

Refugee Council USA

1628 16th Street NW • Washington, DC 20009 • tel: 202.319.2102 • fax: 202.319.2104

Toolkit for August Recess 2018

Advocacy and Refugee Community Advocacy Month

Table of Contents

The Power of Advocacy.....	1
Where to start your advocacy: Teambuilding.....	2
How to Prepare and Organize an Advocacy Meeting.....	3
ACTION ALERT for Refugee Community Advocacy Month.....	4
Setting Up Roundtable Discussions to Support Refugees.....	5
Helpful Tools, Backgrounders, and Advocacy Materials.....	6
Utilizing Social Media, Local Welcome Resolutions & Letters from Policy Makers.....	10
Sample Local Welcome Resolution.....	14
Get Civically Engaged.....	15
Resources & Advocacy Staff Contacts.....	17

The Power of Advocacy: Refugee Community Advocacy Month

Refugee Community Advocacy Month will take place from August 1st – September 3rd this year

Senate In-District Dates:

August 4 – August 11* (Exact dates TBD but will be short)

House In-District Dates:

July 30th – September 3rd

Building Power for Refugee Resettlement

A good time to meet with your Members of Congress and/or their staff is during Congressional recesses when they are in their state and local offices to meet with constituents. Schedules fill up very quickly for these recess periods, so reach out to set up a meeting as soon as possible.

Who You Are. Why You Care. What You Want.

It is more important than ever to meet with your local, state, and national policy makers to educate them about the vital role that refugees and all newcomers play in your communities. Because change takes time, meetings with policy makers should be viewed as part of a continuing process of gathering and sharing information, building relationships, and developing and carrying out advocacy strategies.

Be an Advocate

Developing relationships with, and educating policy makers is necessary if we want to see welcoming policies and attitudes towards refugees. A powerful constituent visit involves impacted communities and allies who join together. Having a team of refugee leaders, resettlement staff, volunteers, employers, faith groups, and other community members who meet regularly is essential in building meaningful relationships with policy makers. It is important that policy makers understand that their constituents care about refugees, and that refugees are their constituents — they live, work, and contribute in their communities, obtain U.S. citizenship, and vote.

Your Voice Matters

Your story as a refugee, staff member, or supporter of refugee resettlement is your most important qualification as an advocate. Talk about the way your community welcomes refugees and the positive contributions refugees make to your community. Refugees, resettlement staff, faith leaders, employers, military veterans, and supportive community members are constituents. Tell policy makers that you care about refugees and they will increasingly vote to support refugee protection and resettlement.

Engaging National and State Elected Leaders

At the national and state levels, individuals who oppose refugee resettlement are making their voices heard loudly and frequently to policy makers. These groups utilize anti-refugee, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim rhetoric and draft legislation to engender fear and foster hostile atmospheres for newcomers. More than [80 bills](#) have been introduced in the last couple years that would dismantle or significantly damage the U.S. refugee resettlement program. In 2018, we faced 14 anti-refugee bills in 11 states and 10 anti-refugee/anti-immigrant bills in 6 states, as well as 11 pro-refugee bills in 6 states and 67 pro-refugee/pro-immigrant bills in 20 states. If we want policy makers to support positive legislation and oppose proposals that would turn our backs on refugees and violate our values of welcome and hospitality, then they need to hear from refugees and supportive community members.

Engaging Local Policy Makers

It is critical for local policy makers to hear from us and affirm that they welcome refugees. There are positive proposals that local elected officials can adopt to affirm the importance of resettlement and foster communities of welcome. City, municipal, and other local councils and commissions need to hear that their communities stand ready to help refugees integrate and thrive. Urge your local leaders to adopt welcoming resolutions that extend hospitality to refugees and all newcomers. Click [here](#) for to see a framework one community developed to assess itself and facilitate welcome and inclusiveness of refugees and immigrants.

Where to Start Your Advocacy: Teambuilding

Teambuilding is an important component of advocacy. Teambuilding brings together diverse voices – such as resettlement staff, refugee leaders, faith leaders, and others – to speak to the importance of welcoming and helping refugees integrate and thrive from several perspectives. Below you'll find ideas on how you can start creating and sustaining your team of advocates.

INTERNAL ASSESMENT

- What are you passionate about? Why? What in your life journey has brought about this passion?
- What policy changes (national and local) would you and your community like to see?
- How could you see your community working to be part of bringing that change about?
- What does being an “advocate” mean to you?

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- Face to face meeting in a mutually preferred location
- Intentional conversation, not an interview
- Listening for passion, vision, stories
- Work together to identify other people who would be interested in joining you
- Each agree to reach out to people who share your vision and help build / energize a team

GROWING YOUR TEAM

- Ask who else in your community cares about this issue and might be interested in joining
- Have each team member reach out to 3-5 more people and have one-on-one meetings
- Set a timeline for a full-team meeting, or recruitment dates
- Schedule regular conversations to keep people engaged

BRING YOUR TEAM TOGETHER

- Set a goal: gather 8-20 people to join you
- Discuss a common vision: What are our hopes and expectations
- Create an action plan: How do we build toward bringing that vision to life
- Think about natural allies who can be energized into being advocates and champions
- Identify next steps: How do we engage with policy makers and other influential people

For more information on how to engage in organizing and teambuilding, click [here](#).
Connect with refugee and immigrants' rights group near you: www.informedimmigrant.com/organizations/.

