



2025 **REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT RESPONSE GUIDE**



A Guide for Community and Business Leaders Advocating for Refugees

For decades, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has served as a safe pathway for individuals fleeing violence and persecution to enter the United States and become valuable members of our communities as neighbors, entrepreneurs, employees, fellow congregants, leaders, and more. This program has helped the United States step up to meet critical global needs, including welcoming Afghans fleeing the fall of Kabul and Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion of their country in recent years.

Since its founding in 1980, the U.S. refugee program has welcomed millions of refugees and resettled them in communities across the country where they have revitalized local economies, contributed to the labor force and tax base, and brought social and cultural vibrancy to the fabric of their new homes.

The Latest: Refugee Resettlement Halted

As of January 2025, the resettlement program has been indefinitely suspended.

On January 20, the administration signed an Executive Order that indefinitely suspended the resettlement program. A few days later, on January 24, the administration ordered resettlement agencies to halt any activities supporting resettled refugees. On March 25, a U.S. appeals court allowed the administration to continue pausing refugee resettlement efforts while litigation works through the legal system.

More than 22,000 people – including 16,000 Afghans approved for resettlement after having supported the U.S. mission – who had been vetted and booked travel had their resettlement flights cancelled. Meanwhile, people recently resettled in the United States are struggling without the critical services they need to rebuild their lives in a new country.

How Can I Get Involved

Community leaders, including business leaders, faith leaders, veterans, and others, have an important role to play in supporting and defending the U.S. refugee program as credible and respected messengers representing many U.S. communities.

This guide offers tips and helpful examples for:

- 1. Engaging with your elected officials >**
- 2. Engaging with the press >**
- 3. Engaging on digital and social media >**

1. Engaging with Your Elected Officials

Communication with elected leaders at all levels of government helps to demonstrate wide support for the U.S. refugee program and push for change. It is especially important to engage your federally elected leaders like your Members of Congress, who have an important role to play in defending and preserving the program.

Preparing Your Message

Be prepared to share **compelling, personal, and impact-driven messages** about refugee resettlement with your elected official. Consider messages that respond to the priorities from U.S. Secretary of State Rubio: Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger? Does it make America more prosperous?

Be prepared to **speak authentically about the reason why you care** and are invested in this program. What is the impact on you, your work, or your community?

- ▶ Be clear about your role and position within the community.
- ▶ Have examples prepared for your personal investment in the refugee resettlement program. Illustrate how you have met refugees or come to learn more about the program that supports their resettlement and integration in the community.
- ▶ Speak to the benefits that you have personally seen.

Be prepared to **explain what you want your elected official to do**.

- ▶ Ask your elected officials to use their position to speak out and urge the Administration to reconsider its decision to suspend the resettlement program.
- ▶ Ask Members of Congress to protect the funding that has been Congressionally allocated to the refugee resettlement program and use their oversight authority to ensure that it has not been reassigned elsewhere.

Some examples of this kind of messaging includes:

- ▶ The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is a strong public-private partnership that drives U.S. economic growth, advances global stability and peace, and supports our national security and diplomatic priorities.
- ▶ The United States has a long, proud history of providing protection to people seeking safety from persecution. The U.S. resettlement program saves lives and allows communities to live out the American tradition of welcome.
- ▶ Since 1980, this bipartisan program has offered a chance for people facing persecution because of their political opinions, religious beliefs, race, nationality, or identity to begin their lives anew and enjoy the safety and freedoms we value in America.
- ▶ The majority of likely voters believe that the U.S. should have a refugee resettlement program.
- ▶ Currently more than 100,000 refugees who were conditionally approved by USCIS are stuck in the pipeline, including more than 22,000 people whose flights to the United States were booked and subsequently canceled.

Economic/Business Framing

- ▶ Refugees bring valuable skills and make immense contributions to our communities and economy. Over the last 15 years, refugees contributed \$124 billion to the U.S. economy, including more than \$31 billion in taxes in 2023 alone.
 - > Consider sharing information on economic contributions of refugees in your state using the American Immigration Council's Map the Impact and the Immigration Research Initiative's Data in Detail resources. You can say: "Refugees living in our state paid \$[#] billion in federal taxes, \$[#] million in state and local taxes, and held \$[#] billion in spending power. The [#] number of entrepreneurs generated \$[#] in business income in our state."
- ▶ As many communities struggle with labor shortages in key industries – from healthcare and education to manufacturing and hospitality – refugees have a critical role in bringing needed talent and expertise to these professions and beyond.
 - > Consider sharing if you have had a hard time filling critical roles in your business or industry or if employers in your community are struggling to fill critical labor gaps.
- ▶ As an [employer/leader], I see refugees demonstrate their resilience, willingness to learn, adaptability, and a strong work ethic, making them great [employees/community members].
 - > Consider sharing a story of how a refugee has made significant contributions to your workplace, organization, or community initiative.

Security Framing

- ▶ Refugee resettlement strengthens national security and supports geopolitical stability and peace – when the United States takes a leadership role in welcoming refugees it builds goodwill among partner nations, advancing our foreign policy and national security interests.
 - > Consider sharing points from this letter from former military leaders speaking to the value of the resettlement program and this letter from multiple veterans' groups highlighting the unintended consequences of ending refugee resettlement.

Faith Framing

- ▶ As people of faith, we look first to our common values rooted in our sacred texts that remind us to love our neighbor and welcome the sojourner among us.
- ▶ For additional faith based messaging, please see this resource.

