

# **World Refugee Day 2020: Celebrating, Protecting, and Standing in Solidarity with Refugees**

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**Please share this toolkit with your networks!**

[bit.ly/WRD2020Toolkit](https://bit.ly/WRD2020Toolkit)

## The Power of Advocacy

Crises test who we are as a nation – and **we are stronger when we are united**. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how interconnected and interdependent the world is. In our shared vulnerability, we have realized that our strength as a human community lies in our togetherness. We are safer when we care for all of our neighbors, listen to public health experts, and resist medical prejudice and scapegoating. The crisis has also shown us that we each have a role to play and every one of us counts.

On Saturday, June 20th - and throughout the month of June - we join people across the world to celebrate the courage and resilience of refugees, recognizing the hardships they have faced and the new lives they have created. Now is a time to come together in an exceptional show of human solidarity and kindness. As refugees and friends of refugees in the United States, we celebrate the positive impact refugees have on U.S. communities. We know the challenges newcomers face are greater than ever and that we must rally in support of preserving the resettlement program and promoting policies that help refugees rebuild their lives in the United States.

In the midst of the current COVID-19 crisis, we stand in solidarity with our refugee neighbors and commemorate World Refugee Day. This year is also the 40th anniversary of the Refugee Act of 1980, which formalized the U.S. resettlement program and asylum system. This is an historic anniversary. Please join us in taking action to underscore the spirit of welcome and solidarity and the contributions of refugees in our communities.

### What is Advocacy?

Effective advocacy lifts up the voices of refugees and allies to change hearts and minds, including those of policy makers and people in power. Advocacy includes activities like public education, relationship-building with policy makers, civic engagement, voter registration, and media outreach. Advocacy can lead to systemic, lasting, positive changes that help all people thrive in their communities. It is critical that we build bipartisan support for refugees by working with policy makers from both parties.

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

Your story as a refugee or supporter of refugee resettlement is your most important qualification as an advocate. Developing relationships with and educating policy makers are necessary to see welcoming policies and attitudes towards refugees. 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. Talk with policy makers about the way your community welcomes refugees and the positive contributions refugees make to your community, and urge them to support refugee resettlement.

### Engaging Elected Leaders

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 community. Because change takes time, engaging with policy makers should be viewed as part of a continuing process of sharing information, building relationships, and having refugees' perspectives genuinely considered when decisions are made that impact their lives.

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 welcome refugees. Urge your local leaders to adopt welcoming resolutions that extend hospitality to refugees and all newcomers. Click [here](#) to see a framework The United Methodist Church General Board of Church & Society developed to build and facilitate welcome.

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. 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.

## **ACTION ALERT: Tell Congress to Cosponsor Bipartisan Resolution Commemorating 40th Anniversary of the Refugee Resettlement Program and Honor Refugees on World Refugee Day on June 20th**

As we approach World Refugee Day on June 20th, now is the time to make your voices heard to tell your Members of Congress to stand in solidarity with refugees and support refugee resettlement. During this difficult time, crises test who we are as a nation. In recognition of the sacrifice, resilience, and contributions of refugees - including the hundreds of thousands working on the frontlines of pandemic response - now is the time to make your voice heard.

### **Call Your Members of Congress Today!**

*\*[Click here](#) to receive a phone call that connects you to your 2 Senators and 1 Representative*

Sample Script: "I'm your constituent from [CITY/TOWN], and [as a person of faith/as a person who cares about refugees], I urge you to:

- Cosponsor the bipartisan resolution commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Refugee Act of 1980 (H.Res.902 / S.Res.545);
- Provide a supplemental \$642 million for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in FY2020 through the Refugee and Entrant Assistance account to ensure vulnerable populations like refugees don't fall through the cracks and can receive housing, food, and the care they need;
- Hold the administration accountable to operating the resettlement program in good faith and restoring both the resettlement program and asylum protections to historic norms; and also to welcoming asylum seekers and stateless individuals, preventing family separation, and ending the detention of asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants seeking protection, in favor of community-based alternatives;
- *(For the House of Representatives Only)* I also invite you to join the bipartisan congressional refugee caucus (led by Reps. Lofgren (D-CA-19), Diaz-Balart (R-FL-25), Neguse (D-CO-2), and Chris Smith (R-NJ-4)) by emailing [rachel.calanni@mail.house.gov](mailto:rachel.calanni@mail.house.gov).

My community welcomes refugees and I urge you to do the same."

**Amplify on Social Media:** Share this message with your [Senators & Representatives](#) on social media! Here are sample posts, below. Stay tuned for a social media toolkit with additional sample posts, graphics, and more.