How to Prepare and Organize an Advocacy Meeting

STEP 1. Learn about your Elected Officials

- ✓ 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. Note: To learn more about your governor, state legislators, mayor, and local officials, click [here](#).
- ✓ What issues are of interest to them? Do they often speak out on a certain issue? This can help you determine what approach to take when discussing refugees in your meeting.
- ✓ What have they said about refugees in the past? Has the member put out statements, authored op-eds, or done other advocacy to support the refugee resettlement program? If they have, be sure to thank their staff for their work. If they have a record for not supporting refugee resettlement, find out why. Have they cited reasons for not supporting the program? If so, build your talking points to address those concerns.
- ✓ What did they do before they were elected to Congress? What a member did before they were an elected official can and does 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 advocacy actions and speak to the diversity of support for refugee resettlement. Learn more about building an advocacy team on the *Where to Start Advocacy: Teambuilding*, found on page 4.

STEP 3. Have a plan: Before you enter an advocacy visit, convene your advocacy team to assign roles:

- ✓ The Facilitator: This person starts the meeting, introduces the group, explains the purpose for 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. A refugee should tell their story to show how peoples' lives are changed through refugee resettlement.
- ✓ Specific Issue Points: It will be helpful to bring handouts– copies available for print are linked [here](#). Stories of welcome by state are available [here](#) and [here](#). Information on refugees by state can be found [here](#).
- ✓ The Ask for All Leaders: The critical part when you ask "Will you be a champion for refugee protection and resettlement and oppose any and all anti-refugee proposals?"
- ✓ The Ask for Local/State Leaders: Examples of asks can be found on page 4 (in the action alert script) and pages 6-7

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.? Share your reflections with your organization's advocacy staff (Contact Information can be found on Page 18).

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

ACTION ALERT for Refugee Community Advocacy Month

Currently, there are more than 68.5 million people displaced from their homes, worldwide. We are also facing the largest global refugee crisis in recorded history, with 25.4 million registered refugees searching for safety. Additionally, we are seeing unprecedented numbers of asylum seekers, with 3.1 million people awaiting asylum decisions. Refugee resettlement saves lives, encourages other countries to keep their doors open to people needing protection, and promotes regional stability and global security. We cannot turn our backs on those refugees we have pledged to welcome. Nor can we discriminate against individuals based on where they're from or what religion they practice.

Last year, the administration set the refugee admissions goal at 45,000 – the lowest level in U.S. history. Even more upsetting, is that three-quarters of the way through the year, we are on track to resettle only around 20,000 refugees. As people who care about refugees, we must make sure that our Members of Congress do everything they can to hold the Administration accountable for meeting the 45,000 refugee admissions goal and urge them to commit to resettling at least 75,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2019. The U.S. can resettle 75,000, and our communities want to welcome refugees.

Right now, we need Congress to urge the administration to **resettle at least 75,000 refugees next year** and hold the administration accountable to **meet its refugee admissions goal** to resettle at least 45,000 refugees by September 30th. Congress must also do everything in its power to **end family incarceration and family separation**, and ensure immediate family reunification. We also call on Congress to **reduce** funding for the mass immigration detention, deportation, and border militarization that harms asylum seekers and prevents vulnerable populations from seeking protection in the U.S.

CALL YOUR SENATORS & REPRESENTATIVES TODAY: [Click Here](#) or Call 1-866-961-4293*

**Please call 3 times to connect with your Representative and both of your Senators*

Sample Script: “I’m your constituent from [CITY/TOWN], and I urge you to support the U.S. refugee resettlement program. I strongly oppose President Trump’s continued Muslim and refugee bans, as well as the all-time low cap on refugee admissions. I urge you to do everything in your power to see that the administration resettle at least the 45,000 refugees they have set as the goal for 2018 and see the administration commit to resettling at least 75,000 for 2019. Resettlement is a core American legacy that allows refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. I also call on you to do everything in your power to end family incarceration and family separation, and ensure immediate family reunification. Please reduce funding for the mass immigration detention, deportation, and border militarization that harms asylum seekers and prevents vulnerable populations from seeking protection in the U.S. My community welcomes refugees and immigrants, and I urge you to do the same.”

You can also tweet at your [Senators & Representatives](#):

- .@[\[SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE\]](#) Welcome #refugees & #immigrants. Protect refugee resettlement & reduce deportations #RefugeesWelcome #NoBanNoWallNoRaids #GreaterAs1
- .@[\[SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE\]](#) Tell the White House to welcome at least 75,000 #refugees in the US & stand against refugee/Muslim ban EO. #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1

Your state and local leaders need to hear the same message. Tell them that your community welcomes refugees. To contact your state and local officials, visit: contactingcongress.org/local and usa.gov/elected-officials. To tweet your state and local officials, click to find the twitter handles for your [governor](#) and [state legislators](#).

Please spread the word and send this alert to your networks!

Follow [@RCUSA_DC](#) on Twitter and “like” [Refugee Council USA](#) on Facebook for up-to-date alerts.

