

The Refugee Resettlement Program Is Not the Refugee Resettlement Program

JAMES SIMPSON

Candidate Donald Trump promised to confront our dysfunctional immigration system head on. Despite a relentless nationwide campaign of obstruction by Democrat-appointed judges, politicians, activists, and establishment Republicans beholden to the Chamber of Commerce, President Trump has worked diligently to keep that promise, and has had notable successes, especially regarding the refugee resettlement program. He has been so successful, in fact, that Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs), the private, tax-exempt, refugee resettlement contractors funded by the government to resettle refugees, have wailed about funding cuts and hyperventilate that Trump policies may kill it entirely.¹

Like all leftists, they deliberately exaggerate. A change in administration, which the Left has sought to effect unethically with the endless, bogus Trump-Russia collusion investigation that started before Trump was even elected, would restore the program overnight at full throttle. But the reduction in refugee resettlement truly has been dramatic. During Obama's last year in office, the State Department imported 84,994 refugees. Trump reduced those numbers to 53,716 in fiscal year 2017, and for FY 2018, about 21,500 will be resettled — a reduction of 75 percent since Obama's last year. (As of this writing, 19,541 refugees have been resettled in FY 2018, which ended September 30.)²

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REFUGEE VETTING

FY 2018 has recorded the lowest annual resettlement number since the program began in 1980. It is largely the result of the Trump administration's "extreme vetting," a necessary change after virtually nonexistent vetting procedures let in numerous refugees who later committed acts of terrorism.³ As former Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Central Region Director, A.J. Irwin, described in a 2016 public TV panel discussion:

[W]hen we send refugee officers over there to interview people, they have a mission and their mission is not to detect fraud or identify terrorists, it's to process these people and get 'em into the system...⁴

The Obama administration knowingly and routinely allowed illegal aliens falsely claiming asylum to remain in the United States.⁵ A September 2016 DHS Inspector General report found that 1,982 aliens from countries known for immigration fraud or terror links, who were scheduled for deportation, instead obtained citizenship by using false identities because fingerprint records were missing.⁶

We have already witnessed the deadly consequences of these policies, as terrorist attacks committed by refugees and those resettled under other special immigrant categories begin to mirror the out-of-control situation in Western Europe.⁷ Even former FBI Director James Comey acknowledged in a 2017 congressional hearing that 300 refugees from Iraq and six of the travel ban countries were the subject of FBI terrorism investigations.⁸

The resettlement contractors recognize the impact that Trump's extreme vetting program is having. It creates bottlenecks in the system that have slowed the process to a crawl. Despite the terror threat that this addresses, refugee advocates now say that Trump vetting policies are *too strong*.⁹

Perhaps, however, slowing the process is the only possible way to "extreme vet" refugees. Mary Doetsch, a former State Department employee who was a refugee coordinator for eight years, recently explained that it is

virtually impossible to vet refugees, and the program is fraught with fraud.¹⁰

WHAT IS THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM?

The current domestic refugee resettlement program, formally called the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), was created with passage of now-deceased Sen. Ted Kennedy's Refugee Act of 1980. It fundamentally changed refugee resettlement from what was an ad hoc, largely privately funded effort, to a federally funded public/private partnership program, where the government selects the refugees and provides funding, while a group of private contractors (the VOLAGs) are paid by the head to resettle refugees.

The refugee resettlement program is administered primarily by three agencies: the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The State Department's Reception and Placement Program is managed by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), which oversees nine public and private Resettlement Support Centers (RSCs) across the globe. These centers select refugees, usually from a list supplied by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

PRM then assigns selected refugees to nine VOLAGs, who meet weekly to decide where the refugees will be resettled in the United States. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), a UN agency, coordinates with the RSCs and the VOLAGs to bring refugees to the U.S.¹¹ VOLAGs are provided PRM seed grants of \$2,125 per head to resettle refugees.¹² VOLAGs are allowed to pocket 45 percent of this funding, and use the rest to pay initial resettlement costs. Refugees receive loans for their airline tickets which are supposed to be paid back. The VOLAG gets a 25 percent cut of this too.

