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## Editorial: U.S. denies refuge to friends, the abused

They are misidentified as supporters of terrorist groups.

Franz Kafka, Czech writer of the surreal and absurd, could have imagined this, perhaps: A young Hmong man fights with Americans against the Communist Laotian government. Decades later, he is accepted into the United States as a refugee. But he can't get a green card that will allow him to remain permanently and work in the United States. He's run afoul of an anti-terrorism law prohibiting asylum for people who have provided "material support" to terrorists. Incredibly, he's not alone, a situation that requires the remedial action promised by Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt.

The issue isn't the law itself but its interpretation by the Department of Homeland Security. The department's definition of "material support" for terrorism is so broad it has caught, among others, a refugee nurse from Colombia who was kidnapped and forced to treat a member of a guerrilla group.

Even strong Bush administration supporters -- the conservative Hudson Institute; Gary Bauer, president of American Values; and the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission -- are outraged by Homeland Security's inflexibility. In words he probably thought he would never utter, the Hudson Institute's Michael Horowitz says, "The key to ending these policies is in the hands of the new Democratic majority" in Congress.

Leahy, a persistent critic of the "material support" provision, has promised hearings on the issue. He should be pressed to follow through. It's beyond outrageous that a law intended to help protect Americans from terrorists should be used to punish old allies and further terrify victims seeking refuge from the abuse they suffered in their home countries.