

Ten Reasons for a Moratorium on Refugee Admissions in 2013

By ANN CORCORAN

The following statement, issued in response to the State Department's refugee meeting, is from the founder of the RefugeeResettlementWatch blog.

Here are ten reasons why no refugees should be resettled in the U.S. in fiscal year 2013. Instead, a moratorium should be put in place until the program is reformed and the economy completely recovers.

1. There are no jobs. The program was never meant to be simply a way to import impoverished people to the U.S. and place them on an already overtaxed welfare system.

2. The program has become a cash cow for various “religious” organizations and other contractors who very often appear to care more about the next group of refugees coming in (and the cash that comes with each one) than the group they resettled only a few months earlier. Stories of refugees suffering throughout the U.S. are rampant.

3. Terrorist organizations (mostly Islamic) are using the program, which still clearly has many failings in the security screening system. Indeed, consideration should be given to halting the resettlement of Muslims altogether. Also, the UN should have no role in choosing refugees for the U.S.

4. The public is not confident that screenings for potential terrorists (3) or the incidences of other types of fraudulent entry are being properly and thoroughly investigated and stopped. When fraud is uncovered — either fraud to enter the country or illegal activity once the refugee has been resettled — punishment should be immediate deportation.

5. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR),

among other agencies, is in complete disarray as regards its legally mandated requirement to report to Congress every year on how refugees are doing and where the millions of tax dollars are going that run the program. The last (and most recent) annual report to be sent to Congress is the 2008 report — so they are out of compliance for fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011. A moratorium is necessary in order for the ORR to bring its records entirely up to date. Additionally, there needs to be an adequate tracking system designed to gather required data — frankly, some of the numbers reported for such measures of dependence on welfare as food stamp usage, cash assistance, and employment status are nothing more than guesses. (The lack of reports for recent years either signals bureaucratic incompetence and disregard for the law, or, causes one to wonder if there is something ORR is hiding.)



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6. The State Department and the ORR have so far failed to adequately determine and report (and track, once the refugee has been admitted) the myriad communicable and costly-to-treat diseases entering the country with the refugee population.

7. Congress needs to specifically disallow the use of the refugee program for other purposes of the U.S.

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Government, especially using certain refugee populations to address unrelated foreign policy objectives — Uzbeks, Kosovars, Meshketians, and Bhutanese (Nepalese) nationals come to mind.

8. Congress needs to investigate and specifically disallow any connection between this program and big businesses looking for cheap and captive labor. The federal government should not be acting as headhunter for corporations.

9. The Volag (voluntary agency) refugee replacement system should be completely abolished and the program run by state agencies with accountability to the public through their state legislatures. The system as presently constituted is surely unconstitutional. (One of many benefits of turning the program over to a state agency is to break up the government/contractor revolving door that is being demonstrated now at both the State Department and ORR.) The participating state agency's job would be to find groups, churches, or individuals who would sponsor a refugee family completely for at least a year and monitor those sponsors. Their job would include making sure refugees are assimilating. A mechanism should be established that would allow a refugee to go home if he or she is unhappy or simply can't make it in America. Short of a complete halt to resettlement-by-contractor, taxpayers should be protected by legally

requiring financial audits of contractors and subcontractors on an annual basis.

10. As part of (9), there needs to be an established process for alerting communities to the impending arrival of refugees that includes reports from the federal government (with local input) about the social and economic impact a certain new group of refugees will have on a city or town. This report would be presented to the public through public hearings, and the local government would have an opportunity to say "no." For these reasons and more, the refugee admissions program should be placed on hold and a serious effort made by Congress to either scrap the whole thing or reform it during the moratorium. My recommendation for 2013 is to stop the program now. The Office of the President could indeed ask for hearings to review the Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980 — three decades is time enough to see its failings and determine if reauthorization is feasible, or whether a whole new law needs to be written.

I suspect the major impediments to reform will be the contractors who make their living from the program (and use the refugees for political goals) and big business, which has entwined itself with the federal agencies, the Volags, and certain Members of Congress (on both sides of the political aisle) to keep the captive labor coming. ■