Make sure that you are considering the political environment in which you are engaging

To ensure your message is heard, it is important to frame your engagement in the right context for the right audiences.

For conservative audiences it can be helpful to focus on:

- ▶ The national security benefits of the U.S. refugee resettlement program
- ▶ The positive economic impact of welcoming refugees
- ▶ The reasons that your faith compels you to welcome and support refugees

For moderate audiences it can be helpful to focus on:

- ▶ Values-based messages that explain the importance of resettlement to your community in fostering creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship
- ▶ The successful model of the public-private partnership in refugee resettlement, which incorporates federal, state, community, and non-profit support to implement the resettlement program and support arrivals

For progressive audiences it can be helpful to focus on:

- ▶ Resettlement as a humanitarian imperative
- ▶ The role of U.S. leadership as example to the world

2. Engaging with the Press

As community leaders, sharing your perspective in local and national media can be helpful in shaping public opinion and highlighting the support for the U.S. refugee resettlement program. You can consider **doing interviews**, **pitching an op-ed**, or sharing a **letter to the editor** with a local or national outlet explaining why you support refugees and detailing the social, cultural, and economic benefits of welcoming refugees in your community using the messaging points above.

An **op-ed** is a short (750-800 word) persuasive essay with a strong, focused point of view and perspective. It should have a conversational but authoritative tone. While writing, keep your audience in mind. Before you begin drafting an op-ed, ask yourself:

- > What is the point that I want to make?
- > Why am I an important messenger?
- > What is the right moment to make this point?
- > Who needs to hear it? Why should this matter to them?
- > What is my evidence?

When drafting your op-ed, be sure to include:

- 1. A strong introduction.** Consider starting with a powerful personal story or example that draws the reader in emotionally.
- 2. A clear call to action.** This is the one message you want the reader to come away with.
- 3. The why.** Share data points and examples that back up your argument and highlight your unique perspective on the issue. Make sure that you address any counter-arguments or myths.
- 4. An inspiring endnote.** End your piece with a strong conclusion that reemphasizes your call to action.

You can typically find instructions on how to submit an op-ed in your favorite local or national newspaper on their website.

Examples of Powerful Op-eds from Community Leaders on Refugee Resettlement

"As Columbus, Ohio, welcomes an economic boom, we need to continue to welcome refugees," USA Today, Mayor of Columbus, Ohio Andrew Ginther and CEO of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce Don DePerro, September 2024

"I'm the Republican Governor of Ohio. Here Is the Truth About Springfield," NY Times, Governor of Ohio Mike DeWine, September 2024

"Keep the promises made to the Afghans who assisted Vermont veterans," Vermont Digger, former Navy SEAL Dan Barkhuff, founder of Veterans For Responsible Leadership and the co-founder of the Vermont Afghan Alliance, February 2025

Sample op-ed from Refugee Council USA

3. Engaging on Digital and Social Media

It is very powerful when businesses, coalitions, congregations, trade associations, veteran and faith networks, and others demonstrate their public support for refugees. Social and digital media is an effective way to share your message of support for the U.S. refugee program to large and diverse audiences:

- ▶ **Issue a statement** on behalf of your organization, network, or company on why you support refugees and highlight the valuable contributions refugees make to your workplace, community, congregation, or other capacity.
 - > Example: How Duolingo Supports Refugees
 - > Example: Ash Wednesday Ecumenical Declaration
- ▶ **Organize a letter or petition** that demonstrates wide support across an entire sector (for example from the business and faith community) for refugees.
 - > Example: Businesses for Refugees Pledge
 - > Example: U.S. Businesses Call on Congress to Pass the Afghan Adjustment Act
 - > Example: U.S. Communities Want to Welcome Refugees
- ▶ **Share a post on social media** expressing your support for refugees and highlighting the contributions you have seen them make in your community or workplace – or educating your networks on the benefits of refugee resettlement and the need to urgently restart the program.
 - > Example: Uber Instagram Post on Refugees
 - > Example: CEO & Co-founder of Give Freely / Co-founder Tripadvisor & former CEO LinkedIn Post: Join Us in Signing the Businesses for Refugees Pledge
- ▶ **Host a virtual event** sharing information on refugees and highlighting the valuable contributions refugees make to your workplace, community, congregation, or other capacity.
 - > Example: Concordia: How Businesses Can Advocate for Refugees

Stay in Touch

If you would like to receive support in advocating for the refugee resettlement program, please feel free to contact Genevieve Kessler from the IRC at genevieve.kessler@rescue.org or Sarah Sheffer from the Refugee Advocacy Lab at ssheffer@refugeesinternational.org.

Additional Resources

[Refugee Council USA State & Local Action Toolkit](#)

[Refugee Council USA Policy Factsheet](#)

About the IRC

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helps people affected by humanitarian crises to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. We deliver lasting impact by providing health care, helping children learn, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always with a focus on the unique needs of women and girls. Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, we now work in over 40 crisis-affected countries as well as communities throughout Europe and the Americas.

About the Refugee Advocacy Lab

The Refugee Advocacy Lab is a partnered initiative housed at Refugees International and co-led with the International Refugee Assistance Project and Refugee Congress to strengthen the movement for the protection and inclusion of people who have been forcibly displaced. Our vision is for the United States to be a place of refuge and opportunity, and a champion for people forced to flee their homes. Centered in the perspective and leadership of displaced people, we support the advocacy community by developing strategic communications and narrative shift resources, championing inclusive policies at the state level and nationally, and building capacity for the field, with a focus on investing in refugee leadership on the ground.