Both the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are responsible for vetting refugees, which includes an in-person interview and database queries. The in-person interview essentially requires the interviewer to take the refugees' word about their identity, because verification of a refugee's identity is difficult if not impossible. Databases are useless in most cases because refugees are either fleeing failed states or states not inclined to share data with the U.S. As James Comey famously said, "We can query databases till the cows come home but nothing will show up because we have no record of that person..."¹³

The Health and Human Service Department's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides most funding for refugee resettlement over and above the \$2,125/refugee seed money provided by PRM. ORR

also offers numerous grants for refugee social services, business startups, and other funding, ostensibly to help refugees get established in the U.S. Contractors administering these grants naturally take a cut. In all, contractors can receive upwards of \$5,000 per head or more for each refugee.¹⁴

Furthermore, most of the work, and even some of the money contractors receive, is provided by volunteers. One VOLAG volunteer recruitment drive specified that each volunteer had to raise at least \$1,100 in cash and in-kind donations, and also raise at least one month's rent in cash for the families they were serving.¹⁵

THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM IS NOT THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

While it is good news that the Trump administration has been successful in its efforts to slow refugee resettlement to a crawl, it is also misleading, because the refugee resettlement program includes other groups that meet the refugee definition but reach the U.S. by other means than through overseas refugee camps.

According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a refugee is any person who is "unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."¹⁶ This mirrors the UN definition established at the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the related 1967 Protocol.¹⁷

It is interesting to note that under these definitions, "individuals who have crossed an international border fleeing generalized violence are not considered refugees."¹⁸ This ostensibly could include large numbers of people who are regularly resettled anyway, for example, some of the Syrians fleeing that country's conflict, and I would argue, most if not all Somalis.

For example, Minneapolis, Minnesota, is home to the largest Somali population in the U.S., most of whom arrived as refugees or are children of refugees. Many now return to Somalia for extended vacations. How can they possibly be refugees if they make regular trips to the country they fled out of fear for their lives? Even more outrageous, upon return, many have been upset to learn that their rent was in arrears. Somalis successfully lobbied the Minneapolis Housing Board to grant rent relief when they leave home for these extended vacations.¹⁹

Those who meet the definition include refugees (those seeking protection in the United States who are not already in the country) also include asylum seekers or asylees (those who apply for asylum after coming to the U.S.), Cuban/Haitian Entrants, holders of Special Immigrant Visas (SIV), and Trafficking Victims. The

Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) program is also administered by ORR, although UACs do not meet the definition of “refugee.” Table I below provides up-to-date estimates for each category.

TABLE I
Refugee Resettlement Program Numbers

Fiscal Year	Refugee Ceiling	Refugees	SIV1	Cuban/Haitian ²	Asylees ³	Trafficking Victims	UAC ⁴	Total
2008	80,000	60,192	666	20,235	23,026	310	7,211	111,640
2009	80,000	74,654	2,332	20,022	22,288	280	6,639	126,215
2010	80,000	73,311	2,108	21,496	19,755	549	8,302	125,521
2011	80,000	56,424	719	22,982	23,570	661	7,120	111,476
2012	76,000	58,236	3,312	21,000	28,010	469	14,271	125,298
2013	70,000	69,926	1,902	28,560	24,997	506	25,498	151,389
2014	70,000	69,987	10,240	31,871	23,296	749	57,496	193,639
2015	70,000	69,933	7,226	71,618	25,971	872	33,726	209,346
2016	85,000	84,994	12,269	87,111	25,149	797	59,171	269,491
*2017	50,000	53,716	19,321	20,000	22,224	500	42,497	158,258
*2018	45,000	22,491	10,230	20,000	27,977	500	35,509	116,707
Total	786,000	692,961	70,546	364,895	266,263	6,193	290,901	1,691,759

Sources: FY 2018 HHS Budget; Refugee and Entrant Assistance, p. 182; Refugee Processing Center (www.wrapsnet.org) Admissions & Arrivals – 2018 refugees & SIVs projected to full-year as of 9/10; 2016 Office of Refugee Resettlement Annual Report to Congress
 * FY 2017/2018 estimates in bold – author estimates
¹ Includes SIVs and family members; FY 2017/2018 SIVs only
² 2010 Excludes 697 Footnotes children served in Haitian Earthquake Repatriation efforts
³ 2017-18 estimates based on approvals from EOIR and USCIS Quarterly Stakeholder reports as of 6/30
⁴ UAC FY 2017-2018 number=placements from ORR state totals; 2018 projected to full-year as of 8/30

As the table shows, while the Trump administration has been able to reduce refugee numbers to historic lows, refugees are but one-fifth of what comprises the entire program. *Over 100,000 refugees and other groups are being resettled in FY 2018, a major reduction, but one that only brings the program back to historic averages.*

Asylum cases have, if anything, increased, and while Unaccompanied Alien Children numbers are down somewhat this year, they still remain historically high.

