



3211 4th Street NE, Washington, DC 20017

Ph: (202) 541-5402/5404 • Fax: (202) 541-3468 • info@rcusa.org • www.rcusa.org

January 11, 2007

Dear Senator/Representative:

As members of Refugee Council USA (RCUSA), a coalition of 23 agencies committed to the protection of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, we urge Congress to provide the strongest possible appropriation for humanitarian assistance programs in the final FY 2007 continuing resolution.

The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account, which provides funding for overseas refugee assistance and refugee admissions to the United States, was funded at \$783m in the regular FY06 appropriations bill. The President's request for FY07 was \$833m, and the Senate Appropriations Committee met this level. We urge that the continuing resolution reflect at a minimum the Senate figure.

The Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account, which funds unexpected refugee emergencies, received a regular appropriation of \$30m in FY06 and the President's FY07 request was \$55m. The Senate Committee honored the President's request, and we urge you to appropriate at least the Senate figure in the continuing resolution.

The International Disaster and Famine Assistance (IDFA) account, which responds to famines and natural disasters as well as the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs), received a regular appropriation of \$361m for FY06. We urge Congress to at least match the FY06 level and caution against going below the FY07 Senate level of \$351m.

We make this request in recognition of several mounting crises, such as the continued outflow of Sudanese refugees to Chad, displacement in Somalia and the Central African Republic (CAR), and the upsurge in the number of Iraqi refugees and IDPs. These new needs are in addition to the ongoing requirements of vulnerable refugees in places like Kenya, Thailand, and Nepal. The U.S. government should also provide robust support for refugee returns in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Southern Sudan. Funds must also be allocated for the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions, which recommends 70,000 refugee admissions to the United States in FY07. FY06 level funding for the MRA would only allow for 43,000 admissions.

Finally, we request that the continuing resolution reflect the President's request of \$615m for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This office ensures that refugees who arrive in the United States have the critical services they need to become self-sufficient. The office also provides critical services to unaccompanied children, trafficking victims and victims of torture.



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Congress and the American people have a long tradition of strong support for the world's most vulnerable people. We hope the new Congress will carry forward this proud tradition by providing the strongest possible FY07 appropriations for life-saving aid to the more than 30 million persons uprooted by conflict around the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Richard Parkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Richard Parkins
Chair, Refugee Council USA

On behalf of the following organizations:

Hugh Parmer, President
American Refugee Committee

Ms. Haifa Fakhoury, President and CEO
Arab American and Chaldean Council

Angela Colaiuta, Washington Representative
Center for Victims of Torture

Joseph Kassab, Executive Director, Immigration and Refugees Office
Chaldean Federation of America

Joseph Roberson, Director
Church World Service/Immigration and Refugee Program

C. Richard Parkins, Director
Episcopal Migration Ministries

Tsehaye Teferra, PhD, President
Ethiopian Community Development Council



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Gideon Aronoff, President & CEO
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

Sky Halvail-Hotrich, Executive Director Washington DC, a.i.
Hmong National Development

Johan Ketelers, Secretary General
International Catholic Migration Commission

Robert Carey, Vice President, Resettlement
International Rescue Committee

Fr. Kenneth Gavin, S.J., National Director
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Ann Buwalda, Esq., Executive Director
Jubilee Campaign USA

Pary Karadaghi, Executive Director
Kurdish Human Rights Watch

Ralston H. Deffenbaugh, Jr., President
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Doua Thor, Executive Director
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

Lavinia Limón, President & CEO
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Carolyn Makinson, Executive Director
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children



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Cc: The Honorable Robert C. Byrd and the Honorable David R. Obey
The Honorable Thad Cochran and the Honorable Jerry Lewis
The Honorable Harry Reid and the Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Mitch McConnell and the Honorable John A. Boehner
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy and the Honorable Nita M. Lowey
The Honorable Judd Gregg and the Honorable Frank R. Wolf
The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Arlen Specter and the Honorable James T. Walsh