

JFI Toolkit for Executive Order 13888

1. Ask your Governor, Mayor, and County Executive to Voice Welcome for Refugees:

How do I get ahold of my Governor or Mayor or County Executive, and how can I best communicate with him or her?

Find Contact information at the [governors link](#) and [mayors link](#) and [county link](#).

Write a letter: see [sample](#).

Meet with Governor or Mayor or County Executive: [click here](#) for guidance on how to [prepare and organize](#).

2. Learn More from are additional resources:

- [JFI FAQ on EO 13888 Requiring State Local Consent for Refugee Resettlement](#).
- [JFI Talking Points on Executive Order 13888](#).
- [RCUSA Factsheet explaining the inaccuracies of the “resettlement vs. asylum” narrative: <http://bit.ly/PDFactsheet>](#).

3. Three additional pro-refugee resettlement advocacy activities:

- **State and local officials Sign-on Letter:** governors, mayors, state/local legislators, etc. - to sign on to [this letter](#).
- **Refugee Employers Letter: Engage local businesses to voice their support for refugees!** Encourage business leaders (refugee-owned businesses AND employers who employ refugees) to sign onto [this joint letter](#) (and/or send their own letters, they can feel free to [use this template](#)).
- **U.S. Senators and Representatives:** Encourage your lawmaker to make public statements in support of refugee resettlement and urge them to visit local resettlement offices in their community. Also urge them to consider co-sponsoring and/or supporting the [GRACE Act](#) (S 1088/HR 2146), to restore the refugee resettlement program to the historical norm of 95,000 refugee admissions annually. USCCB and many others support the bill.

Sample Letter Supporting Refugee Resettlement From Governors or Mayors or County Executive

[DATE]

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Secretary:

As [Governor or Mayor or County Executive] I write to support refugee resettlement in [State; City, State; County, State].

We welcome having refugees come to our communities. We have found them to be resilient, courageous, hard-working, family-oriented people who are thankful for the opportunity to build new lives in America. They often help revitalize neighborhoods and communities and contribute to our local economy and culture. Welcoming refugees is part of our heritage as a nation, and we are proud to be part of it.

[Add success stories from refugees in your community: draw from your own experience; find state information [here](#) & [here](#); draw from [multiple studies](#) that demonstrate that refugees are economic [contributors](#) and job creators.]

We realize that they are people, many of them women and children, forced to flee their home countries due to persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social group membership. We know that resettlement is a humanitarian protection tool developed by the United States and other countries as a last resort for refugees who cannot return to their home country and cannot rebuild their lives in the country to which they first fled.

As one of 27 resettlement countries, the United States has the strictest refugee vetting in the world. Refugee applicants undergo extensive in-person interviews, multiple background checks, biometric screenings, and medical checks. Interviews are conducted by specially trained officers from the Department of Homeland Security, and interagency checks involve the Departments of Homeland Security, State, Defense, and Justice (including the FBI), and the multi-agency National Counter Terrorism Center.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is a prime example of a positive public-private partnership between the federal government, the state and local governments, local non-profit organizations, and volunteers, and faith-based communities that provide refugees with the tools of self-reliance: housing, community orientation, English-language classes, and job placement. Every day, community members in our area are volunteering with resettlement offices to help refugees integrate and thrive.

For these reasons and more, we welcome refugees to our area, thank you for our partnership together to welcome them, and urge that we have a robust refugee resettlement program.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

Talking Points about EO 13888:
Executive Order 13888: On State/Local Consent to Resettlement
10/4/2019

Background: President Trump issued *Executive Order 13888 On Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement (EO 13888)*, a policy that permits State and Local governmental officials, with limited exceptions, to veto the resettlement of refugees into their areas. Current resettlement policy facilitates a vital, active role for States and local communities, consistent with federal law. On the other hand, we are deeply concerned that this new policy will harm refugees and divide communities. We fear it will trigger protracted legal challenges, negatively impact refugee welcome and family reunification, and add greatly to both processing uncertainty and processing time for refugees.

