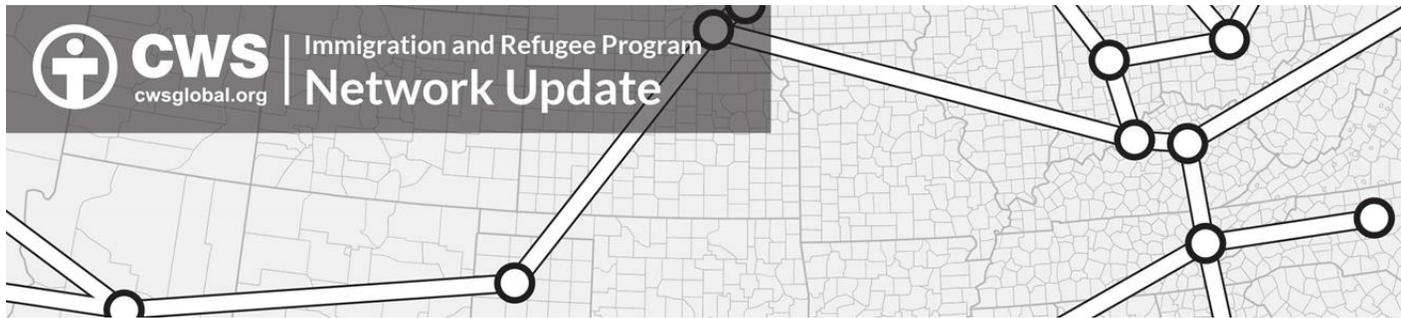


Web Version



Dear Colleagues,

As we continue to make our voices heard to the Governors who have announced that they want to stop their states from resettling Syrian refugees, yesterday the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4038, The American Security against Foreign Enemies (SAFE) Act which would grind to a halt the resettlement of Syrian and Iraqi refugees (more information below). The Senate will likely vote on similar legislation the week after Thanksgiving, and the House will likely continue to vote on even worse legislation. Refugee funding has also been threatened as members are working on an Omnibus appropriations bill that must be passed by December 11th.

This coming week will be critical to ensuring that all of our voices are raised - refugees, employees, volunteers, businesses, faith leaders, donors, supporters, students, etc. We encourage you to mobilize your networks using this [updated action alert](#) to call both your governors and members of congress in this critical time. If you are working on state specific sign on letters, please let us know so we can help promote them. Below is also a list of petitions and letters for a variety of people and organizations to sign:

- [Refugee Council USA Sign on Letter](#) - National, state and local organizations can sign on [HERE](#).
- [LiftMyLamp petition](#) - for individuals
- [400 religious leaders letter to welcome Syrians of all faiths](#) - Faith leaders can sign on [HERE](#)
- [Groundswell petition](#) - for people of faith

Helpful statements and resources:

- [Wall Street Journal OpEd from Ambassador Ryan Crocker](#)

- [WSJ OpEd from Michael Chertoff](#), former DHS Secretary and [joint letter with former DHS Secretary Napolitano](#)
- [Video Comments from General Jack Keane](#), former Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army
- [Benjamin Wittes, Co-chair of the Hoover Institution's Working Group on National Security, Technology, and Law](#)
- Press conference with national religious leaders from Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Jewish and Muslim traditions urging Congress to reject any and all legislation that would stop or pause the resettlement of Syrian refugees, or that would restrict Muslim refugees from accessing resettlement, recording: <http://livestream.com/accounts/15219571/events/4517127>
- [CWS Statement on Paris, Beirut and Baghdad](#)
- [CWS Statement on the Governors' Announcements](#)
- [CWS Statement on the recent house vote](#)

These recent events make it even more important for us to work with supportive community members to educate our communities through a [Welcome Weekend](#), [#RefugeesWelcome Dinners](#), [local congressional visits](#), [social media and Op-Eds](#), [educating our communities](#) and [demonstrating welcome](#). Again, we emphasize that all offices have protocols in place to ensure the safety and security of their staff, clients, and volunteers. Please let us know how we can be supportive of all of your work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erol Kekic". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Erol Kekic

Director, CWS Immigration and Refugee Program

More information about H.R. 4038

- [CWS Statement on House Vote](#)
- [Bill text](#)

- [How each member voted for the bill](#)

Summary: H.R. 4038, The American Security against Foreign Enemies (SAFE) Act calls for each Iraqi and Syrian refugee to be personally certified by the FBI Director, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary, and DHS Inspector General, on top of the already rigorous security procedures, biometric tests, health screenings, interagency checks and in-person interviews with DHS officials that refugees already undergo. It would impact family members of Iraqis who served alongside U.S. interests, as well as individuals from all nationalities who have set foot in Syria or Iraq since March 2011.

Talking points: The United States has the most rigorous refugee resettlement security screening process in the world, including name, biographic and biometric checks, medical screenings, forensic testing of documents, DNA testing for family reunification cases, and in-person interviews with Department of Homeland Security officials. As such, refugees are the most scrutinized and vetted individuals to travel to the United States. Due to technological advances, Syrian refugees are also undergoing iris scans to confirm their identity through the process.

