and others, such as Cuban and Haitian entrants, unaccompanied children seeking protection, and victims of torture and human trafficking as they rebuild their lives in the United States.

Governments around the world look to the U.S. for leadership in developing and implementing humanitarian policies. Unfortunately, in response to the Syrian crisis, the U.S. has fallen far short of the European Union and others in welcoming Syrian refugees. While the Administration's refugee admission goal for FY16 of 85,000 and its commitment for FY17 of 100,000 are welcomed and sizeable commitments, given the unprecedented scope of today's global refugee crisis and the urgent need for U.S. leadership, RCUSA recommends that in addition to the 100,000 refugees for FY17, the United States admit and provide sufficient funding for an additional 100,000 refugees as expeditiously as possible. These numbers should increase in future years, as needed, to address the ongoing refugee crises in the Middle East region and elsewhere, to prevent destabilization of overburdened refugee host countries, and ensure they have the capacity to handle new refugees. Throughout the world and particularly in Central America, all in-country processing and refugee processing programs must be conducted in concert with the full range of refugee and child protections. Adequate funding is critical in enabling the Refugee Admissions Program to assist refugees with initial reception and placement in the United States and to support local U.S. communities that welcome refugees and help them integrate and rebuild their lives. In order to strengthen access to the durable solution of resettlement, the U.S. must increase resettlement and also encourage other resettlement countries to expand their capacity. While expanding overall referral capacity, the United States should help UNHCR expand its ability to identify and resettle unaccompanied refugee children who often lack basic necessities and are vulnerable to exploitation.

#### **EMERGENCY REFUGEE AND MIGRATION ASSISTANCE (ERMA)**

Escalating violence and instability in many parts of the world have placed increasing demands on Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA), an emergency draw-down account. ERMA provides an important "safety valve" during emergencies, allowing the United States to meet rapidly-occurring and unforeseen needs. ERMA is currently authorized at \$100,000,000, and it has not been increased since the mid-1990s. RCUSA endorses increasing the ceiling to \$250,000,000. This would enhance our country's ability to respond quickly and effectively to unanticipated crises. In addition, the Secretary of State should be given the authority to certify ERMA draw-downs. The current process requires presidential certification, which is cumbersome and often results in unnecessary delays. RCUSA recommends a minimum of \$100,000,000 in ERMA funding for FY17.

#### **INTERNATIONAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE (IDA)**

The International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account funds humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. These individuals have fled their homes just like refugees, but they have not crossed an international border so they are displaced within their own country. Significantly increased funding is required to address the needs of the growing numbers of people who are internally displaced due to conflict and natural disasters. This account funds cash-based emergency food assistance for critical voucher programs, local and regional purchase of food, and related cash-based emergency assistance efforts that enable rapid delivery of assistance. RCUSA's recommendation also assumes a stronger commitment to funding for education during emergencies, prevention of violence against women and girls, and emergency food assistance. RCUSA recommends \$2,800,000,000 for IDA for FY17 to meet these needs, noting that meeting the needs of internally displaced persons is one way to prevent the need for them to leave their countries of origin and become refugees.

**For additional information contact RCUSA at [info@RCUSA.org](mailto:info@RCUSA.org) or 202-319-2102. [www.refugeecouncilusa.org](http://www.refugeecouncilusa.org)**

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