State and Locales Play an Active, Vital Role in Welcoming and Integrating Refugees

- There is already a regularly recurring dialogue about meeting refugee and community needs and concerns between resettlement agencies and state and local officials,
- Resettlement agencies are required by their federal contracts to convene consultation meetings with appropriate stakeholders, including elected officials and others, at least quarterly, and
- The State Refugee Coordinator in each state must also agree to placement numbers.

A veto policy may run contrary to prior court decisions that have considered the relationship between states and local jurisdictions and federal immigration law and policy.

- It is not clear how such a policy that seeks to permit states and local jurisdictions to implement federal immigration law and policy, vetoing local resettlement, would be consistent with a long line of precedents in which federal authority over U.S. migration policy preempts that of the state.

EO 13888 could create a chaotic and confusing patchwork of state-by-state, community-by-community immigration and refugee policies, inconsistent with a uniform federal migration policy envisioned by federal law and the U.S. Constitution.

- What if a Governor wants refugees but a Mayor or County Executive does not?
- What constitutes a local jurisdiction - a city, a county; what population size would count?
- What standard would be used by states and localities to veto refugee resettlement?
- How will the process avoid subjecting refugees to uncertainty, arbitrary decisions, and potentially to the vicissitudes of the political climate?
- How would states and local communities guard against a veto against resettlement being a veto against refugees based on their race, religion, or nationality or other protected grounds?
- How frequently would consent be granted?

U.S. communities are eager to welcome more refugees.

- Refugees play a critical role in revitalizing many local communities across the country. They serve as dedicated employees, business owners, homeowners, students, and community leaders. Communities like [Akron, Ohio](#) and communities in [upstate New York](#) are examples.
- Churches, synagogues, and other communities of faith continue to stand in partnership to help refugees of all faiths find safety and hope as they start their lives as new Americans. Refugee resettlement is the living embodiment of the religious commitment to “welcome the stranger,” a bedrock upon which much of America’s strength and character rests.

The family unit is the cornerstone of U.S. communities and is the basis of a values-driven refugee resettlement program.

- The policy would likely create an obstacle to family reunification if a previously arrived family member were in a state or city that vetoed future resettlement.
- Unified families bring stability to individual households and strengthen neighborhoods and communities. Family members help one another navigate a new culture, pursue job opportunities, start businesses, and contribute economically, socially, and spiritually to society.
- Every family deserves stability and security. Children should not have to live with the fear that they will be unable to reunite with their parent. Catholic and other strong, faithful communities recognize the image of God in each person, including refugee newcomers, and rely on opportunities to welcome them in the U.S. resettlement program.

Refugee resettlement strengthens our country and advances U.S. security, diplomatic, and foreign policy interests.

- Refugee resettlement is a critical national security and foreign policy tool, an area reserved to the federal government. Placing so much power over these key foreign policy tools in states and municipalities would leave refugees and immigrants' in insecure situations and jeopardize the effectiveness of the resettlement program for foreign policy and national security contexts.
- Within just a few months, refugees [give back to their new communities](#). Refugees start [working](#) as soon as possible, pay taxes, start businesses, purchase homes, and become U.S. citizens. Over a 20-year-period, refugees contribute, on average, \$21,000 more in taxes than the initial investment to resettle them. In 2015, refugees contributed \$21 billion in U.S. taxes.

For more information see [Frequently Asked Questions on the September 26, 2019, Executive Order Requiring State Local Consent for Refugee Resettlement](#).

How to Prepare & Organize Local Meetings With Policy Makers

Meet with your Governor or Mayor or County Executive; see their contact information at [governors link](#) and [mayors link](#) or [county executive link](#). Meet with your Members of Congress; see their contact information [here](#); federal calendars of in-district time can be found [here](#).

