

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 18, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC

Dear President Trump:

We write to express our deep disappointment in your decision to set the Presidential Determination (PD) for Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2018 at 45,000. We strongly urge you to reconsider this decision and increase the refugee admission level to 110,000 for Fiscal Year 2018. Further, we are alarmed by proposed changes to the resettlement process to require refugees to meet an assimilation standard and ask you brief us at least 30 days before any such changes are made.

As you know, the world is in the midst of the largest refugee crisis in history. An unprecedented 65.6 million people across the globe have been forcibly displaced from their homes because of violence, persecution, and war. Approximately 22.5 million of those individuals are refugees, and more than half are children. The U.S. has a moral imperative to welcome refugees, who are the most thoroughly vetted people who enter our country. America taking a leadership role during this crisis bolsters our credibility as a nation of immigrants founded on the promise to welcome those seeking a better life.

As both Republican and Democratic administrations have confirmed, the United States screens refugees more stringently than any other traveler allowed to enter the United States. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has safely and successfully resettled more than three million refugees from around the world to American communities across the country since 1975. Refugee applicants must undergo a robust and thorough screening process that takes roughly two years and involves our nation's top security and counter-terror experts. The exhaustive vetting process includes checking fingerprints and other biometric data against terrorist and criminal databases and multiple interviews through multiple Federal agencies.

Since the enactment of the 1980 Refugee Act, the average annual goal for refugee admissions has been 95,000. In Fiscal Year 2016, the U.S. resettled approximately 85,000 refugees, and the Presidential Determination for Fiscal Year 2017 was 110,000. During the worst refugee crisis in the world, these resettlement numbers pale in comparison to the support our allies are providing and our moral leadership commands. Since Executive Order 13769 was signed, the number of refugees coming to the United States each month has dropped precipitously. Australia, Norway, Canada, Sweden, and Finland all accept more refugees per capita than the United States, with Canada pledging to accept 300,000 refugees in 2017. Failing to do our part to alleviate this global crisis undermines our leadership, diplomacy, and national security.

In addition to the U.S.'s moral responsibility, supporting our allies and partners, whose resources are being strained by hosting large numbers of refugees, promotes security and stability at home and abroad. Twenty national security leaders, including Henry Kissinger, Michael Chertoff, Madeleine Albright, and Leon Panetta wrote a letter in 2015 noting that "resettlement initiatives help advance U.S. national security interests by supporting the stability of our allies and partners that are struggling to host large numbers of refugees."¹ By doing more to host and assist refugees, the United States would help safeguard the stability of nations like Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, which are hosting the vast majority of Syrian refugees. This can help reduce regional instability and potential for conflict and terrorism. Additionally, severely limiting the number of refugees the U.S. admits perpetuates extremist organizations' false narrative of a war between Islam and the West.


In order to make clear that the United States rejects this worldview, we must bolster our refugee program by supporting the world's most vulnerable people, without discriminating based on religion or nationality. As a nation of immigrants, our country has a long history of welcoming newcomers of all different backgrounds. Any efforts to require refugees meet an assimilation standard misunderstands the purpose of our resettlement program which is to assist the most vulnerable. This is especially true if no additional assistance is provided to ensure refugees are successfully integrated into the fabric of our nation.

The 45,000 PD for Fiscal Year 2018 is woefully insufficient when compared to the millions of people who have been forced to flee their home countries. Establishing a PD of 45,000 is the lowest refugee admissions goal in our nation's history. This would prevent tens of thousands of people from enriching American communities while seeking safety, protection, and an opportunity to provide a better future for themselves and their families in the United States.


The current global humanitarian crisis requires strong American leadership. To reflect that, we request that you reconsider and increase the PD for refugee admissions level to 110,000 for Fiscal Year 2018. Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to working together with you and your Administration on this critical issue.

