

Refugee Council USA

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2014
World Refugee Day
Advocacy Toolkit

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Refugee Advocacy in Your Community: Needs and First Steps

The need for advocacy

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has been drastically underfunded for decades, to the detriment of refugees and the communities that serve them. The ongoing economic downturn has made the need for additional government support more evident, as the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) continues to serve increasing and diverse populations while refugees already here struggle to secure affordable housing, transportation and employment. Each refugee resettlement office represents hundreds, if not thousands, of refugees, staff, and supportive community members who are constituents of members of Congress who regularly make policy decisions that impact refugees and funding for refugee assistance and resettlement. When policy makers know that their constituents care about refugees, they will vote for policies that benefit refugees, and vote against anti-refugee proposals. Advocacy is a great awareness-raising tool to educate your policy makers and members about the benefits refugees bring to our communities. Reform of the refugee program and increased funding will only happen if resettlement agencies and supportive community members educate and urge their elected officials to champion these reforms.

Anyone can be a refugee advocate, at any time!

Advocacy begins with telling your story. Your story as a refugee, staff member, or supporter of refugee resettlement is your most important qualification as an advocate! Tell your senators and representatives about your personal connection to the issue as often as you can. Talk about the way your community welcomes refugees, describe the reasons refugees need more assistance, and let them know about the positive contributions refugees make to your community.

1. Create an advocacy team: An ideal team consists of 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. Teams can identify which policy makers need to learn more about refugees and which policies need to be changed, and can work together to identify advocacy opportunities throughout the year in support of positive and sustainable policy changes.

2. Invite your senators, representatives, local policymakers and stakeholders to community events: Invite your elected officials and law enforcement officials to events where they will be able to speak with supporters of resettlement, including business owners who employ refugees, local government officials, volunteers, and refugees. If the [representative](#) or [senator](#) cannot attend the event, extend the invitation to staff of his or her local office. You can also invite your **local elected officials** such as mayors, city council members, police chiefs, and governors to further educate them about refugees in your community. Officials especially like to attend events that are ‘photo opportunities,’ involve swearing in new citizens, or show support for community efforts. Asking officials to provide remarks during a ceremony can also help solidify them as champions of your cause.

3. Organize group calls to members of Congress: Provide numbers for both of your senators, your representative, or simply the Capitol switchboard number (**202-224-3121**) so people can easily connect to all three of their members. Have a flyer with script available. See the appendix of this document for a sample flyer.

4. Collect stories of refugees: The refugees in your community can speak to the strengths and needs of this program from personal experience. Sharing these stories, along with any available pictures, with advocates in Washington, DC helps them amplify the great work you’re doing by sharing in meetings with Congressional DC offices.

5. Have community members write letters: Members of Congress respond to constituents. Ask your community leaders to write their members of Congress asking them to support refugees and refugee resettlement funding. You can either deliver these in bulk to your members’ local offices, or send them to your DC advocate who will deliver them in DC. You can also provide a sign-up sheet for participants to sign up for advocacy alerts – just have them include their name, email address, and zip code and send the list to your DC advocate.

6. Empower refugees to raise their voices: Not all community members will want to be leaders or public speakers, but when you do identify someone, it is important to encourage them and help them develop the necessary skills to speak out effectively. Behind every successful social movement is a network of communities. When a community is effectively engaged, some call this community organizing, it can create leadership and ensure the advocacy continues and grows. By ensuring the voices of refugees are heard by elected officials, we are empowering people who policy changes will affect directly.

Congressional In-District Advocacy Meetings

Establishing close relationships with your members of Congress and local policy makers is crucial to enacting policies that support a modern, successful refugee resettlement program. In-district meetings with your members of Congress could make the difference in a vote for increased refugee funding while meetings with local policy makers can improve the experience of refugees in the support they receive for integration.

At these meetings, resettlement staff and clients can discuss the challenges and triumphs that new arrivals face. Share how important it is for those who have fled violence and persecution to find a safe home, stable employment, and a quality education. Ask the official to welcome refugees in your district by helping to ease their transition and to ensure welcoming communities have access to the funds and community support that they need to carry out refugee programs and services.

