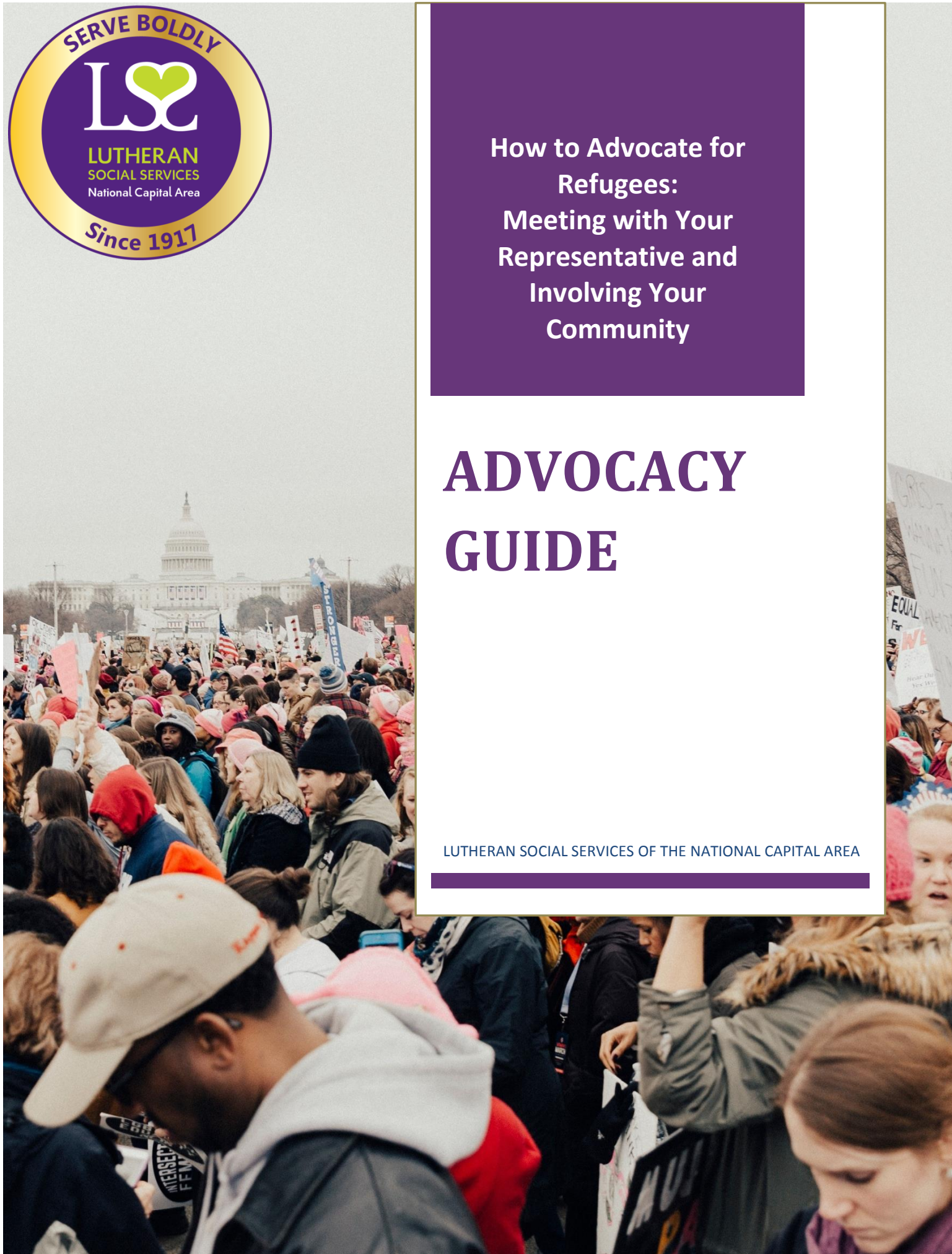




How to Advocate for  
Refugees:  
Meeting with Your  
Representative and  
Involving Your  
Community

# ADVOCACY GUIDE

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA



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## 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, city, county 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 and their staffs 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 limited lobbying is acceptable, if it is not a substantial part of the organization's work, i.e. 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 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. <sup>1</sup>

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. <sup>2</sup>

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. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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>.

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> 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](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.<sup>4</sup>
- **Businesses and entrepreneurship:** 13 % of refugees were entrepreneurs in 2015, compared to just 9% of the US born population.<sup>5</sup>
- **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.<sup>6</sup>
- **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.<sup>7</sup>
- **Government Assistance:** After 10 years, refugees have indistinguishable levels of welfare and SNAP from U.S.-born counterparts.<sup>8</sup>
- **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.<sup>9</sup>
- **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.<sup>10</sup>

## Security

- **Security:** Refugees are intensively vetted for security threats before being resettled in the United States. The U.S. government thoroughly screens refugees' backgrounds<sup>11</sup>--an intensive process involving the Department of Homeland Security and State, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other national intelligence

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](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](http://lssnca.org/programs/refugees_immigrant/stand-with-refugees/refugee-facts.html).

