

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We are writing to express our support for the continued resettlement of Syrian refugees to the United States and to urge you to increase efforts to meet your stated commitment of accepting 10,000 properly screened Syrian refugees during the 2016 fiscal year.

This need has never been more urgent. As a result of the Syrian civil war, more than 400,000 civilians have been killed, and more than 4.8 million people have been forced to flee their homes, according to the UN and the Arab League Envoy to Syria.

The forces these refugees are fleeing – the brutality of the Syrian government and the barbarity of ISIS – are enemies of the United States and our allies. We must not let these adversaries win by denying safe haven to those fleeing their savagery. We must remain steadfast and resolute in who we are as a people and a nation: a beacon of hope for all those “yearning to breathe free.” In other words, the slow pace of current Syrian refugee admissions will not help our national security. In fact, it will only give credence to those who wish to undermine our values.

Amidst an international response that has been slow to offer relief and resettlement to Syrian refugees, the United States should lead as a refuge for those seeking safety from the heinous brutality of the Syrian government and the barbarity of ISIS. In light of the efforts of other countries, such as those in Western Europe admitting hundreds of thousands of refugees, or our close neighbor, Canada, admitting nearly 27,000 in a six-month period alone, we urge you to devote more resources and institutional priority to fulfill the stated level of commitment for 2016.

We are concerned that during the first eight months of fiscal year 2016, only 2,805 Syrian refugees arrived in the United States, which does not indicate a program on track to meet the stated goal of 10,000. Falling short of even this goal is not in keeping with our democratic values and professed role as a leader among nations and beacon of hope for those seeking safety from war.

There is ample historic precedent for U.S. leadership in times of refugee crises driven by war. In the years during and immediately after the Second World War, the United States admitted nearly 400,000 Jewish refugees. Later, during the Vietnam War, the United States resettled 130,000 refugees in 1975 alone, and in the following decade and a half, resettled roughly 900,000 more refugees. More recently, the United States has admitted over 140,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, over 130,000 from Iraq since 2002, and nearly 160,000 from Burma.

While increasing the pace of getting more refugees in the door, we also urge the continuation of robust screening processes to examine refugees before they are permitted into the United States. Refugees

undergo more extensive screenings than any other traveler to the country. As you know, all applicants are fingerprinted and subjected to biometric checks, several layers of biographical and background screening, medical checks, and lengthy in-person interviews by specially-trained officers from the Department of Homeland Security. These officers scrutinize each applicant's explanation of circumstances to establish whether they meet statutory requirements to qualify as a refugee and ensure he or she does not present security concerns to the United States. No refugees are admitted until after successful completion of this stringent security screening regime that includes the FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Department of Defense, and the Department of State.

We have also been informed that in addition to this demanding process of checks for all refugees, an "enhanced review" program is now in place specifically for the Syrian refugee population. All applications receive a specialized review prior to the interview and are repeatedly checked against law enforcement and intelligence community databases. We fully support this robust process and urge the administration to continue the enhanced review program.

Successfully resettling refugees from the Syrian civil war is consistent with our values as a nation, with our role as a global leader, and with the historic precedents in similar periods of conflict.

We support the Administration's stated goal of bringing in 10,000 Syrian refugees to the United States, and urge the appropriate priority and institutional resources are dedicated to ensure we keep our word and meet this goal by the end of the fiscal year, while maintaining appropriate screening processes.

Sincerely,


SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress



DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress


BILL PASCRELL, JR.
Member of Congress

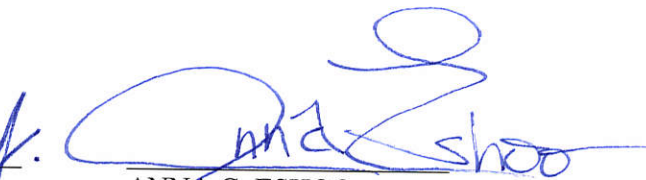

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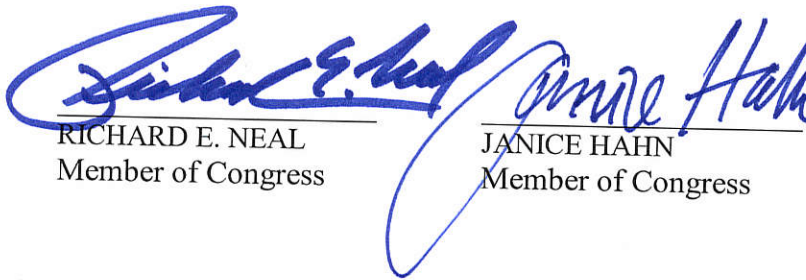
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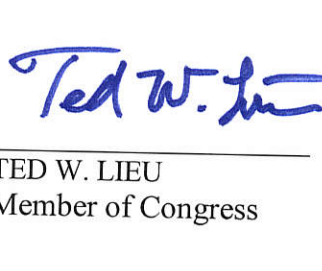
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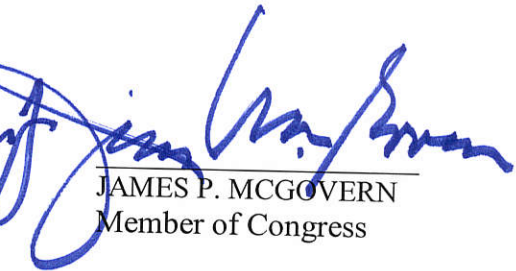
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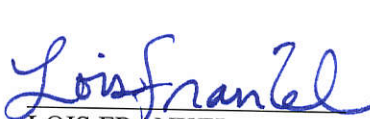
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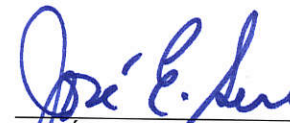
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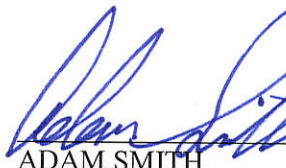

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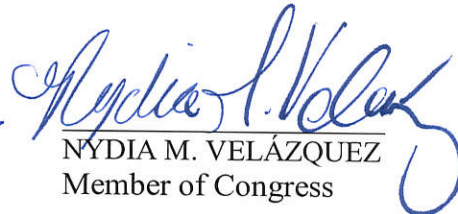

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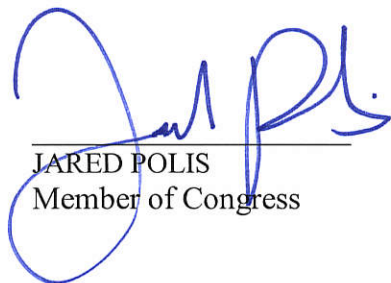

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