- This #WRD2020, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the bipartisan Refugee Act of 1980. I'm calling on @Senator/@Representative to lead by protecting the most vulnerable. Support H.Res.902 / S.Res.545!
- .@Senator/@Representative On #WRD2020 I'm calling on you to hold the administration accountable. Let's be the leader that the world's most vulnerable need. Support H.Res.902 / S.Res.545!

**State & Local Advocacy:** 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](http://contactingcongress.org/local) and [usa.gov/elected-officials](http://usa.gov/elected-officials). To tweet your state and local officials, click to find the twitter handles for your [governor](#) and [state legislators](#).

Sample Ask for State & Local Officials: "Will you be a champion for refugee resettlement, oppose any and all anti-refugee proposals, and help us enact pro-refugee policies?"

- Depending on your state and local context, you can ask state and local leaders to:
  - Pass a refugees welcome resolution to commemorate World Refugee Day; and/or
  - Support workforce development opportunities for refugees, such as emergency licensing for internationally-trained medical professionals.
- *For more information about state and local advocacy, check out our State Action Toolkit for a Refugee and Immigrant Inclusive Response to COVID-19: [bit.ly/StateCOVIDToolkit](http://bit.ly/StateCOVIDToolkit).*

Follow [@RCUSA\\_DC](#) on Twitter and "like" [Refugee Council USA](#) on Facebook for up-to-date alerts.

*Thank you for taking action, and please share this alert with your networks!*

## How to Prepare & Organize Virtual Local Meetings With Policy Makers

### 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. To learn more about your governor, state legislators, mayor, and local officials, click [here](#).
- What have they said about refugees in the past? Has the member put out statements, authored op-eds, or been supportive of refugees? If they have, be sure to thank them and their staff. If they have a record of not supporting refugee resettlement, find out why. Have they cited reasons for not supporting the program? If so, build your talking points to address those concerns.
- What issues are of interest to them? Do they often speak out on certain issues? This can help you determine what approach to take when discussing refugees in your meeting. What did they do before they were elected to Congress? This can impact their perspective. It is your job as a successful advocate to discuss topics and frame issues in a way that will resonate with them.

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

**STEP 3. Outreach to elected officials' offices:** To set up a virtual meeting, call your [Members of Congress](#), [state officials](#), or [local officials](#). Explain who you are, what organization you're with (if any), and that you would like to meet with the official virtually. You can also send a formal email requesting a meeting with the official and/or their staff (sample letter below). Include in the request how the meeting will take place (phone, Zoom, etc.). If you don't hear back in a few days, send a reminder email or call again. You can also use district staff for assistance, especially if there is someone in the office with whom you have a relationship. Remember, if the official(s) themselves are unavailable, always request to meet with the staff member who works on immigration.

When you contact the office to request a virtual visit by telephone or video conference, you can ask if they have a conference line, or set up your own conference line for everyone to use. Some offices are very comfortable with videoconferencing technology, but others are not. Keep that in mind when making your request, and make sure the office knows that you are available to connect in whatever way they prefer. Options for holding a remote meeting include setting up an account with [freeconferencecall.com](#), [Zoom](#), [Google Hangouts](#), [Apple Facetime](#), or any platform with which you are familiar.

#### *Sample Email to Request Appointment*

Dear X,

My name is [name] and I am from [City, State]. As a constituent of [the official's name], I would like to request a virtual appointment with you and the [official's name] on [DATE, TIME] to talk about ways to honor refugees on World Refugee Day and how refugees and immigrants are being impacted by COVID-19 in my community. I plan to use [platform] to conduct this meeting, and I expect to be joined by X people.

Please feel free to contact me at [phone number and email] should you have any questions. I look forward to this "virtual" visit!

Thank you,  
[Name]

**STEP 4. Have a plan:** Before the virtual visit, convene your advocacy team to assign roles:

- **The Facilitator:** This person starts the meeting, introduces the group, explains the purpose of the meeting, and provides time for each person to briefly introduce themselves and their organization and/or connection to refugees, to show that the group represents thousands of community members. The facilitator will also jump in if the meeting goes off-track and redirect the conversation.