Purpose of In-District Advocacy Meetings on Refugee Resettlement:

1. To educate decision makers about the strengths and needs of refugees in your community.
2. To understand where the member stands on the issue.
3. To understand the member's interests and where those interests may align with refugee issues.
4. To get a commitment of support for refugee resettlement.
5. To build relationships with public officials and institutions influencing your community.
6. To ask members for their support on legislation, championing the needs of refugees or other needs.

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. Visit often!

Have a plan: Before you enter an advocacy visit, meet with your group beforehand to assign roles.

Suggested 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 resettlement. 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 themselves 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 -There will be specific points your group will want to make about the refugee resettlement program and your local resettlement landscape. It will be helpful to have one person take on each of these issues to show they are distinctly important.

The Ask is the critical part of the visit when you ask "Will you be a champion for refugees, vulnerable migrants and welcoming communities like ours by ensuring the refugee resettlement program is robustly funded?" Listen carefully and ask for clarification if what they say is vague.

Suggested Leave-Behind Documents: Provide staff the summary of refugee bills found in the Appendix of this toolkit, and a profile of refugees in your state, found at http://www.rcusa.org/uploads/pdfs/RCUSA_StateProfiles_Final_11-8-13 as well as letters of support and news articles that show the positive impacts of refugees in your community. Contact your organization's advocacy staff for other timely materials.

Debrief: It's important to make sure everyone is on the same page leaving the meeting. As a group, ask: what did we hear? Did we get what we wanted? What are the next steps? How did we work together as a team?

Follow-up: Make sure to send a thank you email to the staffer after the meeting. Please also send any follow-up information the staffer asked for, or 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!

Advocacy Phone Calls to Congress

Calling the offices of your members of Congress could make a critical difference in their support for refugee-related legislation. In personal calls to staffers with immigration and refugee expertise, resettlement staff and clients can discuss issues that face new arrivals and show constituent support for bills in Congress. Make sure to mention how important it is for those you serve to find a safe home, stable employment, and a quality education. Ask the member to help welcome refugees in your district by legislatively helping to ease their transition.

Purpose of Refugee Resettlement Phone Calls to Congress:

1. To educate them about the strengths and needs of refugees in your community.
2. To understand where the member stands on the issue.
3. To understand the member's interests and where those interests may align with refugee issues.
4. To get a commitment of support for refugee resettlement.
5. To build relationships with public officials and institutions influencing your community.

Before you call Congress:

- Find out Congressional committees assignments. If your representative sits on the Appropriations Committee, determine if he or she sits on the Labor / Health and Human Services Subcommittee, which funds ORR, or the State Foreign Operations Subcommittee, which funds overseas refugee assistance and the resettlement program. Your member of Congress might also have influence or interest if he or she sits on the Judiciary Committee or the Foreign Affairs / Foreign Relations Committee.
- Research the member of Congress to see if they have supported refugee or immigrant related issues before, such as co-sponsoring legislation related to refugees or making positive statements about refugees. You can use [THOMAS](#) to search for refugee related bills in the current or previous Congress. Statements made publicly can also be found by searching on google. You can also go to the member's webpage and find out additional information by looking at his/her biography.
- Be prepared to give your mailing address or zip code, so they can ensure you are a constituent. If your office is not in the district of the member you are calling, you may want to explain you serve refugee clients in or near their district.
- Be prepared to share specific facts and figures about your office, services your agency provides, as well as a brief and compelling story about a refugee you have assisted.
- Review the supporting background documents from RCUSA and your national resettlement agency to familiarize yourself with the humanitarian crisis that has caused an increase in UACs and the crisis facing refugees and UACs if ORR is not adequately funded. Have a pen and paper ready to write down the name of the staffer with whom you speak, his/her contact information and any relevant notes from the call.
- Let your DC advocacy staff person know that you called or met with your member, so they can remind the member's staff that your organization has met with their local staff and can help in advocating more effectively.

Calling Congress:

Once you are fully prepared, you can use the sample script below to guide your phone call. Remember to be yourself! It is easy to sound rehearsed if you merely read this document aloud. By preparing to discuss your agency, community, and the concerns you want to share, you can really show your passion for refugee-related issues and establish a warm connection with staffers over the phone. (Sometimes it helps to role-play!)

