



Refugee-Related Legislation in the 114th Congress

Positive Legislation

[The Protecting Religious Minorities Persecuted by ISIS Act of 2015 \(H.R. 1568\)](#)

Introduced by Representative Vargas (D-CA), this bill would make the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) more accessible to individuals in or from Iraq and Syria, including individuals facing persecution by ISIS based on gender, religion or ethnicity, by allowing them direct access to the refugee admissions process. The legislation also:

- Allows refugees to apply to USRAP directly for Priority 2 processing
- Requires adjudicators to maintain a record of evidence considered and provide a written decision for any denial of admissions
- Allows refugees to have legal representation at interviews
- Creates an administrative appeal mechanism
- Add additional staff and processing entities in the region
- Streamline existing systems for conducting background and security checks
- Require reports on using video conferencing for refugee interviews in cases where in-person interviews are not available

This bill is bipartisan and has the support of 14 Republicans and 28 Democrats (December 7, 2015).

[The Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act \(H.R. 2798\)](#)

Reintroduced by Representative Ellison (D-MN), this bill would provide increased protections and services to all categories of refugees, would admit refugees as legal permanent residents (currently they must wait a year to apply) and would remove the expiration of supplemental security income benefits for elderly and vulnerable refugees. This legislation also:

- Reviews refugee processing with the goal of streamlining processing while maintaining thorough security checks
- Establishes pre-arrival English language classes and work orientation programs
- Updates placement grants for inflation and to meet initial needs
- Funds national resettlement agencies at a sufficient level
- Opines that the President should appoint a White House Coordinator on Refugee Protection

- Requires voluntary agencies be funded at the start of the year
- Provides funding for case management services and expands monetary support for refugees
- Establishes refugee integration grants to integrate refugees into US civic life
- Expands the matching grant program and adjusts amount based on inflation and cost of living
- Establishes a Domestic Emergency Refugee Resettlement Fund to meet unanticipated resettlement needs
- Grants refugee benefits and foster care to special immigrant juveniles (SIJS) and unaccompanied children granted U-visas.

This bill has the support of 25 Democrats. (December 7, 2015).

[Domestic Resettlement Reform and Modernization Act of 2015 \(S.1615\)](#)

Introduced by Senators Stabenow (D-MI), King (I-ME) and Peters (D-MI), this bill mandates an assessment of the well-being of refugees resettled to the United States and revises federal funding to states and local resettlement organizations to ensure that communities and refugees receive appropriate levels of assistance. The bill also expands data collection and reporting regarding refugees' mental health, medical needs, and other needs.

Representative Pascrell (D-NJ) introduced an identical [companion bill](#) (H.R. 2839) in the House of Representatives. This legislation also:

- Orders a GAO study of the effectiveness of the ORR's domestic refugee resettlement programs including how self-sufficiency is defined, how money is spent and the role of community-based programs
- Reports on the needs of secondary migrants and their impact on states
- Extends assistance to secondary migrants
- Gathers data on mental and physical health, housing needs, employment and self-sufficiency of refugees
- Instructs the Department of State to collect best practices of national resettlement agencies and guide agencies

This bill has 2 Democratic cosponsors in the Senate (December 7, 2015).

Negative Legislation

[The American Security Against Foreign Enemies \(SAFE\) Act of 2015 \(H.R. 4038\)](#)

Introduced by Representative McCaul (R-TX), this bill would immediately end the refugee resettlement system in the Syria and Iraq region and leave vulnerable refugees, including women and children fleeing ISIS, in extreme danger. LIRS believes our commitment to welcoming refugees and the security of the American people are not mutually exclusive. This legislation also:

- Imposes additional security measures that would render the refugee resettlement system inoperable
- Requires the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Directors of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and National Intelligence to personally certify each application
- Requires an audit of admitted refugees by the Office of the Inspector General

H.R. 4038 was passed in the House on November 18, 2015. Senator Johnson (R-WI) introduced a [companion bill](#) (S. 2300) on the same day.

Refugee Resettlement Oversight and Security Act of 2015 (H.R. 3573)

Introduced by Representative McCaul (R-TX), this bill would place the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) on hold until Congress passes a joint resolution on refugee admissions numbers each year. Given the climate of gridlock, Congressional inaction or delay could have life or death consequences for refugees awaiting resettlement. This legislation also:

- Prioritizes religious minorities from Iraq and Syria
- Excludes Muslim refugees and other ethnic minorities as a result
- Adds time- and money-wasting steps to the security screening process
- Requires an annual Congressional report on the effectiveness and adequacy of the admissions process

This bill has 103 Republican cosponsors and 1 Democratic cosponsor (December 7, 2015).

Resettlement Accountability National Security Act of 2015 (H.R. 3314)

Introduced by Representative Babin (R-TX), this bill, like H.R. 3573, would shut down the USRAP until Congress passes a joint resolution that gives the Department of Homeland Security authority to resume admitting refugees. The bill also requires study on how many refugees use public benefits, for how long, how many pay taxes in their first year in the U.S., and the various costs to public assistance programs.

This bill has 82 Republican cosponsors (December 7, 2015).

Babin also presented a letter with 73 Republican co-signers to House Appropriations Leadership asking to stop funds for refugee relocation unless the Obama administration puts in place a long-term monitoring system for refugees.