The Cuban/Haitian Entrant program (CHEP), was created by the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980 in response to the Mariel Boat Lift, when 125,000 Cubans and over 40,000 Haitians attempted to immigrate en masse by boat to the U.S.²⁰ It is a form of humanitarian parole, which allows entry of otherwise inadmissible aliens for humanitarian reasons. CHEP offers benefits to Cubans and Haitians on par with other refugee groups.

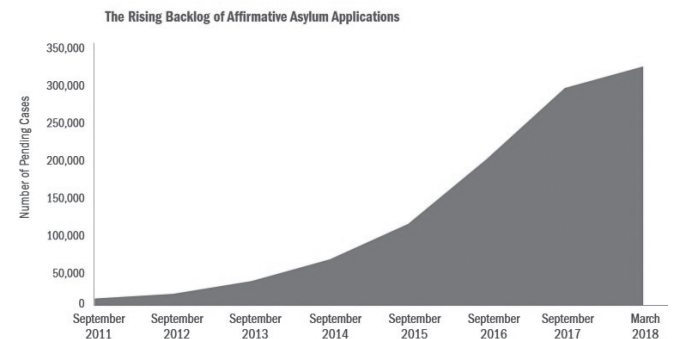
A component of CHEP was the so-called “wet foot-dry foot” policy, which provided expedited residence status to Cubans who successfully reached American shores (dry-foot). If intercepted by U.S. authorities at sea, (wet-foot), they would be returned to Cuba.²¹

Just a few days prior to leaving office in 2017, President Obama cancelled Wet-foot-dry foot. This change was made as part of Obama’s normalization of relations with Communist Cuba, and the numbers of people fleeing Cuba soared in 2015-2016 in anticipation. There are still program-eligible Cubans and Haitians, but the numbers are down substantially since the end of wet foot-dry foot.

As there are no current published numbers for 2017-18, estimates provided are a rough guess. And while that might look good from a strictly statistical standpoint, it is very bad news for Cubans literally dying to leave the Communist state—one of Obama’s last gifts to typically bedrock conservative, anti-Communist Cubans in the U.S. With the exception of the Vietnamese boat people, few immigrants to the U.S. have gone to such extraordinary lengths over so many years to escape an oppressive government. Some 70-80,000 have died in the attempt.²²

Asylum is broken down into two categories: affirmative and defensive. Affirmative asylees are those who formally apply for asylum status at our nation’s borders. Defensive asylees are those in deportation proceedings who request asylum status to avoid deportation. Affirmative asylum cases are decided by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; the U.S. Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) decides defensive asylum cases.

Asylum applications have exploded in recent years, as shown in the above chart of affirmative case backlogs. As of March 31, 2018, the USCIS affirmative asylum backlog was 318,624.²³ The EOIR backlog, which includes defensive asylum and other types of deportation cases, was 786,303 at the end of FY 2018.²⁴



The asylum program is rife with fraud.²⁵ The Trump administration has tightened the strings, which, as shown in the Affirmative Backlog chart, has slowed the growth above in the backlog, but the country still must deal with those in the pipeline. Every one of the approximately 1 million asylum applicants are already in the U.S., free to roam. Many will simply fail to appear when their case reaches court.

The Special Immigrant Visa program (SIV) awards refugee status to Iraqis and Afghans who help the U.S. military as interpreters and translators during military operations in those countries. Many of these individuals legitimately face the threat of death if they remain in their own countries. In recent years their numbers have also soared. However, 200 of the approximately 300 refugee terrorist suspects identified by the FBI are Iraqis,²⁶

and some Iraqi SIVs have engaged in terrorism or other heinous crime, so the SIV program is viewed with suspicion as well.²⁷

Upon their arrival, refugees are urged to apply for relatives. This keeps the refugee flow going and provides more funding for the contractors. However, there are other programs that import needy populations from all over the world not counted under the refugee umbrella. For example, these include families of asylees (about 15,000 per year), the Diversity Visa lottery (50,000 per year, who are then free to invite family members), and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which grants 18 month temporary residence to citizens of designated countries undergoing war, epidemic, or natural disaster, (currently about 437,000 people from 10 countries).²⁸

Most TPS beneficiaries are granted endless extensions — de facto amnesty. TPS was first established in 1990, primarily to assist Salvadorans fleeing civil war. Over 1 million Salvadorans — one-fifth of the nation's population — migrated to the U.S., almost all illegally, during the 1980s. Most are still here. Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras were granted TPS following Hurricane Mitch in 1998.²⁹ A 2001 earthquake allowed for extensions to Salvadorans. All these groups have been granted repeated extensions since. For those who didn't get the memo, the hurricane has passed, the earthquake is over. The Trump administration announced last fall that it was terminating TPS status for El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Sudan, the first time in history these "temporary" programs have ended.³⁰