Sample Script

You: Hello, my name is [name] and I'm calling from [name of town]. May I please speak to the staffer who handles refugee issues for [Representative/Senator] [last name of member of Congress]?

Receptionist: Sure, his/her name is [staffer's name]. I'll connect you. (*Write down the name. If you are transferred to voicemail, see the script below, "Sample voicemail."*) (NOTE: If they do not have a staff member who handles these issues, ask for someone who handles appropriations, immigration, or international issues for the member.)

You: I am calling to urge the Senator/Representative to support adequate funding for the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement in appropriations legislation that Congress passes this year. A lack of adequate funding would be devastating for the vulnerable children and persecuted people the United States has committed to serve. I also encourage the Senator/Representative to support reforms that would better protect and serve refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrant children.

You: When do you think you will be able to speak with your boss about this? When can I follow up with you? (*Note response and make plans to follow up.*)

Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me at [your phone number] if you have any questions about these refugee accounts or the U.S. refugee resettlement program in general.

Sample Voicemail Message:

Hello, my name is [your name] and I am the [position title] at [name of resettlement agency] in [city] and we help to resettle refugees in [name cities in district]. I am calling to ask for [Representative/Senator] [last name of member of Congress]'s support of legislation that would aid and protect refugees.

I am calling to urge the Senator/Representative to support adequate funding for the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement in appropriations legislation that Congress passes this year. A lack of adequate funding would be devastating for the vulnerable children and persecuted people the United States has committed to serve. I also encourage the Senator/Representative to support reforms that would better protect and serve refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrant children.

[Describe your agency's resettlement program and discuss positive impact refugees have on communities in or near the member's district.] Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me at [your phone number] if you have any questions. I look forward to your boss's leadership on these important issues.

After you call Congress:

Follow-up with the congressional staffer via email to provide additional copies of materials and to repeat your asks for support of refugee-related legislation. This can also serve as an opportunity to respond to questions asked during the call. After you speak with someone from your senator's or representative's office, email your DC advocate with an update and relevant information. The advocates will also follow up with the staff person to echo the message.

Sample letter to invite Policy Makers to your World Refugee Day event

[Date]

The Honorable *[full name of Policy Maker]*
[Address]

Dear Senator/Representative XXXX:

I write to invite you to invite you to a celebration of World Refugee Day *[Name of the Event]*. Our celebration of refugees will take place *[date, time and location]*. **World Refugee Day**, observed June 20 each year, is dedicated to raising awareness of the situation of refugees throughout the world. We want to invite you to celebrate with us the contributions of refugees in *[city]*. *[Describe the event]*.

Thousands of refugees are brought to the United States every year because they cannot return to their home country and do not enjoy basic rights in the country where they sought refuge. Hundreds are resettled in *[state]*. My organization, *[agency name]* helps these refugees integrate quickly into our community by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, clothing, medical attention, education, English-language classes and community orientation.

Our office in *[city/state]* has helped resettle *[X number of]* refugees in the past year alone. Since the office opened in *[date]*, over *[X number of]* refugees from *[X number of]* countries have embarked on a path to reach their full potential and enjoy safety, security, and a second chance in life.

Nearly three million people have found safety and begun new lives as a result of the United States' work to welcome refugees. The USRAP was established by an Act of Congress in 1980 and is an integral part of U.S. foreign policy that is rooted in communities. The program is a highly successful example of public-private partnership, where federal assistance is augmented by funds raised by communities across the country. Refugees have opened businesses, revitalized towns, and become productive members of communities that welcomed them. Many become American citizens and see their children graduate from U.S. schools.

We would be honored if you attend our event to celebrate and share time with refugees resettled in our community. Refugees are a testament to the United States' long, proud history as a sanctuary for those who seek lives free from violence and oppression. Join us celebrating this great tradition!