Employer Roundtable: Setting Up Roundtable Discussions to Support Refugees

There are countless opportunities for you to bring together different voices from your community to show support for refugees. By convening a group of individuals who can speak to their personal reasons for supporting refugee resettlement in their communities, you can amplify individual support for refugees into a strong unified message. We encourage you to bring diverse groups of individuals, from all walks of life and industries, not forgetting to include refugees themselves, to meet with local and national leaders.

Your teams can hold roundtables with members of your Congressional delegation, local elected leaders, and other community leaders, all with the aim of speaking in support of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, and supporting our collective request of welcoming **at least 75,000 refugees** in Fiscal Year 2019.

Employers:

If you employ refugees, you know how important their contributions are to our economy – both locally and nationally. Gather other employers of refugees in your district or state and meet with your members of Congress and other elected leaders to share stories of the hard work refugees do to contribute to your business. Utilize your networks to identify and convene a large group of employers who can speak to the economic contributions of refugees. Meetings could include business owners, CEOs, managers, and former refugees who now own businesses.

Faith Leaders:

If you are a faith leader, you understand how meaningful it is to have refugees join and participate in your faith community, as well as the importance of welcoming the stranger and protecting the most vulnerable in your faith tradition. Gather leaders with diverse faith backgrounds in your district or state to share stories of the perspective and life refugees bring to your congregations and communities. Groups could include Bishops, Pastors, Imams, Priests, Rabbis, and other faith or community voices.

Veterans:

Veterans have dedicated their lives to supporting and defending the rights of Americans – including refugees. As someone who has served their country, you know that protecting the world's most vulnerable is part of our country's legacy and is also in the best interests of our national security. Many veterans have served alongside local persons as guides, interpreters, and more who now are seeking safety from the persecution they face due to their role in supporting U.S. troops. It's important elected officials here these stories and continue to uphold promises to our allies who need protection. Groups could include veterans, reserve and guard forces, or active duty U.S. Armed Forces.

First Responders:

As with Veterans, first responders have dedicated their careers to saving and defending the lives of all Americans – including refugees. First responders are committed to protecting all in times of need. A group of first responders could include police officers and other law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel in your state or district.

Diverse Group of Voices:

Alternatively, you could construct a roundtable that includes representatives from each group, demonstrating how much refugees mean to various parts of a community. You could convene employers, faith leaders, veterans, and first responders and hold roundtables with your members of Congress or elected leaders together.

Helpful Tools, Backgrounders, and Advocacy Materials: Refugee Community Advocacy Month

Talking Points for Advocacy Meetings

General:

1. Today, we are facing the worst refugee crisis in recorded history. There are over 68 million displaced people in the world, 25 million of which are refugees, half of whom are children.
2. Since the creation of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, the U.S has set an average admissions goal of 96,000 annually. This is a drastic change from the historically low admissions goal of 45,000, set for Fiscal Year 2018.
3. Refugee resettlement is a life-saving option available to less than 1% of the displaced population who are unable to return home or stay in the countries to which they've fled. Last year, the U.S. resettled over 51% of all resettled refugees worldwide.
4. The U.S. has historically been a leader in refugee protection.
5. The U.S. must continue to welcome refugees through resettlement, while also supporting ally countries who are themselves hosting millions of refugees and encouraging other countries to start or expand resettlement programs during this urgent time.

Presidential Determination:

6. We call on the President to set an admissions goal of at least 75,000 refugees in the coming fiscal year.
7. In the first 3 quarters of FY18, the U.S. has only resettled 16,230 refugees. In order to reach the goal of 45,000, the administration must resettle an average of 3,750 refugees each month. Projections estimate that we may not even resettle 20,000 refugees this year.
8. We call on Congress to urge the President to listen to communities, faith leaders, local businesses, and other community groups across the country that support this life-saving program and are eager to welcome refugees, as they have done for decades.
9. We call on members of Congress to actively engage in the Presidential Determination consultations

National Security and Foreign Policy:

10. Refugee resettlement is a critical tool to alleviate regional instability, maintain relationships with important allies, and advance our national security and foreign policy interests.
11. Refugees are the most vetted individuals entering the United States, and undergo complex security checks through a number of U.S. intelligence agencies.
12. The U.S. must maintain its commitment to resettle refugees and encourage other countries to do the same.
13. National security experts agree: refugee resettlement advances our national security interests and contributes to keeping our troops safe around the world.
14. Resettlement is critical in our ability to help alleviate regional instability, maintain relationships with important allies, and advance our national security and foreign policy interests. Refugee resettlement supports our allies in refugee hosting countries and reinforces stability and liberty around the world.
15. Resettling refugees is tangible proof that the U.S. is a beacon of inclusion and hope that offers a strong counterweight to the anti-American narratives of terrorist organizations.

Advocacy Asks

- **We encourage to urge the administration to resettle at least 75,000 refugees in FY19.**
- **We urge you to hold the administration accountable for resettling 45,000 refugees this year.**

- We call on you to do everything in your power to end family incarceration and family separation, and ensure immediate family reunification.
- Reduce funding for the mass immigration detention, deportation, and border militarization that harms asylum seekers and prevents vulnerable populations from seeking protection in the U.S.