RESETTLEMENT CONTRACTORS

Voluntary Agencies or VOLAGs are private, tax-exempt organizations that resettle refugees for the U.S. government. There are nine VOLAGs, six of which are nominally religious, and these often promote this activity as part of their Great Commission to non-Christians. However, *VOLAGs are strictly prohibited by regulation from any form of proselytization.* In reality, they are simply government contractors paid handsomely for their services. The VOLAGs are:

- Church World Service (CWS);
- Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church (DFMS), also called Episcopal Migration Ministries;
- Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC);
- HIAS, Inc. (formerly Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society);
- International Rescue Committee (IRC);
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS);

- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB);
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI);
- World Relief Corporation of the National Association of Evangelicals (WRC).

VOLAGs utilize a network of, at last count, about 320 subsidiaries called "affiliates" which perform most of the actual resettlement work. This includes providing the following services to refugees for the first 30-90 days of their resettlement in the U.S.:³¹

- Decent, safe, sanitary, affordable housing in good repair;
- Essential furnishings;
- Food, food allowance;
- Seasonal clothing;
- Pocket money;
- Assistance in applying for public benefits, social security cards, ESL, employment services, non-employment services, Medicaid, Selective Service;
- Assistance with health screenings and medical care;
- Assistance with registering children in school;
- Transportation to job interviews and job training;
- Home visits.

The VOLAGs work the administrative end, distributing federal resettlement dollars and deciding where to relocate the refugees. It is important to note that refugees get priority for housing. As a result, many Americans go homeless or are otherwise denied public housing for extended periods. In New Hampshire, for example, where refugee resettlement has stressed many communities to the breaking point, the wait time for public housing is eight years.³²

The two main UAC resettlement contractors are Baptist Child and Family Services (BCFS) and Southwest Key Programs (SW Key), but many others are involved in this lucrative business. More about that later.

VOLAG and UAC contractor leaders do very well by doing good. Table II below lists the CEO compensation of the VOLAGs and main UAC contractors, as available. This information is provided on the IRS annual tax return (Form 990 — Return of Organization Exempt from Taxation) that most of them must file. It is important to note that, while substantial, these salaries would not normally be out of line for a corporate CEO. But these are tax-exempt entities that merely administer federal grants. They are little more than glorified clerks.

**TABLE II
CEO COMPENSATION**

VOLAG	CEO	LATEST 990
CWS	Rev. John L. McCullough	\$345,366
ECDC	Tsehay Teferra	\$357,605
HIAS	Mark Hetfield	\$343,630
IRC	David Miliband	\$671,749
LIRS	Linda Hartke	\$327,876
USCCB	Not Publicized	NA
USCRI	Lavinia Limon	\$300,194
DFMS	Not Publicized	NA
WRC	Stephan Bauman	\$132,740

UAC CONTRACTOR

BCFS	Kevin Dinnin	\$502,614
SW Key	Juan Sanchez	\$786,822

The VOLAGs have indeed fallen on hard times if measured strictly by federal grants. Table III below shows annual grants to each VOLAG and the main UAC contractors. Note that in FY 2018, VOLAG grants totaled \$243.7 million, down 50 percent from FY 2016.

VOLAGs claim they planned to close 74 affiliate offices in 2018 as a result of Trump refugee reductions.³³ The State Department’s Refugee Processing Center website (www.wrapsnet.org) used to provide the list of affiliates, their addresses, and contact information, but has removed this information, so there is no way to

evaluate the claim. More likely the VOLAGs are finding workarounds to stay in business, as they did in the following example.

VOLAG affiliate Catholic Charities of Onondaga County (CCOC) is one many Catholic Charities branch offices of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, New York. In 2016, the latest annual report available, CCOC took in \$17.4 million, \$12.7 million of which was received from government. The report does not specify which level of government, but sources at the CCOC confirmed that it receives funding from federal, state, and local government.³⁴ This is true for many VOLAG affiliates.

**CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF ONONDAGA COUNTY
REVENUE AND SUPPORT**

Government Support	\$12,741,241
Special Events and Contributions	\$866,725
Donations In-Kind	\$359,260
Diocesan Support	\$199,343
United Way	\$711,717
Investment Income	\$59,551
Program Services Fees	\$1,216,126
Rental Income	\$585,685
Management and Accounting Fees	\$574,530
Consulting and Other Income	\$119,596
TOTAL	\$17,433,774

**TABLE III
VOLAG and UAC Contractor Grants
(\$ Millions)**

	VOLAGS									VOLAG Total	UAC Contractors			UAC Total	Grand Total
	CWS	DFMS	ECDC	HIAS	IRC	LIRS	USCCB	USCRI	WRC		BCFS	SW Key	Other		
2008	\$23.1	\$4.4	\$5.2	\$10.8	\$55.3	\$21.1	\$18.7	\$6.3	\$11.7	\$156.6	\$0.0	\$30.7	\$49.3	\$80.0	\$236.6
2009	\$23.0	\$10.0	\$6.3	\$13.4	\$60.7	\$31.5	\$50.3	\$21.5	\$14.5	\$231.2	\$6.6	\$27.8	\$50.9	\$85.3	\$316.4
2010	\$34.1	\$14.0	\$10.3	\$16.3	\$65.8	\$34.8	\$63.2	\$30.6	\$9.8	\$279.0	\$10.6	\$32.5	\$67.0	\$110.0	\$389.0
2011	\$33.5	\$12.1	\$11.4	\$14.3	\$70.0	\$30.5	\$68.5	\$30.4	\$19.9	\$290.5	\$17.0	\$35.6	\$68.0	\$120.6	\$411.2
2012	\$36.1	\$13.6	\$11.0	\$15.5	\$73.2	\$35.0	\$62.9	\$31.6	\$19.8	\$298.6	\$64.9	\$50.2	\$86.3	\$201.5	\$500.1
2013	\$39.9	\$14.9	\$13.1	\$18.6	\$78.8	\$49.2	\$75.8	\$38.8	\$21.1	\$350.1	\$59.5	\$88.2	\$124.1	\$271.8	\$621.9
2014	\$44.1	\$16.7	\$14.8	\$17.7	\$89.7	\$56.4	\$81.8	\$40.4	\$25.4	\$386.9	\$286.9	\$160.1	\$322.8	\$769.7	\$1,156.7
2015	\$46.7	\$17.4	\$15.1	\$24.2	\$90.3	\$54.4	\$81.5	\$48.8	\$24.9	\$403.1	-\$19.9	\$163.8	\$299.3	\$443.2	\$846.3
2016	\$64.8	\$20.5	\$18.9	\$24.1	\$103.7	\$60.0	\$104.2	\$56.0	\$33.8	\$486.1	\$200.7	\$211.4	\$284.2	\$696.3	\$1,182.3
2017	\$54.5	\$16.0	\$15.2	\$22.6	\$105.1	\$57.8	\$88.3	\$80.6	\$21.2	\$461.3	\$225.1	\$285.5	\$407.6	\$918.3	\$1,379.5
2018	\$33.3	\$7.1	\$7.9	\$8.6	\$53.9	\$40.9	\$47.7	\$31.1	\$13.2	\$243.7	\$135.2	\$508.9	\$383.2	\$1,027.3	\$1,270.9
Total	\$433.3	\$146.7	\$129.0	\$186.1	\$846.6	\$471.6	\$742.6	\$416.1	\$215.3	\$3,587.1	\$986.7	\$1,594.6	\$2,142.6	\$4,723.9	\$8,311.1
Gov Grants Latest ¹	\$68.4	\$20.2	\$18.3	\$24.5	\$493.6	\$64.7	\$79.6	\$53.6	\$51.1	\$873.9	\$287.9	\$240.2	NA	\$528.1	\$1,402.0
Annual Revenues	\$95.8	\$91.0	\$19.1	\$45.3	\$736.8	\$69.2	\$85.5	\$59.2	\$79.2	\$1,281.0	\$300.3	\$242.6	NA	\$542.9	\$1,823.9
% Gov Funded	71.5%	22.2%	95.8%	54.1%	67.0%	93.5%	93.1%	90.5%	64.5%	68.2%	95.9%	99.0%	NA	97.3%	76.9%
Net Assets	\$16.2	\$323.1	\$8.5	\$45.9	\$175.8	\$9.2	\$226.6	\$9.1	\$19.1	\$833.5	\$0.4	\$60.4	NA	\$60.8	\$894.3
% Annual Revenues	16.9%	355.1%	44.7%	101.4%	23.9%	13.2%	265.0%	15.3%	24.1%	65.1%	0.1%	24.9%	NA	11.2%	49.0%

Data source: USASpending.gov

¹ Revenues, grants and assets based on latest IRS 990 tax return or most recent annual report

Catholic Charities of Onondaga County also received millions from thousands of private donors, including organizations such as Allstate, Amazon, AT&T, Bank of America, Bristol Myers, Citizens Bank, Exelon, GE, Honeywell, IBM, M&T Bank, United Technologies, United Way, and many more.³⁵

A story appeared recently in the Syracuse, New York, *Post Standard* describing how CCOC may lose \$600,000 from its refugee resettlement program as a result of the historically low refugee numbers and a corresponding reduction in federal funding since President Trump took office.³⁶ The article states that CCOC resettlement staff have been reduced from 6 full-time and one part-time to one each full and part time.