Regards,

[your name]
[title, affiliation]
[contact information]

Sample advocacy letter to send to your Members of Congress

[Date]

The Honorable [full name of Senator/Representative]
[U.S. Senate/U.S. House of Representatives]
[room number] [name of congressional office building]
Washington, DC [20510/20515]

Dear [Senator/Representative] [last name]:

On behalf of [agency name] and the refugees we welcome to our community, I am writing to urge you to support policies that would better protect and welcome newcomers. Refugees are of special humanitarian concern to the United States and are a testament to our nation's long, proud history as a sanctuary for those who seek lives free from violence and oppression. To be admitted to the United States, refugees must demonstrate that they fear persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

My agency, [agency name] helps these refugees who have been resettled in [state] by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, clothing, medical attention, education, English-language classes and community orientation. We help refugees integrate quickly into our community. [Describe positive impact refugees have on your community.]

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is an integral part of U.S. foreign policy that is rooted in communities. I encourage you to co-sponsor legislation that would better protect and serve refugees:

The Refugee Protection Act (H.R. 1365, S. 645), which would make refugee and asylum case processing more timely and efficient, better assist torture-survivors and others with mental health issues resulting from the traumas refugees suffered, and continue support services beyond the initial resettlement period to help refugees access education, advance their careers and participate fully in their new communities.

The Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act (H.R. 651), which would increase refugees' access to English and job training programs as they await resettlement processing and provide green cards to refugees resettled in the U.S., rather than making them wait a year to apply. It would ensure access to Supplemental Security Income benefits for refugees who are elderly or have disabilities, increase initial assistance for refugees every year, extend assistance from 8 to 12 months, expand the Matching Grant Program, improve case management services, and help ORR respond to secondary migration.

The Domestic Refugee Resettlement Reform and Modernization Act (H.R. 1784, S. 883), which would elevate the Office of Refugee Resettlement and strengthen its ability to deal with secondary migration and improve the formula for state funding by considering projected refugee arrival numbers for the upcoming year.

Refugee resettlement is a highly successful public-private partnership in which federal assistance is augmented by funds raised by communities across the country. Please also support the following refugee accounts:

- The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account in the Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill funds the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), helping refugees integrate in their new communities.
- The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account in the State Department and Foreign Operations appropriations bill funds the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), which provides initial assistance for refugees resettled in the United States and helps refugees and displaced persons internationally.

Thank you for your public service and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Regards,

[your name]

[title, affiliation]

[contact information]

Sample email to send to your Members of Congress

Reaching out to Congressional offices can seem intimidating but most members of Congress have provided contact forms on their website to make it easy. You can use these forms to request a meeting or you can call their in-district/local office and ask for the email address of the scheduler. Whichever option you choose, the sample email below can be modified to fit your needs as you contact the office to share World Refugee Day Events, request meetings or share advocacy asks.

Dear **(Representative/Senator _____)**”

My name is **(name)** and I am **(title)** at **(organization name)**, working with a dedicated community of staff and volunteers in (city, state) to welcome and resettle refugees. **(Organization)** serves **(#)** refugees, asylees, Cuban-Haitian entrants, Iraqi and Afghan SIV recipients, and many other vulnerable people per year, with a dedicated staff of **(#)**. Every day we provide these newest community members with the tools for self-reliance and integration including: housing, job placement, employment skills training, clothing, medical, education, English-language classes and community orientation.

I would like to meet with you this month share with you the benefits refugees bring to **(city/state)** and ask you to support the continued success of the program. Please let me know a time in June when you will be available to meet. (If you have submitted either a formal request to the office for a World Refugee Day event or have an event to share, mention it here)

Thank you for your public service and your consideration.

Regards,

[*your name*]

[*title, affiliation*]

Tell the Story, Be the Voice

We need your help to make the case for why Congress properly support the work you do. You can carry a powerful message to Congress by sharing your story about the challenges you face and the triumphs you celebrate in resettling refugees.

It is important that members of Congress learn about the experiences of refugees in the communities they represent. One very effective way to do this is to collect stories of refugees resettled in your community. Refugees can share their experiences in the US and show they contribute to your community by:

- Opening businesses, attending schools and colleges, revitalizing neighborhoods, etc.
- Participating in the community (volunteering, helping other refugees, contributing to community services, churches, etc.)
- The support of the general community (religious and social organizations, businesses, etc.)
- And countless other ways!