- **The Personal Story:** Storytelling is key to advocacy. A refugee should tell their story to show how people's lives are changed through refugee resettlement. Consider inviting a refugee who has been featured in a local news article, which can encourage policy makers to prioritize the meeting.
- **The Community Support:** Faith, business, employers, military, and community leaders briefly share how refugees have contributed to the social, and economic fabric of their new community.
- **Specific Issue Points:** It will be helpful to bring [handouts](#), information on refugees [by state](#) and [stories of welcome by state](#).
- **The Ask:** The critical part when you make an ask, and wait for a response:
  - **For Congress:**
    - Will you cosponsor the bipartisan resolution supporting refugees and resettlement, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Refugee Act of 1980? ([H.Res.902](#) / [S.Res.545](#) / [Bi-partisan talking points](#))
    - Will you support a supplemental \$642 million for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in FY2020 through the Refugee and Entrant Assistance account to ensure vulnerable populations like refugees don't fall through the cracks and can receive housing, food, and the care they need? ([Talking points](#))
    - Will you hold the administration accountable to operating the resettlement program in good faith and restoring both the resettlement program and asylum protections to historic norms, and to welcoming asylum seekers and stateless individuals, preventing family separation, and ending detention of asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants, in favor of community-based alternatives?
    - Will you join the House Bipartisan Refugee Caucus? (*for members of the House of Representatives*)
  - **For State and Local Leaders:** "Will you be a champion for refugee resettlement, oppose any and all anti-refugee proposals, and help us enact pro-refugee policies?" Depending on your state and local context, ask state and local leaders to:
    - Pass a refugees welcome resolution to commemorate World Refugee Day; and/or
    - Support workforce development opportunities for refugees, such as emergency licensing for internationally-trained medical professionals.
    - *For more information about state and local advocacy, check out our State Action Toolkit for a Refugee and Immigrant Inclusive Response to COVID-19: [bit.ly/StateCOVIDToolkit](https://bit.ly/StateCOVIDToolkit).*

#### **STEP 5. Prepare and gather:**

- **Plan for your virtual advocacy visit:** Meet virtually with your team to [plan your conversation](#). Don't forget to assign roles, write down the logistical details, and time a practice session.
- **Send your "leave behinds" early:** When you confirm your visit with the staffer the day before your meeting, attach your "leave behind" materials so that they can reference them throughout your call.
- **"Arrive" Early:** If you are using your own phone or video line, gather your delegation at least 10 minutes before the call is set to begin. Take attendance and make sure the note taker has the names, cities, states, and email addresses of all participants to include in the follow-up email.

#### **STEP 6. A roadmap for your advocacy visit:**

- Each person introduces themselves.
- The group leader presents a "thank you" for the staffer and/or officials.
- A delegation member presents the policy / advocacy ask.
- A few delegation members share their stories and educate the official about why the issue is important.
- Ask your questions to the staffer/official. Listen to and write down their answers.
- Repeat your ask and thank the staffer again for their time.

**STEP 7. 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 with your national advocacy staff (*contact information on last page*).

**STEP 8. Follow-up:** Always send a thank you email to the staff after the meeting. Reiterate the asks and send any information they asked for and any other information you think would be helpful. To maintain the relationship, you should invite the staff and/or the official to an upcoming event to meet with refugees.

## Hosting Virtual World Refugee Day Events

Although we all miss in-person events, it is critical to refrain from hosting such gatherings during this public health crisis to ensure people stay safe. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, communities across the world are still finding innovative ways to stay connected and celebrate World Refugee Day through virtual events. This pandemic has made us more dependent upon one another, and together we are a stronger community.

The steps to organize such an event are similar to organizing an in person event.

- 1) Engage a team of volunteers and community leaders in your planning process.
- 2) Agree on goals and desired outcomes for your virtual events event.
- 3) Register your event [here](#) so we can show the strength and breadth of support for refugees across the U.S.
- 4) Invite the media to cover the event. Write a media advisory before the event and/or media release after the event. Capture quotes from key leaders ahead of time as part of the release you send.
- 5) Explore ways in which you can tie the event to the reality of COVID-19 response, such as highlighting essential refugee workers and providing time to hear their testimonies.
- 6) Identify someone who can lead the technical aspects of online activity. Make sure to test your tech ahead of time to ensure everything is working properly. Consider live streaming options on social media, recording, and promoting the event ahead of time as ways to further your reach.
- 7) Identify speakers and make sure to centralize refugee voices. Collaborate on preparation for story telling, top line messages, advocacy asks and focus on strategic decision makers. Consider inviting an elected official who has been a champion on refugee resettlement to be a speaker.

### While planning the event, don't forget to:

- Promote the event
- Put your event on the map!  
<https://www.weareallusa.org/events>
- For events held/promoted on Facebook, add the [World Refugee Day 2020](#) page as a co-host
- Set a goal for a headcount / views
- Invite local, state, and national policy makers
- Invite media outlets
- Consider the need for interpreters
- Choose the best date and time possible
- Rehearse ahead of time
- Consider live streaming and/or recording to share more broadly
- Have someone cover the event on social media, via Facebook Live and Twitter
- Prepare quotes from speakers ahead of time so they can be shared with media immediately following the event

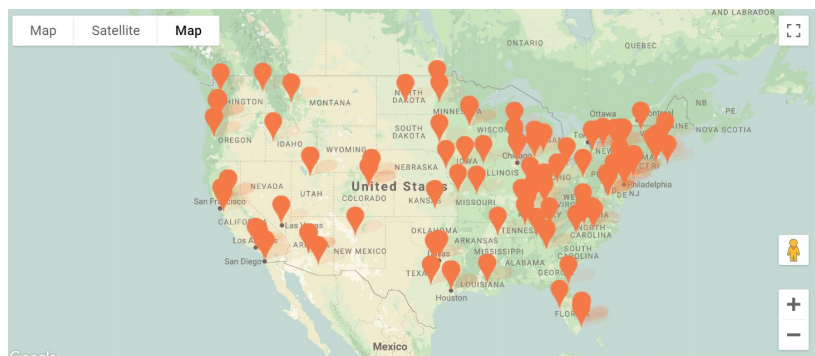
### Be sure to put your event on the national map!