Advocacy Materials and Backgrounders

When you attend an advocacy meeting, you may want to bring documents to leave behind with the office. Depending on the office, and what aspects of Refugee Resettlement might interest them, you can choose what to bring. Below you will find a few RCUSA backgrounders on issues including, the Presidential Determination, appropriations, personal stories from refugees, and numbers.

- [RCUSA Backgrounder: RCUSA Recommends at Least 75,000 Refugees as the Presidential Determination for Fiscal Year 2019](#)
- [RCUSA Backgrounder: State and Foreign Operations Appropriations for Displacement Assistance & Solutions](#)
- [RCUSA Backgrounder: Labor-HHS Appropriations for Refugee Integration & Survivor Success](#)
- [RCUSA Admissions Numbers FY2017 versus FY2018](#)
- [RCUSA Presidential Determination FY2019, The New Lives Behind the Numbers](#)
- [RCUSA Refugee Backgrounder, Refugee Resettlement in the United States](#)
- [Department of Homeland Security Refugee Screening Fact Sheet](#)
- [Department of Homeland Security USRAP Flow Chart](#)

Media & Outreach Resources

Writing & Pitching an Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)

When drafting an opinion piece, research the outlet you are submitting to. Many have a word limit around 600, so check the outlet's website for guidance. Please feel free to use the points in the draft op-ed below as you write your own opinion article, or feel free to write directly from the heart - what you have to say deserves to be heard!

When pitching your op-ed, it is important to keep your pitch short and on message. Most editors and outlets prefer pitches over email or through a submission form on their website. It is important to keep your pitch as short as possible, as reporters are often on a deadline and receive many story pitches every day. Open your pitch with an interesting first line and relate the pitch back to another story the reporter has recently written to increase the likelihood of the reporter picking up your story. Please see the draft pitch below for an example email.

Be sure to research the outlets and reporters in your area. Before pitching, ask yourself:

- Who are the top current events, immigration, or political reporters in your area?
- Have they written about refugees before? If so, how can you tie your op-ed to their previous work?

When drafting your pitch, use the answers to these questions to guide you. They will help increase the chances of your op-ed being picked-up and published.

Draft Pitch Email for Op-Ed

Subject: Submission: Faith leader op-ed on supporting refugee resettlement

Dear Editor,

My name is [NAME] and I'm the [TITLE] of [ORGANIZATION]. As the global community faces the largest displacement crisis in history, our organization/congregation is preparing to resettle refugees and do our part to create a welcoming community. (Here, be sure to include brief details about why you're writing to them about refugees).

My experiences inspired me to author the attached op-ed, reaffirming the need for us all to work together and create an inclusive community. In light of recent anti-refugee and anti-Muslim rhetoric in particular, this piece offers a timely response and highlights the urgent need to create a welcoming place for all people.

Please feel free to contact me at [EMAIL] or over the phone at [PHONE NUMBER] if you have any questions or would like to discuss the piece in greater detail. Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Sincerely,
[NAME]

Sample Faith Leader Op-Ed

I reflect how from the earliest days of [Sunday school/Hebrew School/Seminary], my faith has taught and called me to welcome the stranger, stand with the vulnerable, and love my neighbor. Now, as a [FATHER], [MINISTER], and [STATE], I am proud to demonstrate these values in my daily life and weekly sermons at [NAME OF CONGREGATION]. But it is also because of those values that I am deeply disturbed by recent anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiment espoused by some of our law makers. It sends an unwelcoming and mean-spirited message of exclusion to refugee families fleeing violence and persecution.

Last year, [INSERT STATE CONTEXT]. This [BILL, RESOLUTION, PROPOSAL], as well as the recent executive order to stop refugee resettlement stands opposite to my beliefs as a person of faith. Refugees are also the most scrutinized individuals entering the United States. To claim that they are security threats to our community not only ignores the unimaginable circumstances they flee and heavily scrutinized path to safe haven in the United States, but also stokes fear rather than cultivating compassion, truth, and understanding.

From the [earliest books] in the [BIBLE/TORAH/QURAN], our faith calls on us to show mercy and hospitality to those fleeing persecution. We are called to treat them with dignity, respect, and love, providing the same welcome that we ourselves would hope for.

[INSERT RELEVANT SCRIPTURE – EX: “Bring water to the thirsty, meet the fugitive with bread... For they have fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, and from the stress of battle.” - Isaiah 21:14-15; “And (as for) those who believed and fled and struggled hard in Allah's way, and those who gave shelter and helped, these are the believers truly; they shall have forgiveness and honorable provision.” (Quran 8:74); “And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 10:19)]

As Americans, we live in a country built in part by the hard work, dreams, and determination of generations of immigrants and refugees -- many of whom were our ancestors. Sadly, it seems that our legislators have forgotten these lessons and have acted with fear instead of compassion.

Today, I am asking all Members of Congress to protect funding for refugee resettlement and humanitarian assistance, reduce funding for detention and mass deportation enforcement, and work to ensure the administration recognizes the relationships refugees have with U.S.-based resettlement agencies and family members in the U.S. I also urge them to support resettling at least 75,000 refugees in fiscal year 2018.