You can collect these stories in writing to share with the local office of your senators and representative. Please also share these stories with your DC advocate so we can pass along this information to your members' Washington, DC offices. We welcome pictures, videos, writings, and any other material you can share with us.

Feel free to contact us if you have questions or suggestions. Thank you for your hard work, continued support and dedication!

Appendix A: 2014 Talking Points, ORR Funding, Refugee Bills, Immigration Reform

ORR Funding

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program provides persecuted refugees with safe haven and a chance at a new life. This program continues to face a funding crisis. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) urgently needs additional funding for FY 2015 in response to this crisis.

In FY 2013, the number of Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) increased from 13,668 in FY 2012 to over 24,000. For FY 2014, ORR and The Department of Homeland Security estimate arrivals of UACs could be as high as 70,000. The recent surge in violence and forced gang recruitment of children in Central America has led to an unanticipated increase in the number of children crossing the U.S.- Mexico border.

Without additional funding, ORR could be forced to reduce or disrupt services to all the populations in its care - refugees, asylees, victims of human trafficking and torture, Cuban-Haitian entrants, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, and UACs. If ORR is not able to secure more funds, the road to self-sufficiency and integration could be hampered for thousands of refugees and other populations assisted by ORR. In addition, the ORR funding that states, counties and cities rely on would also be at risk.

Federal funding from ORR relieves pressure on state and local governments and ensures refugees and other populations are able to become self-sufficient in a short period of time. ORR reimburses states for cash and medical assistance and provides funding for employment and language services. The lack of additional funds could negatively impact the months of assistance that refugees are eligible for, microcredit programs to help refugees start businesses, services to elderly refugees, assistance to school districts that serve a large number of refugee children, and Cuban and Haitian entrants in Florida and other areas that serve this population.

Lack of additional funding to respond to this crisis could impact refugee arrivals. This could be the beginning of a downward spiral for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program where insufficient funding results in fewer arrivals. The resettlement program is a lifesaving program that helps an estimated 1% of the world's most vulnerable refugees start a new life in communities across the U.S. Our nation's leadership in offering hope and safety to refugees will be threatened unless funding is made available to ensure ORR meets the need of populations it serves.

Refugee Bills

Congress has the opportunity to consider several pieces of legislation that would better protect refugees and to reject proposals that would harm refugees. In your visits with members of Congress and their staffs, these are suggested talking points on these bills. It is not necessary to discuss or address all these points during your visit/conversation with a member of Congress or their staff. These points are meant to provide some important highlights that will be helpful to call attention to, in trying to educate and get the member's support!

These bills are in need of support to move through Congress! Urge your member of Congress to support them by co-sponsoring and champion them. If your Senators or Representative are already a co-sponsor, ask them to urge other members of Congress to join.

1. Support the *Refugee Protection Act (H.R. 1365/S. 645-Senate Companion bill)*. Introduced by Sen. Leahy (VT) and Sen. Levin (MI) in 2010 and 2011 and Rep. Conyers (MI-14) and Rep. Lofgren (CA-16) in 2011 and has been introduced every Congress session since 2010. It seeks to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers with *bona fide* claims are protected by the United States.
 - Increases protections for asylum seekers by eliminating the requirement that asylum claims must be filed within one year of arrival. This ensures victims who fear coming forward can still apply when they get the courage to do so, even if it is more than a year after they arrive.
 - Authorizes the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to conduct a new study on the effects of expedited removal authority on asylum seekers.