Click here: [https://www.weareallusa.org/wrd2020\\_events](https://www.weareallusa.org/wrd2020_events)

And if you have an event listed on Facebook, add the [World Refugee Day 2020](#) page as a co-host of your event and it will be listed among the running national Facebook events list. Also, national partners hosted a [webinar on what groups are planning for WRD and action in the era of COVID-19](#) that can hopefully serve as a resource.

Here are some examples of creative ideas for virtual events emerging from refugee advocates across the U.S.:

**Arizona:** While the state of Arizona usually has city-specific events (Phoenix/Tucson), this year advocates joined together to celebrate World Refugee Day virtually across the entire state of Arizona! The Phoenix and Tucson World Refugee Day planning committees have come together to plan an online celebration on June 20 from Noon to 1:00 PM, streaming the event live through their Facebook [page](#). It will highlight how refugees have been contributing during COVID, the cultural diversity of refugees, and various performers.





**California:** In partnership with the Refugee Forum of Los Angeles, advocates are planning a virtual week of action during the last week of June to commemorate refugees. Below are some of the virtual events planned:

- “Flavors from Afar - A Refugee Chef Shares Her Best Recipe” – A 30-minute cooking demo on Venezuelan custard, preceded by a 10-15 minute introduction by the refugee--why they left, their journey to LA. and their resettlement challenges and successes.
- “Refugees Share Their Stories: From Fleeing to Resettlement” – A series of 3 Zoom events with refugees living in Norway, Germany, Iceland, Austria, Greece, Pakistan, Los Angeles telling their stories.
- “Stories of Reunification” – Digital storytelling board highlighting stories from families impacted by family separation and empowering affected individuals and others to become advocates for change.
- Somatic Exercise Class/other exercise classes – Relaxing exercises that will release chronic muscle tension, relieve joint pain, and improve posture, as well as breathing exercises to clear the lungs.
- COVID-19 Virtual Resiliency Module –This temporary module offers stress-management and relaxation techniques and an opportunity to connect with others in a group, virtual environment. Participants are encouraged to share in the discussion as though they were in person together to discuss challenges and stressors from COVID and to teach and practice skills for stress management.
- Communications and informational materials that we would want to make available with virtual events to help our community (i.e., information on public charge or accessibility of COVID relief).

**Louisiana:** June 6th will kickstart #WRD2020 in collaboration with the Baton Rouge Mayor’s International Relations Commission recognizing New American 2020 graduates. A representative from EmployBR will talk about employment opportunities for refugees. On June 20th, they will hold a virtual prayer vigil for all who lost their lives during this crisis, and acknowledge the refugees heroes who are at the frontline of this pandemic.

**North Carolina:** This year’s WRD advocacy day at the NC state legislature will be online. During the week of June 20th, they are inviting state representatives to join refugees, service providers and allies for a virtual day at the General Assembly. In Greensboro, refugee leaders are holding three food and supplies donations in hard-hit refugee communities during the same weekend. In Durham, refugee leaders are working with a local food bank to hold a drive-thru food donation to refugees and the broader community on WRD.

**Pennsylvania:** WRD events will be part of Philadelphia’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) Immigrant Heritage Month. An OIA press release will promote events that month, including WRD. Below is an outline for the week of June 15<sup>th</sup>. We plan to share content surrounding each of these topics in partnership with other local refugee providers. Below are some tentative plans for our virtual events in Pennsylvania starting June 15- 20th:

- Monday: Kickoff Event
  - Introduce virtual mural idea and solicit drawings around prompts from refugees and the public
  - Proclamation by Governor Wolf and the Mayors of Lancaster, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh
  - Press Statement from Mayor Kenny and/or his designated proxy
  - An overview of who refugees are via video
- Tuesday: Food
  - Having at least one person sharing a meal preparation via either live or pre-recorded video
  - Sharing other recipes that have been collected in advance
- Wednesday: Music
  - Crowd-sourced Spotify playlist folks can add to throughout the day
  - Live virtual performances from refugee artists
- Thursday: Entrepreneurship
  - Live or pre-recorded video highlighting immigrant businesses/business owners
- Friday: Geography
  - Interactive map where folks can add where they come from, where they live in Philly
  - Information about where refugees are from
- Saturday: Finale
  - Storytelling interview, panel discussion, and mural presentation of drawings together
- Throughout the week:
  - Encouraging folks to change Facebook backgrounds to refugee specific images
  - Global, national and local refugee facts are shared each day related to the theme
  - Sharing collected drawings throughout the week as we receive them





