



ADVOCACY GUIDE

How to Advocate for Refugees: Meeting with Your Representative and Involving Your Community

Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	6
Refugees versus Immigrants	6
Commerce and the Economy	6
Security	8
Education	8
Current State of Refugee Resettlement Orders	9
Executive Order 13769—Released on January 27, 2017	9
SCOTUS Decision on the Travel Ban Explained	10
How does this impact refugees?	10
How does this impact the work of LSS?	11
How to Arrange a Meeting with Your Representative	11
Contacting your Representative/Senator	12
Setting up the Appointment	13
Inform yourself	15
Send an Op-Ed to Your Local Paper	15
Notify the Local Media	15
Rally Your Community	15
Show up to a Town Hall Meeting	16
Use Social Media to Your Advantage	16
When You Get There	17
What to Wear	17
What to Bring	17
Getting There	17
What to Expect	17
What to Say	18
Message	18

Your Talking Points	19
Facts about refugees	19
After the Meeting	21
Send a thank you	21
Invite commentary from the community	21
Follow up on social media	21
Share with others	21
Appendix	22

Importance of Advocacy

Be an Advocate

We face a vast humanitarian crisis. But we are not powerless. At a time when the current administration, U.S. Congress and state legislatures are discussing policies that would either exclude refugees from entering the United States based on their national origin or religion or fundamentally change our long-standing and successful refugee resettlement program, policy makers need to hear from their constituents who support refugees.

There are many ways we can act and have our voices heard. The most effective is to develop a relationship with and educate the policy makers who serve you about how these proposed refugee policy changes will impact your community, your neighbors and your vote.

Your message will be even more powerful when the community itself rallies around the issue. Having a team of refugee leaders, resettlement staff, volunteers, employers, faith groups, and other community members is essential in demonstrating the importance of this issue to policy makers. It is vital that policy makers at all levels understand that **their constituents care about refugees, and that refugees are their constituents** — individuals and families who 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 and opportunities to contribute to their new U.S. communities.

Your Voice Matters

Your story as a refugee, staff member, or supporter of refugee resettlement is your most important qualification as an advocate. You have first-hand experience in welcoming refugees into your community and the positive contributions refugees make to your community. And you are not alone. Refugees, resettlement staff, faith leaders, employers, military veterans, and supportive community members can all add their voices to reach local, state, and national elected leaders who make policy decisions that impact refugees.

When policy makers know that their constituents care about refugees, they will feel compelled to at least consider supporting refugee assistance and resettlement, as well as productive policies that protect refugees.

It's important to note that 501(c)3 organizations like LSS/NCA can confidently educate policy makers concerning refugee policy and how those 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, if 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 organizations.

Background

Refugees versus Immigrants

Refugees are forced to flee their homes because of armed conflict, persecution, or natural disaster. Putting them in a situation where it is necessary for them to cross borders to save their life. This is a legal classification which allows them to be eligible for assistance from other countries and organizations. They are given this legal status because it is too dangerous for them to return home. There are international laws and treaties that the US has signed on to and adopted to protect refugees so they can live in safety with basic human rights being upheld and are given assistance as they begin the process of starting a new life. ¹

Immigrants are people who chose to move to new countries in hope of a better life, often for economic, educational, or family reasons. This is legislated by each country's individual immigration laws. ²

The biggest differences between refugees and immigrants are that refugees do not choose to leave their country, rather they were forced to out of fear for their life. The second difference is that our country has a legal obligation to help refugees because of the laws passed both nationally and internationally that are aimed at protecting refugees.

To confidently communicate why supporting refugees is vital to our local, state and national interests, it is crucial that you understand and can speak to the many ways refugees contribute to society. These facts encompass a number of issues that are at the top of our public policy agenda as highlighted below.

Commerce and the Economy

- **Employment:** The U.S. refugee resettlement system emphasizes self-sufficiency through employment. Refugee men are employed at a higher rate than their U.S.-born peers with two-thirds of refugee men employed during the 2009-11 period, compared to 60 percent of U.S.-born men. ³

1 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "UNHCR viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'migrant' – Which is right?" UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html>.

2 ibid

3 Capps, Randy, and Michael Fixx. "Ten Facts About U.S. Refugee Resettlement." Migrationpolicy.org. March 01, 2016. http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/ten-facts-about-us-refugee-resettlement?gclid=CjwKCAjwk4vMBRAGeiwA4ftLsyceJdkaadX3U5wbwDsSxKYD6jpthu83K5dEaqXd7WOpZlt46J0SPxoCfjwQAvD_BwE.