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>.



agencies. Of the 784,000 refugees resettled in the U.S. since September 11, 2001, three have been arrested for planning terrorist activities. Check the [appendix](#) to learn about the screening process for refugees and download a handout that explains the current security procedures.<sup>12</sup>

- **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.<sup>13</sup>
- **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:<sup>14</sup>

- 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.<sup>15</sup>

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

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<sup>12</sup> "Learn the Facts." Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area.

<sup>13</sup> "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/>.

<sup>14</sup> 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>.

<sup>15</sup> "Learn the Facts." Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area.

<sup>16</sup> "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).



### ***Current State of Refugee Resettlement Orders***

Since the start of the Trump 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 1.0

**January 27, 2017:** President Trump signs "Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States." The order bans all people from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen from entering the United States for at least 90 days and orders the secretary of Homeland Security to conduct a 30-day review to determine which countries do not provide "adequate information" for its citizens to be issued visas to enter the US. In addition, the order stopped Admission of all refugees for 4 months and banned Syrian refugees indefinitely.

**February 9, 2017:** The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upholds a federal judge in Seattle's restraining order against the executive order that was determined earlier in February. Legal questions were brought against the order stating that the travel ban unjustifiably targeted Muslim nations and peoples.

#### Executive Order 2.0

**March 6, 2017:** President Trump issues second Executive Order, replacing the first, to limit potential challenges. The order has roughly the same effect as the first. The new ban lays out a far more specific national security basis for the order, blocks the issuance only of new visas, and move to ban travel from just six of the original seven countries included in the first executive order, omitting Iraq.

**March 15, 2017:** Legal challenges brought by the state of Hawaii stall the ban hours before it is set to take effect.

**June 2017:** Following a similar government appeal and oral arguments in the Hawaii case, a three-judge panel from the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit rules unanimously to keep the refugee and Muslim ban on hold, the second defeat for the March 6 executive order at the circuit court level.

#### The Supreme Court Weighs In.

**June 26, 2017:** The United States Supreme Court (SCOTUS) responds to the government's emergency motion to overrule the lower courts' injunctions against the March 6 revised executive order, as well as their appeal to hear the case during the fall term. The Court announces that it will hear arguments for the case in the fall, and also

issues an order keeping in place much of the lower court rulings which prevent the administration from implementing the ban in full. As part of the order, however, the Supreme Court specifies that refugees and foreign nationals who have a “bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States” are exempt from the ban.

**June 29, 2017:** The Trump administration issues guidance on how it plans to implement the Supreme Court’s parameters. The administration’s restrictive guidance includes narrow definitions of “bona fide relationships,” excluding grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. Importantly, the administration also announces that ties to resettlement agencies are not expected to be considered as a “bona fide” relationship, leaving thousands of already vetted and cleared refugees in limbo.

#### Challenging the Administration’s Interpretation

**July 13, 2017:** A day after the partial ban is in effect, U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson, in response to a second motion filed by the State of Hawaii and supported by HIAS and (International Refugee Assistance Project) IRAP, halts the implementation of key portions of the executive order, citing HIAS’ arguments in several instances. As a result of the ruling, refugees with “assurances” from U.S.-based resettlement agencies are officially considered to have “bona fide” relationships with a U.S. entity, as defined by the Supreme Court. Additionally, the judge’s decision expands the administration’s overly narrow interpretation of which close family ties would qualify to be exempted from the refugee ban, which had originally excluded even grandparents and grandchildren.

**September 7, 2017:** A three-judge panel from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit Court hears oral arguments in Seattle on whether grandparents, aunts, uncles and other close family members, as well as refugees with assurances from U.S.-based resettlement agencies, should be exempt from the Trump administration’s Muslim and refugee ban. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit issues a ruling affirming that grandparents, aunts, uncles and other close family members, as well as refugees with assurances from U.S.-based resettlement agencies, are exempt from the Trump administration’s Muslim and refugee ban.

**September 11, 2017:** U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy temporarily grants the Trump administration’s appeal to limit the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals’ ruling that refugees with assurances from U.S.-based refugee resettlement agencies would be exempt from the ban according to the Supreme Court order’s definition of “bona fide relationships” with a U.S. entity. The Supreme Court rules that refugees with assurances from U.S.-based refugee resettlement agencies are not exempt from the ban according to the Court’s definition of a “bona fide relationship” with a U.S. entity.