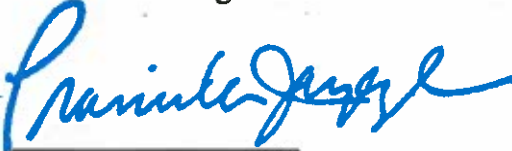
Sincerely,


Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress


Juan Vargas
Member of Congress


David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress


Luis V. Gutierrez
Member of Congress


Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

¹ Letter from Madeleine K. Albright, Henry A. Kissinger, et. al. to members of Congress (Dec. 1, 2015) available at: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/FormerNatSecOfficialsLetterRefugees.pdf>

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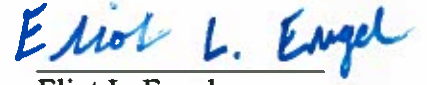
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



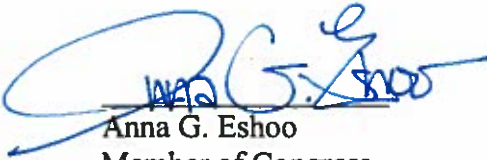
Mike Doyle
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



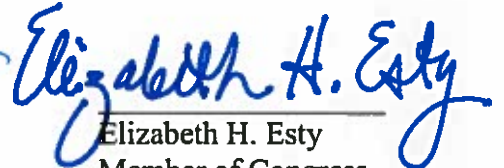
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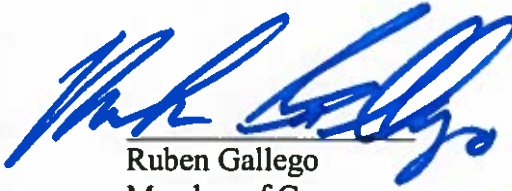
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Member of Congress



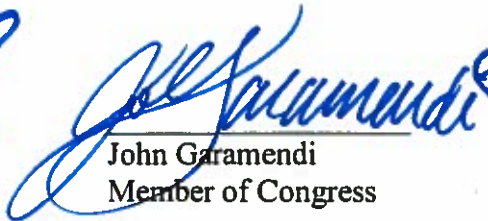
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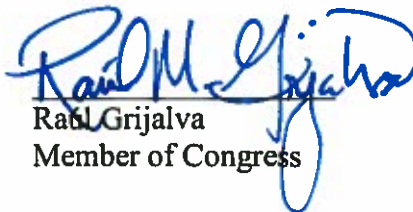
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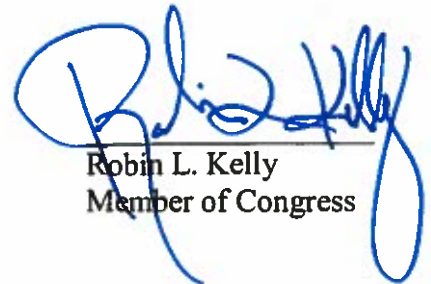
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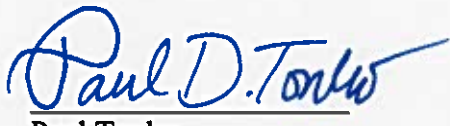
Adam Smith
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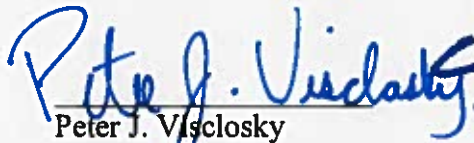

Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress

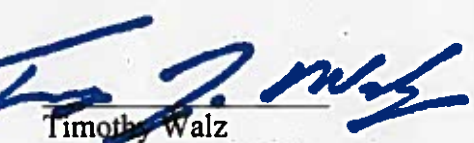

Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

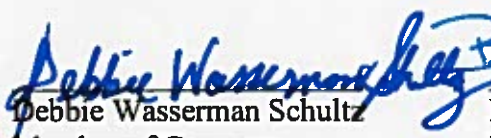

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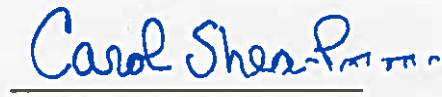

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Member of Congress


John B. Larson
Member of Congress


Ro Khanna
Member of Congress


Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress


Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress


Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Rex Tillerson, Secretary, State Department
The Honorable Elaine Duke, Acting Secretary, Homeland Security Department
The Honorable Mark Green, Administrator, Agency for International Development
The Honorable H.R. McMaster, Assistant to the President, National Security Advisor