- **Workforce participation:** After around six years in the U.S., refugees have higher labor force participation and employment as compared to U.S.-born residents.⁴
- **Businesses and entrepreneurship:** 13 % of refugees were entrepreneurs in 2015, compared to just 9% of the US born population.⁵
- **Taxes:** Refugees pay employment, property, sales, and other taxes, the same as any U.S. citizen. In 2015 Refugees earned more than \$77 billion in household income and paid almost \$21 billion in taxes.⁶
- **Taxes:** Over the course of a 20-year period refugees pay \$21,000 more in taxes than they receive in benefits over their first 20 years in the U.S.⁷
- **Government Assistance:** After 10 years, refugees have indistinguishable levels of welfare and SNAP from U.S.-born counterparts.⁸
- **Investment:** Refugees show a willingness to make long-term investments in the country—they found companies, earn citizenship, and buy homes at notably high rates. A majority, 57.4 percent of all likely refugee households own their homes, a figure relatively close to the homeownership rate among U.S. residents overall.⁹
- **Resettlement Funding:** Although the Federal Government funds refugee resettlement assistance, funding has been limited and the program works as a public private partnership. Non-profits and community groups offer substantial support for refugee families above and beyond limited government funding.¹⁰

4 Evans, William, and Daniel Fitzgerald. "The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States: Evidence from the ACS." National Bureau of Economic Research, 2017. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w23498.pdf>.

5 "From Struggle to Resilience The Economic Impact of Refugees in America." New American Economy. June 2017. http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/NAE_Refugees_V5.pdf.

6 "From Struggle to Resilience The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."

7 Evans, William, and Daniel Fitzgerald.

8 *ibid.*

9 "From Struggle to Resilience The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."

10 "Learn the Facts." Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area. http://lssnca.org/programs/refugees_immigrant/stand-with-refugees/refugee-facts.html.

Security

- **Security:** Refugees are intensively vetted for security threats before being resettled in the United States. The U.S. government thoroughly screens refugees' backgrounds¹¹--an intensive process involving the Department of Homeland Security and State, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other national intelligence agencies. Of the 784,000 refugees resettled in the U.S. since September 11, 2001, three have been arrested for planning terrorist activities. Check out the appendix to learn about the screening process for refugees and download a handout that explains the current security procedures.¹²
- **Citizenship:** More than 84 percent of refugees who have been in the country for 16 to 25 years have taken the step of becoming citizens, compared to roughly half of all immigrants in the country that long.¹³
- **Reforming the Resettlement process:** U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) is taking advantage of its suspension to reform aspects of it to better serve U.S. interests, support our allies, and help those in greatest need.

Key benefits of the program:¹⁴

- Asserts U.S. leadership in foreign crises
- Provides the U.S. with a positive response to crises
- Assists allies in crisis
- Strengthen the public diplomacy in America
- Lessen human suffering

Education

- **Achievement:** Refugees are more likely to have a high school degree than other immigrants, and are just as likely as U.S. born residents to have graduated from college.¹⁵

11 Pope, Amy. "Infographic: The Screening Process for Refugee Entry into the United States." National Archives and Records Administration. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2015/11/20/infographic-screening-process-refugee-entry-united-states>.

12 "Learn the Facts." Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area.

13 "Refugees in the U.S. Had More Than \$56 Billion in Spending Power in 2015, New Study Shows." New American Economy. <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/press-release/refugees-in-the-u-s-had-more-than-56-billion-in-spending-power-in-2015-new-study-shows/>.

14 Enos, Olivia. "The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program: A Roadmap for Reform." The Heritage Foundation. July 5, 2017. <http://www.heritage.org/immigration/report/the-us-refugee-admissions-program-roadmap-reform>.

Resettlement statistics for Virginia and Maryland can be found in the [appendix](#). Statistics for other states can be found [here](#)¹⁶.

Current State of Refugee Resettlement Orders

Since the start of the new Administration, the status of the U.S. refugee resettlement program has been in flux. A flurry of executive orders, appeals court injunctions and, most recently, a partial U.S. Supreme Court ruling have left many confused concerning the status of refugees currently in or awaiting entry into the United States.

Executive Order 13769—Released on January 27, 2017

What does the initial executive order do?

In brief: The executive order suspends the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for 120 days (4 months) for all refugee populations. It also prevents Syrian refugees from being resettled in the United States indefinitely. Lastly, it prevents all people of Iraqi, Iranian, Syrian, Somali, Sudanese, Yemeni, and Libyan nationalities from traveling to the United States for any reason for 90 days.