### Executive Order 3.0

**October 24, 2017:** Following the expiration of the 120 day ban on refugee resettlement, the Trump administration announces the resumption of the United States Refugee Admissions program with new “enhanced vetting capabilities.” Under the new restrictions, however, refugees from 11 countries and stateless Palestinians are banned for at least 90 more days. The 11 countries—Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen—accounted for nearly half of all refugee admissions in Fiscal Year 2017. Additionally, the procedures make it harder for all refugees to come to the United States, and prevent the spouses and children of refugees and asylees from following to join their loved ones.

[In addition, administration sets refugee resettlement goal to 45,000 individuals for fiscal year 2018. (Over a 50% decline from previous years.) U.S. refugee resettlement agencies advocated for at least 75,000 individuals.]

**December 23, 2017:** U.S. District Judge James Robart issues a ruling largely blocking implementation of the Trump administration’s most recent refugee restrictions which suspended the admission of refugees from 11 countries, nine of which are predominantly Muslim, for a minimum of 90 days. The restrictions also stopped the follow-to-join process, which reunites family members with refugees already in the U.S. The ruling stops the implementation of the new refugee restrictions for refugees with bona fide relationships to the United States.

### New Resettlement Procedures

**January 2018:** Department of Homeland Security releases a memorandum stating that refugees will undergo additional screening procedures before receiving approval in the United States. For instance, refugees are now required to list contact information for every address they have lived for the past 10 years. However, many of these details about the additional procedures and requirements are unknown or unclear. Refugee resettlement agencies across the country have seen a dramatic decline in refugee arrivals since this policy change, including Special Immigrant Visa holders. Despite a goal of welcoming 45,000 through the end of September, estimates project that the U.S. will resettle only about 20,000 refugees--the lowest number since the refugee resettlement program began in the 1980's.

**April 10, 2018:** the Administration lifted the travel ban against Chad, but the remaining countries were still subject to travel restrictions.

### Supreme Court Case Trump v. Hawaii

**June 26, 2018:** In Trump v. Hawaii, SCOTUS held that President Trump's third travel ban is within his presidential authority. The travel ban was upheld 5-4 by SCOTUS, which rejected the argument that the policy was based on anti-Muslim bias. Justice Sonia

Sotomayor, in dissent, stated that the court had blindly endorsed "a discriminatory policy motivated by animosity toward" Muslims. Advocates argue that this decision clears the way for a policy that separates families and endorses religious discrimination.

### ***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.

### **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               | <a href="#">Andy Harris</a> (R)            | <a href="#">Robert Wittman</a> (R)       |
| 2               | <a href="#">A. Dutch Ruppersberger</a> (D) | <a href="#">Scott Taylor</a> (R)         |
| 3               | <a href="#">John Sarbanes</a> (D)          | <a href="#">Robert “Bobby” Scott</a> (D) |
| 4               | <a href="#">Anthony Brown</a> (D)          | <a href="#">Donald McEachin</a> (D)      |

|    |                                     |                                       |
|----|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 5  | <a href="#">Steny Hoyer</a> (D)     | <a href="#">Thomas Garrett</a> (R)    |
| 6  | <a href="#">John Delaney</a> (D)    | <a href="#">Bob Goodlatte</a> (R)     |
| 7  | <a href="#">Elijah Cummings</a> (D) | <a href="#">David “Dave” Brat</a> (R) |
| 8  | <a href="#">Jamie Raskin</a> (D)    | <a href="#">Donald Beyer</a> (D)      |
| 9  |                                     | <a href="#">Morgan Griffith</a> (R)   |
| 10 |                                     | <a href="#">Barbara Comstock</a> (R)  |
| 11 |                                     | <a href="#">Gerald Connolly</a> (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.<sup>17</sup>
- Today, we are facing the worst displacement crisis in recorded history with over 68 million people, including over 25 million refugees, forced to leave their homes because of who they are or what religion they practice.<sup>18</sup>
- There are currently over 25 million refugees worldwide, less than 1% of whom will ever be resettled. Resettlement, especially for children, is a health and safety imperative.<sup>19</sup>
- 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, with many being elected to public office. Studies show that refugees contribute

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<sup>17</sup> "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>.

<sup>18</sup> "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015." The UN Refugee Agency.

<sup>19</sup> "Forced Migration Review." Refugee Studies Centre. May 2016. <http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/solutions.pdf>.

more value to the economy than the initial investment in their resettlement.<sup>20</sup>

- 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.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 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>.

<sup>21</sup> "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 2018(pdf to download)
6. Maryland Refugee Resettlement 2018(pdf to download)
7. Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program (pdf to download)
8. Employ a Refugee (pdf to download)
9. Immigration Services (pdf to download)
10. Refugee Resettlement (pdf to download)
11. Rent to a Refugee (pdf to download)
12. Security Screening Steps for Refugees (pdf to download)

**\*Please visit the “Advocacy Resources” page on LSSNCA.org to download the PDF appendix items. Direct Link: <http://bit.ly/2PMixP3>**