Refugees are mothers, fathers, and children. They are doctors, teachers, lawyers, business owners, craftsmen, and musicians. As the world searches for solutions to the largest displacement crisis in history, with more than 21 million refugees worldwide, we have a moral and legal obligation to refugees seeking a chance to rebuild their lives and create a better future for their families. These people are no different than our **[BIBLICAL]** ancestors who were once refugees who found welcome and were called to do the same.

I urge our elected lawmakers to ensure **[STATE]** is providing refugees a chance to live, work, and go to school in safety. To do otherwise would be to dishonor our legacy of welcome and hospitality and fall short of our values.

Sample Refugee Leader Op-Ed

Take it from Someone Who Has Been in Their Shoes: We Must Welcome Refugees

My name is **[NAME]**, and I'm **[CAREER, FAMILY, ETC.]** I came to the United States as a refugee from **[COUNTRY]** **[TIME]** years ago. My family and I were forced to leave everything behind after **[PERSONAL STORY]**.

Today, I reflect on my journey and am so grateful to the United States and my new community for giving me another chance at life.

As with many refugees, I would have preferred to remain in my homeland. However, **[SHARE WHY YOU NEEDED TO MOVE, AND THAT THE JOURNEY WAS DIFFICULT AND LONG]**. After experiencing such traumas, I faced other challenges while resettlement, such as **[NAME A FEW OF THESE CHALLENGES]**. What made the biggest difference in overcoming these hardships--and in healing from past traumas--has been the welcome received when I joined my new community. **[NAME A FEW WAYS YOU WERE WELCOMED, AND TELL HOW THAT MADE YOU FEEL.]**

As someone who understands the struggles of refugees firsthand, I am disheartened to see that my beloved new home is denying that same opportunity to others now facing similarly dangerous situations.

I always viewed America as a beacon of hope. The executive orders banning Muslim immigrants and refugees do not reflect that. In fact, they completely contradict the values America stands for: compassion, welcome, and resilience. The United States is a country where anyone should be able to pursue the American Dream and live in safety.

[INSERT STATE SPECIFIC CONTEXT ON REFUGEE-RELATED STATE PROPOSALS.] The fear, hate and xenophobia perpetuated by **[IF RELEVANT: THIS STATE BILL]** and the executive order do not reflect the **[STATE]** and America I know. The **[STATE]** and America I know is compassionate in its acceptance of those seeking shelter from some of the worst conflicts in history.

Today, I am asking all Members of Congress to protect funding for refugee resettlement and humanitarian assistance, reduce funding for detention and mass deportation enforcement, and work to ensure the administration recognizes the relationships refugees have with U.S.-based resettlement agencies and family members in the U.S. I also urge them to support resettling at least 75,000 refugees in fiscal year 2018.

I continue now to believe in the importance of welcoming others--for others have welcomed me. As someone who knows firsthand the horrors that refugees flee and the sense of hope finding a home brings, I urge our local leaders, state legislators, and national policy makers to stand with refugees--today and every day. Only then will we truly reflect the welcome our country stands for.

Together, we can inspire welcome across the country and around the world.

Utilizing Social Media, Local Welcome Resolutions & Letters from Policy Makers

Social Media

Sample Tweets to post can be found below. You can also tweet directly at your elected officials by looking up their individual twitter handles [here](#), or typing their names into twitter. Please click [here](#) for more sample social media posts.

Contributions and Benefits of Refugees in Our Communities

- My community is better with refugees. They [pay taxes, create jobs, start businesses, bring cultural diversity, open restaurants, etc.]. #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1
- We celebrate the diversity and resiliency #refugees bring to our communities! #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1
- Making #RefugeesWelcome involves teamwork! NGOs, faith communities, community groups & others all chip in. #GreaterAs1
- Refugees across the US add value: working, learning English, paying taxes, opening businesses & becoming citizens. #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1
- Entire communities benefit from refugees when we invest in welcoming them and equipping them to thrive. #GreaterAs1
- Every year, [#Refugees](#) open businesses, revitalize towns, become citizens & give back to the communities that welcomed them. #GreaterAs1
- #Refugees bring their resiliency & experiences to help make our communities better. #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1

Refugee Facts

- 51% of #Refugees are children. What if that was someone you know? #GreaterAs1
- Every minute, 24 people are forced to flee their homes because of war or persecution. #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1
- The US has been a global leader in the protection of refugees and must continue to set an example as a safe haven. #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1
- Since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, over 3 million [#Refugees](#) have found safe haven in America. #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1
- The US Refugee Resettlement Program is a lifesaving, public-private partnership for #refugees with no other means of finding safety. #GreaterAs1

Sending Letters

Letter to Your Members of Congress

[DATE]

The Honorable [SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE] (Find this information at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov)

[ROOM NUMBER] [NAME OF CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING]

WASHINGTON, DC [20510/20515]

Dear [SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE] [LAST NAME]:

As your constituent, I urge you to protect funding for refugee protection internationally and refugee resettlement in the United States and to reduce funding for detention, deportation, and border militarization, which only tears families apart. Over sixty-eight million people are displaced globally, including over 25 million refugees, the largest number in recorded history. As Congress works on federal spending bills for Fiscal Year 2019, it is critical that the United States demonstrate leadership by extending international humanitarian assistance and ensuring that refugees resettled in the United States receive the welcome they need to thrive in their new communities. I also urge you to support resettling at least 75,000 refugees in fiscal year 2018. In response to the recent Supreme Court decision limiting the entry of refugees to those who have a “bona fide relationship with a person or entity” in the United States, please do everything in your power to ensure the administration recognizes the relationships refugees have with U.S.-based resettlement agencies and family members in the U.S.