But no worries: *the New York State government has stepped in to shore up funding.* The article quotes CCOC CEO Mike Melara, who believes that refugee resettlement will resume apace when a new, presumably pro-refugee, administration replaces the current one. “[L]ocally, we don’t want to get depleted to the point where we can’t resettle refugees,” he said.³⁷

So despite having little to do, the goal is to keep staffing levels up in anticipation of future increases—at taxpayer expense. CCOC’s parent, the Diocese of Syracuse, lists income of \$61.4 million in its most recent non-profit tax filing, with government grants totaling \$26.9 million and net assets exceeding \$21 million. Annual revenues alone exceeded expenses by \$3.5 million.³⁸ Clearly, the organization is flush with cash, gets huge amounts from the government, and has no problem raising money from a broad base of private donors.

Why should taxpayers be providing the support to keep CCOC workers employed on the hope that when political winds change, they will have something to do?

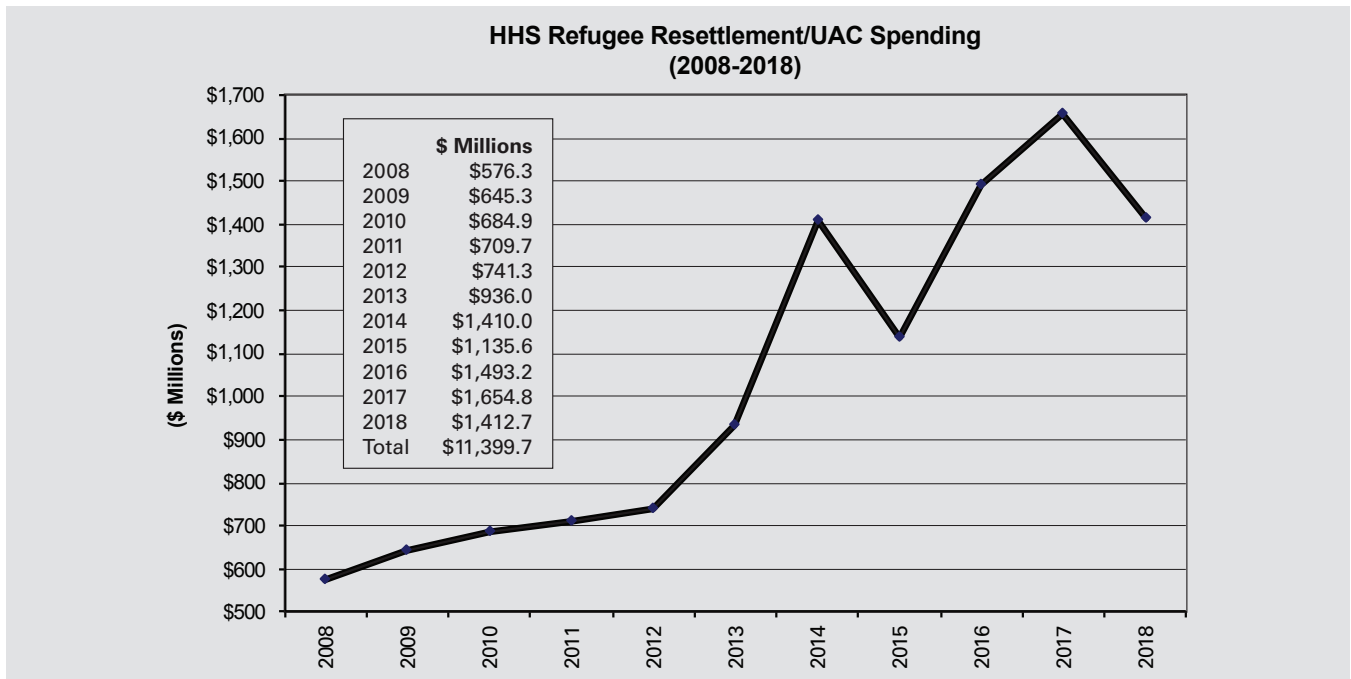
It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail how state and local governments support the refugee program over and above that provided by the feds, but be assured this story is not unique. It provides a window into how refugee contractors and their political allies rip off the public in just one locale, and how difficult it is to uncover their financing.

