

## **USCRI Commends Senator Leahy for Introducing Legislation That Will Help Protect the Lives of Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

Washington, D.C.—The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) applauds Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) for introducing the Refugee Protection Act of 2010 in the Senate, extending America's commitment to those fleeing war and persecution. Coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the Refugee Act of 1980, the bill makes critical improvements to the current law by expediting and expanding protection for people seeking asylum.

"America has long been a human rights leader, offering safety and protection to those who need it most," said Lavinia Limón, USCRI's President and CEO. But the current law makes it difficult for refugees and asylum seekers to receive the protection they need and has often led to unnecessary detention and deportation to countries where these individuals face persecution, explained Limón.

"On behalf of refugees and asylum seekers around the world, we thank Senator Leahy and the co-sponsors of the Refugee Protection Act of 2010 for introducing much-needed reform to ensure that those fleeing danger can quickly receive U.S. protection," said Limón, commending the legislation co-sponsored by Senators Carl Levin (D-MI), Richard Durbin (D-IL), and Daniel Akaka (D-HI).

The Refugee Protection Act of 2010 would establish a number of crucial changes designed to improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable people. It would eliminate the one-year waiting period for refugees and asylees to apply for a green card. This measure would enable individuals to become lawful permanent residents (LPRs) as soon as their refugee or asylee status is granted and would help speed up their integration into American society. Moreover, the assistance provided to newly arrived refugees will be adjusted annually for inflation and cost of living, which would prevent newcomers from quickly slipping into poverty.

Other reforms include authorizing the Secretary of State to designate certain vulnerable groups as eligible for expedited adjudication as refugees; enabling individuals considered de jure stateless—meaning those who live in limbo with no citizenship and without the ability to exercise their basic human rights—to obtain lawful status in the United States; and clarifying definitions of what constitutes "material support" to ensure that innocent actions of asylum seekers are not mistaken as terrorist activities. At the same time, those with ties to terrorist activity will continue to be denied entry to the United States.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) is a non-profit, nongovernmental organization that has served refugees and immigrants and defended the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons worldwide since 1911. USCRI's national network of community-based partner agencies helps thousands of refugees build new lives in the United States each year.

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