Refugees are of special humanitarian concern to the United States and are a testament to our nation’s long, proud history as a beacon of hope. To be admitted to the United States, refugees must demonstrate that they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and must undergo rigorous security screenings, including biometric checks and interviews with specialized and well-trained Department of Homeland Security officers. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is a private/public partnership that is integral to U.S. foreign policy and national security.

[LOCAL AGENCY NAME] helps refugees who have been resettled in **[STATE]** by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, English-language classes, and community orientation. Refugees are resilient, hard workers whose innovative skills have contributed greatly to our state. **[DESCRIBE POSITIVE IMPACTS REFUGEES HAVE ON YOUR COMMUNITY—CAN INCLUDE EXAMPLES OF REFUGEES CREATING JOBS, STARTING BUSINESSES, OPENING RESTAURANTS, BRINGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY, BUYING HOMES, PAYING TAXES, ETC.]**

Our office in **[CITY/STATE]** has helped resettle **[X NUMBER OF]** refugees in the past year alone. Since the office opened in **[DATE]**, over **[X NUMBER OF]** refugees from **[X NUMBER OF]** countries have embarked on a path to reach their full potential and enjoy safety, security, and a second chance in life. Refugees have opened businesses, revitalized towns, and become productive members of communities that welcomed them. Many become American citizens and see their children graduate from U.S. schools.

Refugees are a testament to the United States’ long, proud history as a sanctuary for those who seek lives free from violence and oppression. I call on you to support resettling at least 75,000 refugees in fiscal year 2018; protect refugee assistance and resettlement; and reduce funding for detention, deportation, and border militarization. My community welcomes refugees and immigrants, and I invite you to meet with refugees next time you are in your home office. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me if you have any questions.

With Appreciation,
[YOUR SIGNATURE AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

Sample Letter to Send to Your State and Local Leaders

[DATE]

[TITLE] (To find your governor, state legislators, mayor, and local officials, click [here](#))
[ROOM NUMBER] [NAME OF OFFICE BUILDING]
[CITY, STATE ZIP CODE]

Dear **[TITLE LAST NAME]**:

As your constituent from [CITY, STATE], I urge you to welcome refugees, support the U.S. refugee resettlement program, and declare our [CITY/COUNTY/STATE] a “Welcoming City.” I would also urge you to write the State Department to show your support for resettlement. Resettlement is a strong American legacy that extends hospitality and offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Every day, more community members than ever before are volunteering with resettlement offices around the country to help refugees integrate and thrive.

The United States has a long history of providing protection to persons seeking safety from persecution. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. led humanitarian assistance efforts to help displaced persons, including resettling hundreds of thousands of Europeans to the United States, including Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. During the Cold War period, the U.S. welcomed refugees from Vietnam, Cuba and the former Soviet Union. Today, we resettle Darfuri refugees fleeing genocide, Bhutanese refugees forced out of their country, Syrian refugees who have fled mass violence and human rights atrocities, Iraqi and Afghan refugees who served alongside the U.S. military, and many other populations in need of lifesaving protection. Refugee resettlement is a public / private partnership that celebrates the hospitality, resilience, and freedom that our communities hold dear.

Refugees are forced to flee their homes because they face persecution on account of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Over 68.5 million people are displaced globally, the largest displacement crisis in recorded history, including over 25 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 a rigorous selection, security vetting and medical screening process.

[LOCAL AGENCY NAME] helps refugees who have been resettled in [STATE] by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, English-language classes, and community orientation. Refugees are resilient, hard workers whose innovative skills have contributed greatly to our state. **[DESCRIBE POSITIVE IMPACTS REFUGEES HAVE ON YOUR COMMUNITY—CAN INCLUDE EXAMPLES OF REFUGEES CREATING JOBS, STARTING BUSINESSES, OPENING RESTAURANTS, BRINGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY, BUYING HOMES, PAYING TAXES, ETC.]**

Our community is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants, adding to the economic strength and cultural richness of our community. We have been an example of a hospitable and welcoming place to all newcomers, where people thrive and the contributions of all are celebrated and valued. As cities across the United States have declared themselves to be welcoming to refugees and immigrants, we urge to adopt a resolution declaring [CITY/COUNTY/STATE] a “Welcoming City,” one in which all are welcome, accepted, and appreciated.

Please stand with us as we welcome refugees and affirm the richness of our community. We invite you to come visit our office and meet with refugees *[perhaps include event information]*. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me about how we can be supportive of moving a welcoming resolution forward.