## Civic Engagement: Why It's Important and How to Host an Event

World Refugee Day provides an opportunity to build more diverse and inclusive communities that are welcoming and open to refugees, as well as to strengthen ties within refugee communities. **Civic engagement** refers to the ways in which individuals participate in the life of their communities -- including by voting, educating others on policy issues, and encouraging people to make their voices heard. It could even mean running for office! Civic engagement is a critical component to the process of integration and participating in activities such as voting are part of the civic duties of citizens. Civic engagement lifts up the voices and power of refugees and immigrants, educates policymakers, and builds champions across party lines at local, state, and national levels.

Why is civic engagement important?

- **Civic engagement is a key component of integration:** 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.

Here are some civic engagement actions related to World Refugee Day:

### **Education on Voter Registration During Virtual and Digital Action**

Register naturalized citizens to vote! Even though events will not be held in person, there will still be opportunities to educate naturalized citizens about how they can register to vote. It is important to also educate about your state's voting laws. Most states have online voter registration now, which is generally confirmed through the mail. Options to integrate voter education and registration into WRD virtual events include:

- Add a speaker to your virtual event who can educate people about how to register to vote and why civic engagement is a critical part of integration and building welcoming communities.
- Create and/or share informational voter registration videos on social media
- Create and/or share a video with information for first-time voters
- Organize periodic virtual speakers series on civic engagement and how to register to vote
- Use zoom or join.me platforms to show newly naturalized citizens how to fill out voter registration form
- Post on social media to encourage voter registration

**Know Your State Voting Laws:** It is important to know the laws in your state and communicate them in conversations with new voters. The best resource on your state's voting laws is your local Election Board. Each state also has their own [early voting policies](#) and vote by mail requirements. If your state has a [voting ID law](#), inform people so they can have the necessary identification when they vote. Share [information about states' voter registration deadlines and election dates](#) and [online resources on voting in all 50 states](#).

### **Census 2020**

It is critically important that everyone is counted for the U.S. Census including asylum seekers, undocumented immigrants, and refugees. The number of people counted in the Census determines how funding is allocated to your community and it also determines how many U.S. Representatives your state can have. There are vital services that refugees/immigrants and other vulnerable population use in their respective communities that are tied to the Census count. There are extremely strong protections for census data and the Census Bureau employees with access to protected data are sworn to keep information confidential for life. (See [Census Toolkit for Immigrants and Refugees](#)). Here are options to encourage community members to fill out their census forms:

- Educate first-time filers on why it is critically important to participate in Census 2020.

- Film short videos in languages widely spoken by many immigrants and refugee communities and share on social media. And also do robocalls for those who aren't on social media
- Partner with your local Census bureau to organize a virtual job fair for your community members and encourage them to apply for Census jobs, since they can serve as ambassadors for their communities
- Download a [sample census form](#) and use the zoom or other online platforms to educate refugees on how to fill out the forms, and/or provide direct assistance by identifying volunteers who can connect with community members who need help with the forms, as it is currently done in some communities in PA

Post on social media, call your friends and community members, and send emails to encourage people in your community to complete the Census.

### **Boards & Commissions**

City, county, and state governments usually have committees, boards, and commissions that area residents are appointed to. Some focus on issues -- such as aging, transportation, children/youth, human rights, recreation, policing, and more. Institutions like schools and libraries also often have committees such as Parent-Teacher Associations. Boards, commissions, and committees are a great place to make your voice heard. Look at your city, county, and state websites or talk with your elected officials to find out more about what is available and where you can best make a difference. There may be a board or commission specifically focused on issues faced by refugees and immigrants, but it is also important to bring the voices of these communities to boards and commissions focused on other issues that impact all community members.

Some actions you could take include:

- Join a board, commission, or committee
- Encourage other refugees and immigrants to join a board, commission, or committee
- Attend board, commission, or committee meetings. Most are required to be available to the public
- Collaborate with local boards, commissions, or committees on a World Refugee Day event or action

## World Refugee Day: Media & Outreach Resources

### Writing & Pitching Your Event and Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)

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

**This year, editors are very focused on how COVID is impacting every-day life.** Your op-ed or event does not need to focus on the pandemic, but keep this in mind when framing it.