STEP 1. Learn about your Elected Officials

- Is your Governor or Mayor or County Executive engaged in welcoming refugees? Explore their websites to be aware of their knowledge, understanding, and commitment to refugees.
- Are your Members of Congress in Congressional leadership, or on the [Senate](#) or [House](#) Appropriations Committees; [Senate](#) or [House](#) Judiciary Committees; [Senate](#) or [House](#) Homeland Security Committees; or [Senate](#) or [House](#) Foreign Relations Committees? If so, they have jurisdiction over various aspects of the refugee program. Even if they aren't in leadership or on these committees, they can still be champions for refugees.
- What have your State, Local, and Federal officials said about refugees in the past? Has the member put out statements, authored op-eds, or been supportive of refugees? If they have, be sure to thank them and their staff. If they have a record of not supporting refugee resettlement, find out why. Have they cited reasons for not supporting the program? If so, prepare by more deeply understanding their concerns and build your talking points to address those concerns.
- What issues are of interest to them? Do they often speak out on certain issues? This can help you determine what approach to take when discussing refugees in your meeting. What did they do before they were elected to Congress? This can impact their perspective. It is your job as a successful advocate to discuss topics and frame issues in a way that will resonate with them.

STEP 2. Create an advocacy team: An ideal team consists of different stakeholder voices including refugees, case workers, faith leaders, business leaders, military veterans, and community leaders – all who can share in the planning, outreach, and coordination of visits and speak to the diversity of support for refugee resettlement.

STEP 3. Have a plan: Before the congressional visit, convene your advocacy team to assign roles:

- **The Facilitator:** This person starts the meeting, introduces the group, explains the purpose of the meeting, and provides time for each person to briefly introduce themselves and their organization and/or connection to refugees, to show that the group represents thousands of community members. The facilitator will also jump in if the meeting goes off-track and redirect the conversation.
- **The Personal Story:** Storytelling is key to advocacy. If comfortable, a refugee should tell their story to show how people's lives are changed through refugee resettlement. Consider inviting a refugee who has been featured in a local news article, which can encourage policy makers to prioritize the meeting.

- **The Community Support:** Faith, business, employers, military, and community leaders briefly share how our refugees have contributed to the social, and economic fabric of their new community, and share concerns about negative policies.
- **Specific Issue Points:** It will be helpful to bring general [handouts](#), information on refugees [by state](#) and [stories of welcome by state](#). See the cover page of this toolkit for the [FAQ on Executive Order 13888](#), on State/Local Consent to Resettlement. See and adapt the [EO 13888 talking points](#).
- **The Ask:**
 - For State and Local Leaders: “Will you be a champion for refugees, declare your public support for refugees, formally consent (when the time comes) to refugee resettlement in your state, city, or county, oppose anti-refugee proposals, and help to enact pro-refugee policies?”
 - For Members of Congress: “Will you be a champion for refugees, hold the Administration accountable to meeting the annual resettlement goal, and returning to a goal of at least average annual historical norm of 95,000?” Ask them to co-sponsor and support the [GRACE Act](#) (S.1088/HR2146). *If they are a Representative, you can also urge them to join the Bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus.*

STEP 4. Debrief: It’s important to debrief as a team in a separate location following the meeting. As a group, ask: What did we hear and learn? Did we get what we wanted? How did we work together as a team? What are the next steps? How can we engage this policy maker in the future, perhaps through event invitations, etc.?

STEP 5. Follow-up: Always send a thank you email to the staff after the meeting. Reiterate the asks and send any information they asked for and any other information you think would be helpful. To maintain the relationship, consider inviting the staff and/or the official to an upcoming event to meet with refugees.

STEP 6. Share: Share your updates with USCCB/MRS/JFI National Advocacy Staff Matt Wilch, Refugee Policy Advisor, mwilch@uscgb.org and Tony Cube, JFI National Manager, acube@uscgb.org. Please make sure to include jfi@uscgb.org in your email update.