Note from Table III that grants for the Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) program have exceeded those for VOLAGs since FY 2014. The two largest UAC contractors, BCFS and SW Key, have received UAC grants that dwarf those of the VOLAGs. And while VOLAG dollars declined in FY 2018, UAC grants actually increased.

LIRS, USCCB, and USCRI resettle UACs in addition to refugees and asylees, but it didn’t help them much in 2018. SW Key appears to be the big winner. In FY 2018 it received over half a billion dollars to resettle UACs. When amounts the VOLAGs received for UACs are added to the UAC contractor totals, together they received \$1.1 billion in FY 2018. For resettling an estimated 36,611 UACs this year (see Table I), that means average contractor compensation would have been \$29,000 per UAC — a very large number.

A BILLION-DOLLAR TAXPAYER-FUNDED ADVOCACY INDUSTRY

The Office of Refugee Resettlement offers a multitude of grants for refugees and UACs to thousands of other NGOs in addition to the VOLAGs and their affiliates. It has created a billion-dollar taxpayer-funded advocacy industry that has experienced explosive growth. The chart below shows total ORR grants for refugees and UACs since 2008.



The thousands of organizations are almost all open-borders-oriented for conspicuously self-serving reasons, and naturally lean left. In Massachusetts alone, which brags that one of every six residents and one in five workers is foreign born, there are 130 organizations that comprise the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA).³⁹ Other states have similar networks based on the size of their refugee/UAC programs and the level of non-profit engagement in the state.

Many organizations not normally associated with refugee issues have also jumped on board. Who could imagine, for example, that YMCA of Greater Houston could take in almost \$30 million for refugee resettlement over the last two years? But it did.⁴⁰ Dearborn, Michigan-based ACCESS (the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services) describes itself as “the largest Arab-American community nonprofit in the United States.”⁴¹ According to its latest IRS filing, ACCESS took in \$26.7 million in FY 2016, \$15.2 million of which was from government grants.⁴²

Two refugee VOLAG affiliates, Lutheran Social Services (LSS) and Catholic Charities, are also contractors for the UAC program. This has added substantially to their bottom line, with UAC grants alone totaling \$245.7 million for the many LSS and Catholic Charities offices around the country since 2008.

Additionally, the Catholic Charities dioceses across the U.S. receive grants from other federal programs, such as Head Start, Section 8 Housing, homeless veterans programs, and others, in addition to refugee and UAC resettlement. In FY 2018 alone, Catholic Charities programs in the U.S. collected a total of \$118 million in prime grants and another \$1.3 million in Veterans Administration contracts.⁴³

And even that isn't the end of it. There is Catholic Community Services, Catholic Social Services, Inc., the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, and others. All of these receive resettlement and/or UAC grants. The Catholic Church does big business with the federal government and throws its political weight around to protect its refugee resettlement franchise.

Immigration and Refugee Services of America (IRSA) has received refugee resettlement grants totaling \$102.5 million since 2008, including \$17.5 million in 2018.⁴⁴ But IRSA is a ghost.

It is not listed among 501(c)(3) charitable organizations and does not publish an annual report. Two reviews of IRSA found in a Google search provide a Washington, D.C., address and phone number, but repeated calls at all hours get a busy signal. Two separate IRSA websites are referenced in these reviews, www.refugeesusa.org, and www.irsa-uscrr.org. Both are defunct placeholder blogs with no reference to IRSA and no current information of any sort. The State Department's archives list IRSA as a

VOLAG, ironically, as of April Fools Day, 2001.⁴⁵ However it is not one of the nine current VOLAGs.

Bloomberg's review describes IRSA as “a charitable organization that focuses on defense of human rights, builds communities, fosters education, promotes self-sufficiency, and forges partnerships through an array of programs.”⁴⁶ The other review was written in 2008 by Melanie Nezer, currently Senior Vice President for Public Affairs at HIAS. Nezer was paid \$30,000 in 2013 for a 30-page HIAS pamphlet, the notorious *Resettlement at Risk*, which advocated partnering with media and the Southern Poverty Law Center to investigate and vilify refugee resettlement opponents.⁴⁷ Your tax dollars at work.