When pitching your event, op-ed, or other welcoming project:

- Most editors prefer pitches over email or through a submission form on their website.
- Keep your pitch on-message and as short as possible. Reporters and editors are often on a deadline and receive many pitches each day.
- Open your pitch with an interesting first line, mention how it is relevant in the time of COVID, and mention how this is a new and innovative take on current news in the community that their readership will find interesting.
- See the draft pitch below for an example email.

To increase your chances of getting media coverage for an event -- especially a virtual one -- set up an exclusive interview with one outlet. Making your event exclusive to one reporter makes it more appealing to the journalist, as they will be the first ones to "break" the story.

When pitching an exclusive story, research the outlets and reporters in your area. Who are the top current event, immigration, or political reporters in your area? Have they written about refugees before? If so, how can you tie your event into their previous work? Answering these questions and using them to draft your pitch will increase the chances of your welcoming event being covered and featured as an exclusive in a larger outlet.

#### Draft Pitch Email for Event:

Hello [USE THE NAME IF YOU HAVE IT],

I hope you are well! I wanted to let you know of a potential story opportunity about how new members of our communities are contributing during the time of COVID in CITY/STATE.

On [DATE, ORGANIZATION] will host a [EVENT TYPE, ie: virtual town hall, musical performance, etc.] with refugees in our community that are giving back during this dark time. While they are from [COUNTRIES], they are joining together with local leaders including [LIST] to create a community that is healthy and united in the face of this pandemic.

We would like to highlight the human stories behind those new Americans working on the front lines, particularly those serving in hospitals or elder care facilities, those making sure our grocery stores are stocked, and those volunteering to keep [CITY] vibrant. Given your past articles highlighting refugees/immigrants, I would love to offer you an exclusive interview with the group next DATE if you are interested.

I have included the invitation below with a full list of individuals participating, but please let me know if you are interested or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
NAME

#### Draft Pitch Email for Op-Ed

Dear Editor/Name,

As [CITY NAME] and our global community face the largest displacement and health crisis in history, our organization/congregation is preparing to do our part to create a welcoming community in the time of COVID. Serving as a leader with ORGANIZATION, I have long witnessed the strength refugees bring to our community, something even more evident in the time of pandemic.

To mark their contributions to [CITY NAME] this World Refugee Day I was inspired to write the below op-ed for your **exclusive consideration**. It details my experience working with refugees that are serving our community and provides a unique look into the lives of our new neighbors. In light of the toll COVID-19 has taken in our city and beyond, I think it would give your readers a positive story about resilience in the time of crisis.

As I write in the piece:

(Include short quote from the piece here that underlines the above sentiment)

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. I'd be happy to adapt the piece according to your needs. Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Sincerely,  
NAME

**Sample 2020 World Refugee Day Faith Leader Op-Ed**  
***(We encourage you to make this as much your own story as possible)***

Gratitude in the Time of COVID-19

This World Refugee Day in the time of COVID-19, 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 resident of STATE NAME]**, 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 inspired by how new members of our community are keeping us healthy and safe in the face of pandemic.

Refugees have long been some of the first to step up in times of crisis. Maybe it's because they learned the value of community on the long road to lives free from fear and persecution, but they are willing to serve and give back to those who took them in.

In recent years, my congregants and I would mark World Refugee Day by lamenting attacks on refugee resettlement. And while we continue to work together to ensure the United States does not fail the world's most vulnerable, this year our strongest emotion is one of gratitude.

**[INSERT RELEVANT STORY ABOUT REFUGEES IN YOUR COMMUNITY GIVING BACK:** This can be a story of a refugee serving in a hospital or elder care facility, or a refugee working in supply chains to keep food on our shelves, or a refugee family cooking food to make sure local firefighters/police officers are staying fed as they work. The more personal the better. Include where they are from and why they are here, if appropriate.]

**[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)]

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. 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.

Refugees are mothers, fathers, and children. They are doctors, nurses, and medical aides working in our hospitals and elder care facilities. They are truck drivers making sure our grocery stores stay stocked. They are factory workers making sure we have what we need. As the world searches for solutions at the nexus of the largest displacement crisis in history and a global pandemic, we have a moral and legal obligation to those who only want to be good neighbors with lives free from fear and persecution. These people are no different than our **[Biblical]** ancestors who were once refugees who found welcome and were called to do the same.

That's why this World Refugee Day, as the pandemic makes it hard for us to find something to be grateful for, I urge you to join me in expressing gratitude to those, like **[NAME OF REFUGEE MENTIONED ABOVE]**, who risked it all to become part of our community and give back.

### **Sample World Refugee Day Refugee Leader Op-Ed**

*(We encourage you to make this as much your own story as possible)*

#### **World Refugee Day 2020: Op-Ed Template for Refugee Leaders**

*(Ideally authored by a refugee working on the frontlines of COVID-19 response in medical care, in supply chains, or by supporting community efforts to bolster public health)*

In **XXXX (year)** I was forced to leave **[INSERT COUNTRY]** because of **[INSERT DETAILS OF PERSECUTION OR THREAT, OTHER DETAILS OF YOUR JOURNEY]**.

