

Utah House Democratic Caucus



UTAH STATE CAPITOL
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SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84114-5030 • (801) 538-1650

August 21, 2018

President of the United States Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Secretary Mike Pompeo
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Secretary Kristjen Nielson
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Honorable Secretary Nielson:

We, the Democratic Caucus of the Utah House of Representatives, write to urge the White House to continue to resettle refugees to our great country and honor the 45,000 admissions ceiling in 2019.

Utahns have an exceptional understanding of the importance of welcoming persecuted peoples and offering them safe haven. Generations ago, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who also experienced oppression and hardship, sought refuge in what is now Utah.

By accepting refugees year after year, the great state of Utah has benefited economically and socially by being a welcoming state to refugees and new Americans. Over 65,000 resilient new Utahns have proven to be an asset to their new communities since our state began resettling refugees but could not have achieved this alone. Over the last two years, over 5,000 volunteers have stepped forward in Salt Lake County to support new Americans in receiving sanctuary, opportunities to rebuild their lives and thrive.

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Refugees are compelled to flee their homes, they have faced persecution on account of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Astonishingly, over 65 million people are displaced globally, the largest displacement crisis in recorded history, including over 22 million refugees. Resettlement offers a chance for less than 1% of the world's refugees to reach safety in a third country when no other options remain.

Resettlement to the United States is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection and takes place after eligible refugees undergo rigorous selection, security vetting and medical screening processes. Upon arrival, organizations like the International Rescue Committee, Catholic Community Services, and other community partners help refugees in Utah by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing; job placement and employment skills; English-language classes; and cultural orientation.

We acknowledge that our nation's policies for aiding refugees is just one policy piece of a larger immigration puzzle. We believe Utah's principles for welcoming immigrants serves as an important model for our nation. Eight years ago, Utah's political, business, law-enforcement and religious leaders endorsed the Utah Compact. It recognizes Utah's principles in regard to Federal solutions, law enforcement discretion, keeping families together, the economic role immigrants play, and our spirit of inclusion. Maintaining our commitments to welcoming a reasonable number of refugees is consistent with these values.

In recent decades, we have seen our communities thrive because of our growing diversity and the economic contributions that all newcomers - refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and naturalized citizens alike - continue to make. The overwhelming majority of resettled refugees integrated into our communities are hardworking, entrepreneurial, and family-focused people who share our Utah values. Like most Utahns, they want safe communities, they are patriotic, they cherish the freedoms and opportunities America provides, and they want the best futures possible for their children.

As Utah House Democrats, we cherish Utah's values of helping those in need. It is only moral and right that we commit to help newcomers from around the world who have escaped life-threatening circumstances to begin building new lives for themselves and their families.

Sincerely,



Representative Patrice Arent



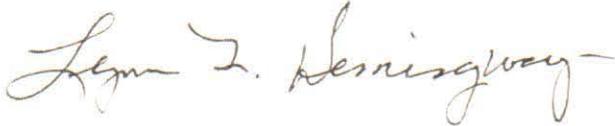
Representative Joel Briscoe
House Democratic Whip



Representative Rebecca Chavez-Houck



Representative Sue Duckworth



Representative Lynn Hemingway



Representative Sandra Hollins
House Democratic Caucus Manager



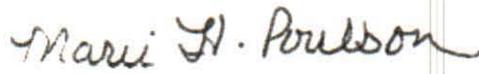
Representative Brian King
House Democratic Leader



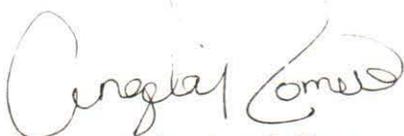
Representative Karen Kwan



Representative Carol Spackman Moss



Representative Marie Poulson



Representative Angela Romero
House Democratic Assistant Whip



Representative Elizabeth Weight



Representative Mark Wheatley

Utah League of Democrats
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Salt Lake City, UT 84114



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Attn: Secretary Kristjen Nielson
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

November 1, 2018

The Honorable Patrice Arent
Utah States Capitol
350 North State Street, Suite 400
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-5030

Dear Ms. Arent:

Thank you for your August 21, 2018 letter. Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

As you express in your letter, the U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) has a long history of resettling refugees in the United States and reflects this country's highest values and aspirations of compassion, generosity, and leadership. It is important to note, however, that its support of refugees extends beyond the refugee admissions program. Our response encompasses a broad protection-based immigration structure including the asylum program and generous humanitarian assistance overseas.

On October 4, 2018, the President signed the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 and set the refugee admissions ceiling at 30,000. The ceiling takes into account the operational realities associated with security measures to protect national security and public safety, as well as the need to conduct credible fear screenings of aliens seeking asylum at our borders and address the backlog of affirmative asylum cases, which stands at about 320,000 (approximately 492,000 individuals), the highest since 2002.

As you may be aware, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, together with the Department of State, law enforcement, and the intelligence community, has worked very hard in recent years to analyze the USRAP and introduce new measures to make the program more secure and enhance national security. The implementation of new security vetting procedures, while necessary, has lengthened processing times for some cases and slowed admissions in FY 2018. We anticipate that this is a temporary impact and that over time, as we and our vetting partners adjust to these changes and address resources constraints, the process will speed up.

We appreciate your comments regarding the positive contributions refugees have made to your state. Thank you again for your letter and your state's commitment to refugee resettlement. The co-signers of your letter will receive a separate, identical responses. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LFC", written in a cursive style.

L. Francis Cissna
Director