What does the injunction that was issued on Saturday, January 28 mean?

The injunction blocked immigration officials nationwide from deporting individuals from countries listed in the executive order who arrived in the United States with valid immigration and non-immigration visas in the immediate hours following the signing of the executive order. It still allows the U.S. government to detain these individuals, pending further legal review. The injunction does not impact anyone overseas, and it does not stop the executive order from being implemented.

Who does the executive order affect?

The executive order impacts all people seeking refugee status in the United States, as well as all people of Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, Somali, Sudanese, Yemeni, and Libyan nationalities (except, most likely, those with green cards to live in the United States) hoping to travel to the United States for any reason. This includes people who hold special immigrant visas (SIVs – granted to Iraqi nationals who worked for the U.S.

¹⁵ "Learn the Facts." Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area.

¹⁶ "State by State Information," Refugee Council USA, [http://www.rcusa.org/state-refugee-profiles/?rq=state profiles](http://www.rcusa.org/state-refugee-profiles/?rq=state%20profiles).

military), Visa 93s (family reunification visas for refugees joining family members who are already in the United States), other refugees, and parolees.

If refugees were already undergoing the necessary steps to be resettled in the United States when the executive order went into effect, can they be resettled during the 120 day suspension?

No, unless they receive an exception. Additionally, after the 120 day period is over, refugees who were previously resettled may have to obtain new security and medical clearances prior to traveling to the United States if their pre-existing clearances expired during the 120 day period.

How will the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program change if and when the injunction is lifted?

- The maximum number of refugees that can be admitted annually will be reduced from 110,000 to 50,000.
- The order requires the program, upon its resumption, to prioritize resettling religious minorities who experience religion-based persecution in their home countries due to their minority status.
- The order completely ends resettling Syrian refugees until the President determines that the vetting procedures for Syrians are “consistent with the national interest.”
- The order directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to determine whether more decision-making power regarding refugee resettlement can be transferred to state and local governments.¹⁷

SCOTUS Decision on the Travel Ban Explained

The supreme court’s decision June 29 allows part of the proposed travel ban to go through. The travel ban is on nationals from six Muslim majority countries, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The ban lasts for 90 days for nationals from these countries, and applies to refugees from all countries for 120 days.

How does this impact refugees?

The ban is on refugees from all countries for 120 days. Refugees can be exempt from the ban if they have a “bona fide relationship” with someone in the US, including close family, students admitted to university, worker with a job offer from a US company. Or if they already had visas and travel arrangements. “Bona fide relationships” includes

¹⁷ Golshan, Tara. "Trump's travel ban is the most difficult for refugees." Vox. June 26, 2017. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/6/26/15873690/supreme-court-travel-ban-refugees>.

resettlement agencies that refugees are already paired with, making them also exempt from the ban.

How does this impact the work of LSS?

The SCOTUS ruling has effectively put our entire unaccompanied refugee minor program on permanent hold. We currently represent several children and foster parents ready to welcome them into their homes but because of the ban they are unable to travel despite being cleared and assured homes in the United States. More importantly, some of these children left in limbo are 17 and in danger of aging out. When a youth turns 18 years old they are no longer eligible to enter the U.S. through the URM foster care program.

Virginia, one of the states we resettle in is a tie state, this means that to be resettled in Virginia the refugee must claim a relationship tie that resides in the area. The new definition of “bona fide” relationship tightens what defines a “tie,” which even after the 120 day ban will have lasting limitations on who can be resettled in Virginia, because of how ties are (will be) legally defined.

For more information on the travel ban and who it affects see the original article from the Washington Post below, or linked in the appendix.

[Which of your family members could visit under the travel ban](#)¹⁸

[What Trump changed in the new travel ban](#)¹⁹

How to Arrange a Meeting with Your Representative

Meeting face to face with your Senator or Congressional Representative is one of the most effective ways to have your voice heard and to make an impact. Scheduling a meeting with your Representative or Senator follows a set process, outlined below. While your meeting will most likely be attended by a staff member – not your actual Senator or Representative – the meeting will be time well spent if you are well prepared, clear in your message and connected with other constituents from your state or district.

¹⁸ Reuben Fischer-Baum et al., "Which of your family members could visit under the travel ban," Washington Post, , https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/world/travel-ban-who-is-close-family/?utm_term=.8565af76eda9.