My personal story is unique, but my situation is shared by countless others who have also experienced unimaginable loss and tragedy. It is also a story of community – not just of the refugee community but of the community here in **[INSERT LOCATION]** and others across the United States that made the choice to welcome me, and those like me, to our new homes.

I'm forever grateful to the U.S. Refugee Resettlement program and **[INSERT CITY]** that gave me a second chance. In the time of COVID-19, gratitude may seem to be a rare commodity, but that's exactly what I feel, even during this public health crisis.

**[INSERT DETAILS ABOUT ARRIVAL YEAR OR ANY OTHER PERSONAL DETAILS. What was it like when you arrived? What do you remember thinking, feeling? What are you most thankful for?]** Through resettlement, I was able to rebuild my life and give back to my community.

As World Refugee Day approaches, I'm inspired by ways Americans are choosing to support families like mine, and I'm inspired by my fellow refugees that are showing support right back.

Like you, refugees are mothers, fathers, and children. We are doctors, nurses, and medical aides working in hospitals and elder care facilities. We are truck drivers making sure our grocery stores stay stocked. We are factory workers making sure we have what we need to fight COVID-19. We are standing by your side during this pandemic and we'll be standing right there with you when we triumph over it.

Forty years ago, Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, legislation that firmly established the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. By passing it, the United States became the world's leader on refugee resettlement. It's a program that has saved many, many lives, including my own, and was historically supported by both Republican and Democratic administrations. Unfortunately, over the past few years, our government's policies towards refugees have not reflected the compassion and generosity that I've seen in **[CITY NAME]**. Resettlement has been slashed, vital lifelines have been cut off, and lives are left hanging in the balance.

**[STATE AFFILIATION E.G. TENNESSEANS]** are empathetic and gave me a new life. **[INSERT Anecdote about how you were welcomed by the community]**. That's why I'm serving my community as **[INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT WORK, ACTIVISM, VOLUNTEERISM]**.

There are thousands of other former refugees just like me all across the country working to make their communities safer during COVID-19. But beyond the virus, they are making our nation stronger. They are

starting businesses, serving in the military, paying taxes. They are at once inspiring and ordinary, the kind of citizens this country needs.

This World Refugee Day, as we celebrate refugees in our community of **{city name}**, we must call on our elected leaders do the same. Congress must rebuild the refugee resettlement program. Our communities and our nation will be made more prosperous and strong when we can restore policies that reflect our values and honor our promises to the thousands of refugee families who are looking for a safe place to call home.

We will emerge from COVID-19 with our sense of community intact. I just hope one day the program that saved my life will do so, too.

## Social Media: 2020 World Refugee Day Posts & Graphics

### Elected Officials

- [Senator, Representative, Governor, etc.], [name of my community] stands #WithRefugees! Show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting refugee resettlement! #RefugeesSaveLives
- Thanks, [Senator, Representative, Governor, etc.] for your support of #refugees and policies that welcome them to our communities! #WRD2020 #40YearsofWelcome
- This #WRD2020, as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the bipartisan Refugee Act of 1980, I'm calling on @Senator/@Representative to welcome the world's most vulnerable. Support H.Res.902/S.Res.545!
- .@Senator/@Representative On #WRD2020 I'm calling on you to hold the administration accountable. Let's be the leader that the world's most vulnerable need. Support H.Res.902 / S.Res.545!

### Contributions and Benefits of Refugees in Our Communities (Include photos if possible)

- #RefugeesSaveLives in my [city] community by serving on the frontlines of #COVID19. #WRD2020 **[UPLOAD ACCOMPANYING PICTURE, IF POSSIBLE]**
- [Name of group, family, etc.] is ready to welcome #refugees! #RefugeesSaveLives #WRD2020 **(insert photo)**
- My community is better with refugees. They serve in hospitals and clinics, keep food on our shelves, and make sure [CITY/TOWN] can combat #COVID19. #WRD2020 #RefugeesSaveLives
- This #WRD2020, we celebrate all that refugees are doing in our communities to keep us strong and safe during #COVID19 #RefugeesSaveLives
- Refugee [#resettlement](#) means not only saving lives, but also successful integration for [#refugees](#) in communities across the US. [#WRD20](#) #RefugeesSaveLives
- #RefugeesSaveLives by joining NGOs, faith communities and community groups to help chip in during #COVID19. #WRD2020
- [#Refugees](#) add real value to our communities as hard working taxpayers [#WRD2019](#)
- Refugees across the US add value: working as doctors and nurses, paying taxes, opening businesses & becoming citizens. #WRD2020 #RefugeesSaveLives
- Entire communities benefit from refugees, especially when we invest in welcoming early on, equipping them to thrive. #WRD2020 #RefugeesSaveLives
- Every year, [#refugees](#) open businesses, revitalize towns, become citizens & give back to the communities that welcomed them. [#WRD2020](#)
- #Refugees bring their resiliency & experiences to help make our communities better. We celebrate them this #WRD2020! #RefugeesSaveLives
- This #WRD2020, join us in honoring the contributions of #refugees in the time of #COVID19 – Share your story with #RefugeesSaveLives today!
- Want to help celebrate #WRD2020? Share your stories of refugees giving back in your community with #RefugeesSaveLives & help welcome #refugees in your area!
- As we celebrate #WRD2020, join us in making sure the US continues its welcoming legacy and resettles #refugees. #RefugeesSaveLives