With appreciation,
[YOUR SIGNATURE AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

Draft Letters for Local Officials to Send the White House & State Department

[DATE]

Dear President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo:

Welcoming refugees shines a light on Americans’ most cherished common values. As a community in [CITY, STATE], we believe in the strength of the U.S. refugee resettlement program and welcome refugees from all backgrounds, faiths, and countries of origin. This commitment reflects a core American belief in the dignity of every person, lifts up diversity as a community’s strength, and cultivates an environment of inclusion. Resettlement is a strong American legacy that

extends hospitality and offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Every day, more community members than ever before are volunteering with resettlement offices around the country to help refugees integrate and thrive.

Refugee resettlement is the living embodiment of the religious commitment to “welcome the stranger,” a bedrock upon which much of America’s strength rests. In our community, churches, synagogues, mosques, and other communities of faith stand in partnership to help refugees of all faiths find safety and hope as they start their lives as new Americans. The United States has a long history of providing protection to persons seeking safety from persecution. In our community, we have welcomed refugees from **[DESCRIBE WHERE REFUGEES IN YOUR COMMUNITY HAVE COME FROM AND THE STRUGGLES THEY FACED ON THEIR JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES.]**

Refugees are forced to flee their homes because they face persecution on account of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Over 68.5 million people are displaced globally, the largest displacement crisis in recorded history, including over 25 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.

The resettlement program is a prime example of a public-private partnership between the federal government, the state government, and local communities and their agencies and volunteers. [Local agency name] helps refugees who have been resettled in **[STATE]** by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, English-language classes, and community orientation. Refugees are resilient, hard workers whose innovative skills have contributed greatly to our state. **[DESCRIBE POSITIVE IMPACTS REFUGEES HAVE ON YOUR COMMUNITY—CAN INCLUDE EXAMPLES OF REFUGEES CREATING JOBS, STARTING BUSINESSES, OPENING RESTAURANTS, BRINGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY, BUYING HOMES, PAYING TAXES, ETC.]**

Please stand with our community as we welcome refugees. We invite you to come visit our office and meet with refugees **[PERHAPS INCLUDE EVENT INFORMATION]**. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me if you have any questions about refugee resettlement in our area.

With appreciation,
[YOUR SIGNATURE AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

**Your local policy makers will know how to send correspondence to the White House and State Department. Encourage them to also send the letter to your Senators and Representative, and also please share a copy with your agency's advocacy staff, contact information on last page, so we can see how many have been sent and ensure that Administration officials and members of congress see them.*

Sample Local Welcome Resolution

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE CITY/COUNTY OF **[NAME]** AS A WELCOMING **[CITY/COUNTY]** THAT CELEBRATES THE GROWING DIVERSITY OF ITS RESIDENTS AND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS, AND ALL NEWCOMERS ENHANCE THE CULTURE AND THE ECONOMY

WHEREAS, there are more than 65 million displaced people have been forced from their homes, more than any time in recorded history, including over 21 million refugees;

WHEREAS, millions of refugees – regardless of faith or country of origin – are making life and death decisions to flee their homes and neighboring countries because they are unable to access shelter, health care, education, or protection, and neighboring countries have either closed their borders to new arrivals or violence persists in those countries as well;

WHEREAS, resettlement is available to a very small portion of the most vulnerable refugees and provides safe haven in a third country when no other options for safety are available;

WHEREAS, resettlement to the U.S. is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection – such as unaccompanied and other at-risk children, female-headed households, victims of torture, the physically disabled, members of the LGBTI community, and members of minority groups that are experiencing oppression in the host country – and takes place after eligible refugees undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting, and medical screening process;

WHEREAS, the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants, adding to the economic strength and cultural richness of our community;

WHEREAS, organizations responsible for resettling refugees in our community, as well as numerous other community organizations and religious institutions, have declared their support for resettling refugees in **[CITY]**;

WHEREAS, the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** has been an example of a hospitable and welcoming place to all newcomers, where people, families, and institutions thrive and the contributions of all are celebrated and valued;

WHEREAS, cities across the United States have declared themselves to be welcoming to refugees and immigrants, joining a national movement for creating an inclusive community;

WHEREAS, residents of **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** aspire to live up to our highest societal values of acceptance and equality, and treat newcomers with decency and respect, creating a vibrant community for all to live in;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE **[CITY/COUNTY]** OF **[NAME]**, that the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** is hereby declared a Welcoming City, and one that affirms the beauty and richness of our diversity, and one in which all are welcome, accepted, and appreciated.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** hereby urges other local and state communities to join us in a stronger national effort to resettle the most vulnerable refugees worldwide and help them integrate and thrive.

Adopted this the X day of **[MONTH YEAR]**.

Get Civically Engaged

Civic engagement refers to the ways in which individuals participate in the life of their communities. Many refugees and immigrants are very active in the civic life of their communities, and now the need for participation in broader civic institutions, voting, and influencing policy making is more important than ever. Civic engagement can mean anything, from voting and understanding policy issues that impact our lives, to educating and encouraging other individuals to vote and make their voices heard. It could even mean running for office! Civic engagement lifts up the voices and power of refugees and immigrants in our communities, thus educating policy makers and building champions across party lines at local, state, and national levels.

Civic engagement is a key component of integration: Voting and participating in civil society are key to the integration process. When immigrants and refugees become naturalized U.S. citizens and exercise their right to vote, they engage in an active process that goes beyond passive citizenship, empowering themselves to be full members of their new communities.