Nezer was apparently employed by IRSA in 2008 and described it as “the oldest and largest non-sectarian network of organizations serving immigrants, refugees, and other foreign-born people worldwide.”⁴⁸ Nezer listed a network of IRSA partner affiliates, most of which still exist. Lavinia Limon, the former director of U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI, one of the nine VOLAGs), is listed by Bloomberg as IRSA's current director, along with COO Eskinder Negash, who is now director at USCRI.⁴⁹

There have been frequent requests to audit the refugee resettlement program, especially the contractors, something that has *never been done*. IRSA is a good case in point. What is going on there? Is IRSA some kind of slush fund flying under the radar because no one pays attention to this politically coddled, convoluted, Byzantine network of programs?

Welcoming America, an organization created specifically to advance the “Welcoming” mantra for refugees and immigrants, has received \$1.2 million from the federal government since 2012. “Welcoming” is not a positive message. It employs a propaganda tactic to shame people into supporting Welcoming America's open borders agenda. If you are not “welcoming,” you must be a _____. Fill in the blank. As founder and CEO David Lubell says, the goal is to “...recognize the role *everyone must play* in furthering the integration of recent immigrants...”⁵⁰ (emphasis mine).

Many politicians support the refugee program specifically so they can be considered “welcoming,” because to be “unwelcoming” is just another code word for “racist, bigot, xenophobe, etc.”⁵¹ As a result, politicians abdicate their responsibilities to their electorate to avoid negative press attacks. Public officials have been lambasted as “bigots” simply for questioning the program's cost. An effort to recall a city commissioner in Fargo, North Dakota, for merely posing this question is just one example.⁵² The effort failed, but how do responsible government leaders function in such an environment?

The Trump administration zeroed out federal support for Welcoming America — a welcome change — but it gets much more support from private donors. Between 2011 and 2016, Welcoming America received almost \$10 million from open borders foundations like Open Society (\$450,000), Unbound Philanthropy (\$984,450), Kellogg (\$200,000), Kaplan, (\$595,000), the Einhorn Family Trust (\$1.5 million), Carnegie, (\$325,000), and others.⁵³ The Welcoming network includes over 90 cities and 114 organizations, including US Together, the Southern Poverty Law Center, numerous VOLAG affiliates, 10 YMCA branches, and even some governmental entities, like the Atlanta Regional Commission and Redwood City 2020.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to expose the true dimensions of the domestic refugee resettlement program and detail some of its many costs. It did not attempt to detail U.S. contributions to the UNHCR (more than any other nation) or the cost of overseas operations. Nor did it broach the subject of refugee welfare costs, which are astronomical compared to other groups.

The key takeaway is the massive incentives the refugee resettlement program provides to thousands of tax-exempt organizations which depend on it for their survival. The 1980 Refugee Act weaponized refugee resettlement, guaranteeing the growth of a self-interested industry that would lobby for more refugees and cultivate political allies, while making buck on the outcome — all at taxpayer expense. The result is an out-of-control program that is changing the character of our communities from one that recognizes, understands, and appreciates our traditions, laws, and culture, to one that looks more and more like the Third World. It is a situation that cannot stand. ■

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HIAS, the Media Swamp, and Refugee Resettlement

The Trump administration's proposal to cap the number of refugees admitted next year (2019) at 30,000 has HIAS and other nonprofit advocacy groups urging policy makers to *increase* refugee admissions to 75,000.¹ VOLAGs, such as HIAS, have a vested interest in an uninterrupted flow of refugees coming to the U.S.

The recent NPR interview ("All Things Considered," September 18, 2018) with HIAS President Mark Hetfield offers a window in how such advocacy groups use the media to further their agenda goals (the interview was broadcast the day after the Trump administration announced the reduction in refugee levels for 2019). Here are some excerpts:

NPR's ARI SHAPIRO: People fleeing persecution and violence will soon have a smaller chance of finding a new home in the United States. Yesterday, the Trump administration announced plans to lower the number of refugees that can be resettled in the U.S. next year to 30,000 people. *It's the lowest ceiling since the refugee program was created in 1980.* And right now, there are more refugees in the world than at any time since World War II. Mark Hetfield is president of HIAS, a group that helps resettle refugees in the U.S. Welcome to the studio....

ARI SHAPIRO: What was your first thought when you heard this announcement?

MARK HETFIELD: I was shocked and yet not surprised. This administration has shown absolutely no commitment to refugee protection or to *international* leadership. The Trump administration has vilified refugees. So it was not a surprise that they lowered the ceiling.... The U.S. is helping in other ways and has always helped in other ways. Refugee resettlement has always been a part of a larger strategy to help refugees where they are. But part of doing that is to demonstrate to countries of asylum that we have skin in the game, that we're willing to accept their refugees as well and do more than just give money.... It's the mission of my organization to help refugees, to assist refugees — period.... ■

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