H.R. 4038 is a waste of resources given the robust security procedures already in place, and would also delay, in some cases indefinitely, the resettlement process for Syrian and Iraqi refugees, all of whom are fleeing persecution and many of whom are trying to reunite with Syrian American family members in the United States. Since each part of the security check process is only valid for a limited period of time, holding that process up for needless certification and congressional reporting on every single refugee, when certainty is already being accomplished with the robust process of security checks, will mean that refugees will be caught in an un-ending loop of expiring validity periods.

To reject refugees because of their nationality or religion out of blanket suspicion, despite the fact that we have the most secure program in the world, is an abdication of our values and will be remembered in history as a shameful decision.

Note: President Obama has said he will veto the bill, but we are concerned that the Senate might pass a more compromising version that he would sign (that's not for public talking points, just FYI as background.)

From the bill's sponsors:

The bill prevents admission to the United States of any proposed Syrian or Iraqi refugee, or any

proposed refugee present in Iraq or Syria at any time on or after March 1st, 2011, until the nation's top security officials—the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of the FBI, and the Director of National Intelligence— unanimously certify that the individual does not represent a security threat.

- The bill mandates that the FBI conduct thorough background checks and certify the integrity of the process to declare each refugee individually does not pose a national security threat to the United States.
- Under this legislation, no Syrian or Iraqi refugee can enter the United States until the American people's representatives in Congress receive these certifications
- It also creates an additional layer of protection by requiring the DHS Inspector General to independently assess the refugee approvals—making sure that high-risk individuals do not slip through the cracks.

More detailed talking points from advocates:

H.R. 4038- The American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act of 2015 (American SAFE Act of 2015)

- Since 1975, the United States has resettled more than 3 million refugees from around the world, including 169,000 from Bosnia and more than 100,000 from Iraq. Three quarters of million of those refugees entered the U.S. since 2001. During that time, there have been no recorded terrorist acts in the United States by a refugee. That should come as little surprise. Refugees are, by definition, people fleeing from persecution—not persecutors themselves.
- H.R. 4038 creates a bureaucratic review process that could take years to implement and would effectively shut down refugee resettlement. The bill requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to “certify” whether an individual refugee is a threat or not after "concurrence" with the Directors of the FBI and DNI. The bill does not provide guidance on what the process for certification will be. This process will have to be created and agreed upon by three heads of agencies. Establishing such a process could take years, and in the meantime, refugees who could be resettled would languish in camps and dangerous situations, Syrian Americans would not be able to reunite with their family members, and there would be very real ramifications for international refugee protection and U.S. foreign policy interests in the region.
- The process, once established, would add months or years to the security screening process, which is already the lengthiest and most robust in the world, routinely taking between 18 and 36 months. Obtaining the concurrence of three heads of federal agencies for EACH REFUGEE would take years and effectively put an end to the refugee resettlement program. For reasons of

security and safety, security and medical clearances are only valid for limited periods of time. During the certification process, these clearances will expire. This will mean that refugees will be caught in an un-ending loop of security clearances that will never end.

- The bill requires reporting to THIRTEEN congressional committees on EACH REFUGEE that is considered for resettlement. This is unreasonably burdensome and will further delay the admission of refugees, cause security clearances to expire, and effectively end the program.
- Refugees are already the most vetted non-citizens in our country. All refugees undergo thorough and rigorous security screenings prior to arriving in the United States, including but not limited to multiple biographic and identity investigations; FBI biometric checks of applicants' fingerprints and photographs; in-depth, in-person interviews by well-trained Department of Homeland Security officers; medical screenings; investigations by the National Counterterrorism Center; and other checks by U.S. domestic and international intelligence agencies. Supervisory review of all decisions; random case assignment; inter-agency national security teams; trained document experts; forensic testing of documents; and interpreter monitoring are in place to maintain the security of the refugee resettlement program. Due to technological advances, Syrian refugees are also undergoing iris scans to confirm their identity through the process.
- The bill is a waste of resources. Funds used to establish and run this certification process would be better used in conducting actual security reviews of refugees and others who are vetted by these agencies.
- The bill is a pretext and requires differential treatment of refugees from Syria and Iraq without providing a justification for the additional verification. It is a disguised attempt to stop refugees from two countries long beset by internal conflict, including refugees who have been in neither Syria nor Iraq for four years. Differential treatment, with no clear justification, amounts to discrimination on the basis of nationality without rational basis.
- No terrorist attacks in the US have been committed by refugees. The few non-citizens who have caused harm have come to the US as tourists or through other means. This bill will tell the world that the US has no interest in being part of the global solution to protect the victims of the violence in Syria and Iraq. It will keep US citizen family members of these refugees from reuniting with their loved ones who are in danger. This bill does nothing to keep the country safe, is a waste of tax dollars, and is an attack on refugees and immigrants - both those who are seeking safety and those who are already here.