Civic engagement is part of our mission to build welcoming communities: Refugees, resettlement offices, and supportive community members know first-hand the impact that policies have on the lives of refugees and their communities. It is critical for policy makers to meet refugees and understand their struggles, as well as see first hand the positive contributions that they make.

Civic engagement work is non-partisan, and does not endorse any candidate or political party: RCUSA members are 501(c)3 organizations that promote non-partisan civic engagement as part of our joint mission to lift up the voices of refugees and build stronger, more welcoming communities. Neither RCUSA nor its member organizations endorse any party or candidate. You should never mention a political party or candidate while registering people to vote.

Voter Registration in your Community

An event that brings members of your community and refugees together provides a great opportunity to register naturalized citizens to vote. Have volunteers register new voters, distribute voter registration information, or early voting cards.

Voter Registration Table Checklist

- ✓ Voter registration cards, absentee and early voting ballots, with relevant information on each
- ✓ Clip boards, a visual flow chart on voter registration, and sample scripts for volunteers (see next page)
- ✓ [Commitment cards](#) asking people to promise to vote on election day and a volunteer sign-up sheet
- ✓ State voter information from your Election Office, including a map of jurisdictions & polling places
- ✓ Signs: "Register to Vote Here!" & "Voter registration available without regard for the voter's political preference"
- ✓ Tally sheet for reporting your activity at the end of the day

Know Your State Voting Laws: The best resource on your state's voting laws is your local county election board. There are Voter ID laws in 32 states, which can limit people's access to voting. Each state also has their own early voting policies. It is important to know the laws in your state and communicate them in conversations with new voters. If your State has a voting ID law, make sure you inform people so they can prepare to have the necessary identification when they vote. Use these links to customize information based on your state's requirements:

- Voting ID laws by state: www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx
- Early & absentee voting by state: www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx

Collaborate Locally: Registration forms and early voting applications can be picked up at your local board of elections office. Ask them if there are any rules about non-profits turning in registration cards or early ballot applications once they are filled out by new voters, as some election boards have deadlines or limits on the number of registration forms or applications turned in at once. Work with a local organization dedicated to voter registration to enter the information into the Voter Activation Network and follow up to ensure a successful voting experience.

Hello, I'm out registering people to vote today. My name is _____. Voting is one of the most important ways to add our voices to shape community. Many refugees and immigrants first register at their naturalization ceremony.

Are you a U.S. citizen – have you had your ceremony yet?

NO

YES

It's simple to register to vote today, you just have to fill out this basic information with your name and address.

(They fill out the form)

Thanks! I will turn this to the Election Board and they will mail you more information.

Would you also like to sign up to volunteer to help get people to the polls on election day? (If so, have them sign up on the volunteer sign-up sheet.)

Did you register to vote?

NO

YES

While you can't register to vote until you are a U.S. citizen, you can still be civically engaged. Would you like to sign-up to volunteer leading up to, or on election day?

Have you moved since you last voted? If so, you will have to update your address if you did.

NO

YES

Sometimes when people register they don't actually make it out to vote, which is why we're asking people to sign-up on the early voting, or vote by mail list. The percentage of voting is much higher because you can vote from home or go to the polls on the weekend, rather than a workday, since elections are on a Tuesday. Do you want to sign-up for early voting?

Lastly, I would ask you to commit to voting today. One way you can do that is by filling out this commitment card, so that we can follow-up with you and remind you to vote as we get closer to the elections?

Have them fill out the registration form with their new address, then move to the last step to the right!

Resources & Advocacy Staff Contacts

State-by-State Resources

- RCUSA State Profiles on Refugee Resettlement: www.rcusa.org/state-refugee-profiles
- Interfaith Immigration Coalition State-by-State Articles and Demonstrations of Welcome: www.interfaithimmigration.org/2015/12/03/welcoming-refugees-state-by-state-resources/

Additional Advocacy Toolkits

- Interfaith Immigration Coalition Neighbor-to-Neighbor Toolkit: www.interfaithimmigration.org/neighbor
- Refugees Welcome Toolkit: www.refugeesarewelcome.org/refugees-welcome-toolkit_final-8-5-16/
- My Neighbor is Muslim Toolkit: <http://lirs.org/myneighborismuslim/>

The following advocacy staff represent organizations working with refugees:

- Church World Service: Jen Smyers, jsmyers@cwsglobal.org
- Episcopal Migration Ministries: Lacy Broemel, lbroemel@episcopalchurch.org
- HIAS: Liz Mandelman, elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org
- International Rescue Committee: Kristen Aster, kristen.aster@rescue.org
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: Javier Cuebas, jcuebas@lirst.org
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: Matt Wilch, mwilch@uscgb.org
- U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants: Esmeralda Lopez, elopez@uscrdc.org
- Ethiopian Community Development Council: Kevin Meadowcroft, kmeadowcroft@ecdacus.org
- World Relief: Jenny Yang, jgyang@worldrelief.org
- Jesuit Refugee Service/USA: Giulia McPherson, gmcpherson@jesuits.org
- Refugee Council USA: dgrigsby@rcusa.org