- Requires changes in the immigration detention system to ensure access to counsel, medical care, religious practice, and visits from family.
 - Provides immigration protections to allow certain family members of refugees to be considered as derivative applicants for refugee status.
 - Authorizes the Secretary of State to designate certain groups as eligible for expedited adjudication as refugees.
 - Prevents newly resettled refugees from slipping into poverty by adjusting the money they get annually for inflation and the cost of living.
2. Support the *Domestic Refugee Resettlement Reform and Modernization Act (H.R. 1784 / S. 883)*. This bipartisan bill was first introduced in the House 2011 and was reintroduced in both the House and the Senate in 2013. In the House it was introduced in 2011 by Rep. Peters (MI-9) as H.R. 1475. It seeks to increase the efficiency of the resettlement process and provides structural reforms that would improve services to refugees and the communities that welcome them.
- Elevates the Office of Refugee Resettlement within HHS.
 - Requires an annual report on secondary migration and its impact on states.
 - Expands and improves data collection and reporting with regards to the mental health needs of refugees, housing needs, and long-term employment and self-sufficiency.
 - Is a no cost bill.
3. Support the *Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act (H.R. 651)* The bill was introduced in both 2012 and 2013 and seeks to increase coordination and improve the services available to refugees both before and after they are resettled to the United States.
- Streamlines refugee processing abroad and uses this time to provide refugees with English classes and work orientation training.
 - Creates a White House coordinator to address refugee protection issues across federal agencies.
 - Allows refugees to be admitted to the United States as lawful permanent residents, saving resources.
 - Strengthens grant programs to support refugees' integration into local communities. In particular, this bill expands the public-private Matching Grant program.
 - Protects refugee seniors and persons with disabilities by removing time limitations for supplemental security income assistance for the most vulnerable refugees.

Immigration Reform

In June 2013 the Senate passed *S.744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act* which included several improvements to the refugee and asylum processes. A very similar bill has been introduced in the House as *H.R. 15* but it has not been brought to the floor. To date, it is unclear whether House immigration legislation will include refugee provisions.

- As our national leaders consider legislation to create a just, fair, and humane immigration system, they must ensure that our system effectively protects and provides safe haven to victims of persecution.
- Unnecessary barriers to protection should be eliminated, and visa backlogs should be reduced.
- Refugees should be admitted as lawful permanent residents to save time and resources and help refugees integrate more quickly.
- Refugees should receive more information about why their applications for refugee status have been denied in order to help ensure effective review.
- Provisions should be eliminated that needlessly separate asylees and refugees from close family members.
- Refugee adjudications abroad should be more fair and efficient.
- The one-year asylum filing deadline should be eliminated, as called for in S. 744 and H.R. 15.
- Vulnerable migrant children should also be eligible for federal assistance to the same extent as refugees.

Appendix B: Sample Advocacy Flyer for World Refugee Day

FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 2014

WORLD REFUGEE DAY



Today we celebrate refugees' courage in overcoming adversity and the many gifts they bring to our community. As refugees and friends of refugees, we know the challenges newcomers face and the need for improved policies and services to help refugees rebuild their lives in the United States.

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR REFUGEES by letting our Members of Congress know that we support positive and necessary improvements to the U.S. refugee resettlement program.

BOTH CHAMBERS OF CONGRESS are considering legislation that would greatly assist refugees both in the United States and internationally. Please call your Senators and Representative and urge them to support refugee funding and co-sponsor these bills that will improve the lives of refugees.

Call the Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 to connect with the offices of your Senators and Representative. Urge them to support:

Refugee Funding

- The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account in the Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill funds the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), helping refugees integrate in their new communities.
- The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account in the State Department and Foreign Operations appropriations bill funds the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), which provides initial assistance for refugees resettled in the United States and helps refugees and displaced persons internationally.

The Refugee Protection Act (H.R. 1365, S. 645)

- Make refugee and asylum case processing more timely and efficient.
- Better assist torture-survivors and others with mental health issues resulting from the traumas refugees suffered.
- Continue support services beyond the initial resettlement period to help refugees access education, advance their careers and participate fully in their new communities.

The Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act (H.R. 651)

- Increase refugees' access to English and job training programs as they await resettlement processing
- Provide green cards to refugees resettled in the U.S., rather than making them wait a year to apply
- Ensure access to Supplemental Security Income benefits for refugees who are elderly or have disabilities
- Increase initial assistance for refugees every year, extend assistance from 8 to 12 months, expand the Matching Grant Program, improve case management services, and create a fund to help with secondary migration

The Domestic Refugee Resettlement Reform and Modernization Act (H.R. 1784, S. 883)

- Elevate the Office of Refugee Resettlement and strengthen its ability to deal with secondary migration.
- Improve the formula for state funding by considering projected refugee arrival numbers for the upcoming year.

For questions and more information, contact [ORGANIZATION'S ADVOCACY STAFF]