



## STATEMENT FOR MATERIAL SUPPORT PRESS CONFERENCE:

“Allow me to thank each of you here today who has worked courageously and tirelessly on behalf of refugees around the world, particularly those who live in limbo due to the definitions of material support and terrorism in our laws that affect refugees from a number of countries.

“On a daily basis, I receive reports in my office about the atrocities suffered by displaced persons, whether IDPs or refugees, in regions of conflict – these stories are heartbreaking. Tragically, the only reason those members of the ethnic and other groups listed below are prevented from entering our country is due to overly broad definitions in our law, definitions that do not even make exceptions for someone forced to provide support under duress or coercion. This is deeply disturbing.

“As many are well aware, ethnic groups from Burma, the Hmong and Montagnards from Vietnam, internally displaced persons in Colombia, women from Africa, and others are held hostage by definitions in our laws that reportedly would not allow even the founding fathers of our country to enter as refugees!

“Unfortunately, these laws bar groups the U.S. supports and who support the U.S. This means Vietnamese minorities who supported the U.S. during the Vietnam War and Cubans who joined anti-Castro movements because we asked them to are barred from coming here. I find this ludicrous. Last year I introduced, along with a number of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle, language to correct our law so that qualified refugees could enter our country. Recently, the Administration developed and expanded the coverage of waivers regarding the impacted refugee populations, however concerns remain. This year, I intend to reintroduce my bill.

“It is vital that our nation find a balance so that we protect our national security while maintaining our openness toward refugees – we have not yet found that balance, but we must do so soon. The inscription on the Statue of Liberty says, ‘Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free...’ The refugees who should have been resettled here last year need protection. Many of them live in situations in which their lives are still at risk. The U.S. Congress and the Administration need to fix this problem now.”

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