¹⁹ Soffen, Kim, and Darla Cameron. "What Trump changed in the new travel ban." Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/trump-compare-travel-ban/?tid=graphics-story>.

Contacting your Representative/Senator

Online

- o Locate your Senators and Congressional representatives by zip code at [Senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov) and [House.gov](https://www.house.gov)
- o Many of them have instructions on the best way to contact them on their website such as a phone number to call, online form to fill out, or email address to contact.

SENATORS	
Maryland	Virginia
Ben Cardin (D)	Mark Warner (D)
Chris Van Hollen (D)	Tim Kaine (D)

REPRESENTATIVES		
District	Maryland	Virginia
1	Andy Harris (R)	Robert Wittman (R)
2	A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D)	Scott Taylor (R)
3	John Sarbanes (D)	Robert “Bobby” Scott (D)
4	Anthony Brown (D)	Donald McEachin (D)
5	Steny Hoyer (D)	Thomas Garrett (R)
6	John Delaney (D)	Bob Goodlatte (R)
7	Elijah Cummings (D)	David “Dave” Brat (R)
8	Jamie Raskin (D)	Donald Beyer (D)
9		Morgan Griffith (R)
10		Barbara Comstock (R)
11		Gerald Connolly (D)

Call

- o Call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121. Know the name of your House Representative prior to calling; the operators are not able to look up that information for you.

Setting up the Appointment

When you call, ask to speak to the member's **appointment secretary** or **scheduler**.

- Identify yourself as a constituent and also identify yourself by profession (teacher, administrator, professor or student).
- Inform the scheduler the specific date and time you will be in Washington, DC (e.g., Thursday, September 21, between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m.). Alternatively, you can meet with your representative when they are home on recess at the district office.
- You will likely need to email a written request for a meeting in addition to the phone call. Be sure to ask for the email address. DO NOT mail the request via the post office. Due to terrorism threats, all mail service to Senate and House offices has been suspended indefinitely.
- Depending on where you are meeting them look up whether the [house](#) or [senate](#) is in session, which will impact availability.

Sample Correspondence

Email to request a meeting at the district office

[Your name and address]

The Honorable [First name of legislator] [Last name of legislator]

[Lawmaker's district office address]

Attention: [Name of scheduler]

Dear [Representative or Senator] [Last name]:

I am your constituent and was asked by [name of scheduler you spoke with] to submit this request to meet with you in your [name of city where district office is located] office to discuss [issues].

I believe [issue] is important because... (1-2 sentences)

I will be joined by [list of people who will be joining you, if any]. The best dates for me to meet are [fill in several dates and/or times].

I will contact you shortly regarding the possibility of scheduling this meeting. In the meantime, you can contact me at [phone number] or [email] if you have any questions.

*Sincerely,
[Your Signature]*

Sample email to request a meeting at the DC office

[Your Address] [Date]

*The Honorable [full name]
U.S. Senate (or U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510 (20515 for House)
Attention: (Name of Scheduler)*

Dear Senator (or Representative) [last name]:

I am writing to request an appointment with you on [date]. I am a member of the [your group, if any] in [your city/state], and I'm concerned about [issue].

I realize that your schedule is difficult to project at this point, but it would be ideal if we could meet between [time] and [time].

I believe [issue] is important because [1-2 sentences].

My home address is [address]. I can also be reached by phone at [phone number] or email at [email address]. I will contact your office during the week of [1-2 weeks before the visit] to confirm the details of the appointment.

Thank you for considering my request to meet with you.

*Sincerely,
[name]*

Preparing for the Meeting

Inform yourself

Typical meetings last only 15-45 minutes. Become an expert on the refugee issue including understanding the arguments of the opposition and being prepared to counter them. The background section is a good place to get started on your research and familiarize yourself with facts and statistics. Personal stories and experience, however, are the best way to punctuate your position.

Send an Op-Ed to Your Local Paper

An op-ed (commonly referred to as an "opinion editorial") is a written prose piece typically published by a newspaper or magazine which expresses the opinion of a named author usually not affiliated with the publication's editorial board. To support your meeting with your representative, you can consider writing and submitting an op-ed to your local newspaper that articulates your main points. [The Op-Ed guide](#) from LSS/NCA will provide you with a framework to follow to craft a sharp, provocative piece.

Notify the Local Media

Members love to read about themselves in local newspapers, except when the news is negative. You can notify your local media about your meeting with your representative and invite them to attend, especially if you are bringing a large group to express their opinion and speak out for refugees. Remember: a photo is worth a thousand words. If you can provoke a strong visual, you'll be more attractive to your local media. Some ideas include the following.

Rally Your Community

Gather your community around to underscore the personal reasons that standing with refugees is important to you and to our country. For more information on how to mobilize community members and advocate to your local leaders, click [here](#) for a framework for change to make our cities welcoming and inclusive.

Meet and coordinate with influential and active community members and other organizations to create greater awareness and exposure for the refugee issue at hand.

Since the refugee issue impacts many sector: business, health, education, law enforcement, and faith communities, it is appropriate for representatives from these communities to provide their perspective to your representatives and the media. To make it easy for these constituents to lend their voices, urge them to sign onto these sector-specific letters or add your name as appropriate.

- o [Businesses](#)
- o [Educators](#)
- o [Law Enforcement](#)
- o [Faith Leaders](#)

Show up to a Town Hall Meeting

An easier way to talk to your representative in person is to show up to town hall meetings. Rally your community members to show up in a large group to the town hall meeting. It is a good place to ask your questions and get direct responses. Look up your representative's schedule (linked above) to see when they are hosting events at the district office.

Use Social Media to Your Advantage

Social media, especially twitter, has become a popular way for politicians to interact with their constituents. It offers a direct, public line between you, your representatives and the public at large.

Before your meeting, use social media channels to put your name and your position on the issue on your elected official's social media agenda.

Sample Tweets:

- @_____ I'm coming to show you resettlement demonstrates the best of our American and Christian values #WelcomeBoldly
- @_____ Refugee resettlement is a proud American legacy with bipartisan support Coming to tell you to #WelcomeBoldly
- @_____ We are people of faith who OPPOSE refusing protection or a religious litmus test for refugees #WelcomeBoldly
- @_____ We Christians oppose policies that would deny Muslims refugees #WelcomeBoldly

When You Get There

What to Wear

Dress professionally for meetings with your Legislators. Business suits are entirely appropriate. Clergy are encouraged to wear collars; other professions—such as police and healthcare workers—uniforms also tell an impactful story.

If you are going as a group, consider dressing for your cause (remember the power of a photograph)! You can print t-shirts focused on your message. Most importantly be comfortable.

What to Bring

The [appendix](#) includes helpful handouts and infographics to print out and bring

- One to two water bottles and light food, such as a granola bar or sandwich, are permitted in the Senate and House office buildings.
- Feel free to bring a camera.
- Keep in mind that you will go through metal detectors and your bags will go through an x-ray.

Getting There

If arriving by the DC Metro there are three subway stops found within walking distance of the Capitol: Union Station, Capitol South, and Federal Center, SW. You'll want to note where your Representative's office is.

The three Senate office buildings are along Constitution Avenue north of the Capitol: Russell Senate Office Building, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hart Senate Office Building.

The three House office buildings are along Independence Avenue south of the Capitol: Cannon House Office Building, Longworth House Office Building, Rayburn House Office Building.

What to Expect

Arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled time to give yourself plenty of time to go through security and find your representative's office.

You might talk with your Representative; it's more likely you'll talk to a staffer who is familiar with refugee issues. They are there to listen to you and report back to the Member.

What to Say

Be polite and direct with your message, but don't forget you are talking to a person. Nothing destroys your credibility like ranting, raving, and having an "in your face" demeanor. Have a specific request ready. Always try to emphasize the positives of your standpoint. And try to end the conversation on a positive note. LSS/NCA and other resettlement agencies in our community are encouraging people to ask their Representatives to oppose anti-refugee and anti-immigration legislation or to express dissent against executive orders carrying these sentiments.

Feel free to ask questions of your representative and their staffers.

Message

Your message should be 15-30 minutes long

Give thanks: Start off by thanking them for meeting you. Have a bit of small talk (1 or 2 minutes) to warm them up. Know your representative's stance on policies and actions they have recently taken/ spoken on so you can reference it if applicable when you meet them. "Thank you for speaking on/voting on..."

Next state why you are here. Explain why you care about refugee issues—ex: I'm a business owner and it helps my business to have refugees ...etc., faith leader, teacher etc.). And why they should too (ex. Helps the economy, revitalize your city, all they contribute etc.)

Facts: Include facts about refugees (see handouts and talking points below)

Story: Be sure to include a story of a specific refugee from your community—one of their constituents, or a positive experience you have with refugees.

State purpose again: Recap why you care about refugees and why they should too.

Call to action: Include a call to action by asking them to consider voting a certain way, sponsoring a bill, or writing a formal letter to the President or State Department, etc.

Leave behinds: Give them the handouts you brought. Leave them with colorful and organized visuals. (see [Appendix](#))

Give thanks again: Thank them again for taking the time to meet with you

Be sure to leave all the LSS documents behind after you leave!!!!

For those who support a refugee ban: You might not change their position, but you can appeal to their other interests. Connect refugee issues to other issues they care about—such as security or small business—you can make a very compelling case. Remember: your vote is their primary interest.

For those who oppose a refugee ban: Thank them for standing with their constituents; ask how they've taken a leadership role on this issue. Suggest ways you expect them to demonstrate leadership in the future.

Your Talking Points

Facts about refugees

- The United States is one of 28 resettlement countries, and has proudly resettled Jewish refugees during World War II, Vietnamese refugees in the 1980s, and more recently refugees from the Sudan, Burma / Myanmar, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.²⁰
- Today, we are facing the worst displacement crisis in recorded history with over 65 million people, including over 21 million refugees, forced to leave their homes because of who they are or what religion they practice.²¹
- There are currently over 21 million refugees worldwide, less than 1% of whom will ever be resettled. Resettlement, especially for children, is a health and safety imperative.²²
- In our nation's founding document, we declare that all people have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Refugee resettlement is an embodiment of that belief.
- Refugees resettled in the United States pay taxes, open businesses, buy homes, and utilize their expertise, skills, inventive ideas and resilience to contribute to American communities. They also become proud American citizens and voters,

²⁰ "U.S. Refugee Admissions Program FAQs." U.S. Department of State. January 20, 2017. <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2017/266447.htm>.

²¹ "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015." The UN Refugee Agency.

²² "Forced Migration Review." Refugee Studies Centre. May 2016. <http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/solutions.pdf>.

with many being elected to public office. Studies show that refugees contribute more value to the economy than the initial investment in their resettlement.²³

- Refugee children have suffered from stolen childhoods. Every day, we see firsthand the resilience, passion for learning, and determination of refugee children and parents who overcome these obstacles.
- We call on you to recognize this nation's leadership in protecting refugees and celebrate the contributions refugees and immigrants make to their communities.
- Each refugee admitted to the United States through the resettlement program not only undergoes rigorous security screenings, but also receives a medical screening before arrival.²⁴

²³ Bondarenko, Veronika. "Study finds refugees actually pay the US government thousands more than they get from it." Business Insider. June 13, 2017.
<http://www.businessinsider.com/how-much-do-refugees-cost-us-taxpayers-2017-6>.

²⁴ "U.S. Refugee Admissions Program FAQs." U.S. Department of State. January 20, 2017. Accessed August 03, 2017.
<https://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2017/266447.htm>.

After the Meeting

Send a thank you

Send a follow up email thanking them for meeting with you. Also include any additional information you may have offered to provide on this issue. A follow up letter is important because it shows your commitment to the issue and helps build an important relationship with your legislator.

Invite commentary from the community

Encourage those who participated in meetings and outreach to follow-up with representative(s) to reinforce their own point of view and perspective and demonstrate momentum and community involvement with the refugee issue.

Follow up on social media

Tweet your representative(s) again to thank them again for meeting with you and to reiterate your points.

Share with others

Use your experience to remind others of the importance of advocacy and encourage them to go and advocate by meeting with their congressional representatives or through writing letters.

Share a meeting report and notes with members of your community, congregation or other organizations who provided assistance to organize the meeting.

Submit another op-ed to your local newspaper about the importance of meeting with legislators and your personal experience.

Share with schools (especially any who were involved with organizing or supporting your outreach) the importance of meeting with elected officials, and encourage them to become involved even if they can't vote through writing letters or other age appropriate levels of political engagement.

Continue to raise awareness for refugee issues, making it an important issue in your community

Appendix

Helpful documents

1. [10 facts about refugee resettlement](#)
2. [What Trump changed in the new travel ban](#)
3. [Trump's travel ban family requirements – who can visit](#)
4. Op-Ed guide (pdf to download)
5. Virginia Refugee Resettlement 2017(pdf to download)
6. Maryland Refugee Resettlement 2017(pdf to download)
7. Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program (pdf to download)
8. Where do refugees in Maryland come from (pdf to download)
9. Employ a Refugee (pdf to download)
10. Immigration Services (pdf to download)
11. Refugee Resettlement (pdf to download)
12. Rent to a Refugee (pdf to download)
13. Security Screening Steps for Refugees (pdf to download)
14. Where do refugees in Virginia come from (pdf to download)