### Refugee Facts

- FACT: 52% of #refugees are under the age of 18. What if that were your child or friend? #WRD2020
- 44,400 people a day are forced to flee their homes because of conflict & persecution. #WRD2020

- The number of #refugees and others forcibly displaced from their homes is over 70 million worldwide, the highest level in history #WRD2020
- Every minute, 24 people are forced to flee their homes because of war or persecution. #RefugeesWelcome #WRD2020
- The US has been a global leader in the protection of refugees and must continue to set an example as a safe haven. #WRD2020 #RefugeesSaveLives
- 40 years ago the Refugee Act of 1980 was enacted, since then, over 3 million #refugees have found ways to give back to America. #RefugeesSaveLives #WRD2020
- DID YOU KNOW: Less than 1% of the world's #refugees are ever resettled. #WRD2020
- The US Refugee Resettlement Program is a lifesaving, public-private partnership for #refugees with no other means of finding safety. #WRD2020
- Fewer than 1% of the world's 25+ million refugees will be resettled. #WRD2020
- #Refugees from all over the world do whatever it takes to try to bring their families to safety, once they do, they give back to the communities that take them in. #WRD2020 #RefugeesSaveLives
- Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia, & Jordan are the top #refugee hosting countries. #WRD2020

Please click [here](#) for more sample social media posts.



## **Talking Points: Refugee Resettlement & Access to Asylum**

### **Resettlement is a refugee's last option for safety:**

- Today, we are facing the worst refugee crisis in recorded history. There are over 70 million displaced people in the world, 25 million of which are refugees, half of whom are children.
- Resettlement is the last resort, when refugees cannot safely return to their home country and when they cannot safely remain in the country to which they initially fled. Refugee resettlement is a life-saving program available to less than 1% of refugees.
- To be considered for resettlement, a refugee must first receive a refugee status determination by the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) by proving they are fleeing persecution based on their ethnicity, nationality, religion, political opinion, or social group. UNHCR then refers refugees to one of 37 resettlement countries, one of which is the U.S.
- Since the creation of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, the U.S. has set an average admissions goal of 95,000 annually. The U.S. resettled less than half of FY18's then-historic low refugee admissions goal of 45,000. We resettled 30,000 refugees in FY19. This year, due to an even lower resettlement ceiling -- 18,000 -- and a temporary halt to the resettlement program due to travel restrictions under COVID-19, only 7,550 refugees have been resettled in the United States.

### **The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is critical to U.S. foreign policy & national security objectives:**

- Refugees are the most vetted individuals entering the United States, and undergo complex security checks through the DHS, DOD, FBI, State Department, and a number of U.S. intelligence agencies.
- The U.S. must maintain its commitment to resettle refugees and encourage other countries to do the same, as resettlement is a critical tool to alleviate regional instability, maintain relationships with important allies, and advance our national security and foreign policy interests.
- National security experts agree: refugee resettlement advances our national security interests and contributes to keeping our troops safe around the world. Resettling refugees is tangible proof that the U.S. is a beacon of inclusion and debunks the anti-American narratives of terrorist propaganda.
- The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program allows the U.S. to resettle Afghans who had worked for the U.S. government in Afghanistan and whose lives were threatened because of their work in support of the U.S. mission. As U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan continues, we cannot complete our mission there without the Afghan translators, engineers, security guards, embassy clerks, logisticians, cultural advisors, and soldiers who stand by us. Protecting our allies is vital to maintaining support of the Afghan people and to completing our mission there and for future wars in which we may be engaged.

### **Refugees positively impact their new communities:**

- Refugees are serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response. They are doctors, nurses, and medical personnel working in hospitals, clinics and elder care facilities. They work in vital supply chains, keeping grocery store shelves stocked. The work in factories and plants making sure we have what we need to stay healthy and beat the pandemic.
- Refugees give back to their new communities. They start working as soon as possible, pay taxes, start businesses, and become active members of society.
- In 2018, the average workforce participation rate of refugees is 81.8%, above the national 62%.
- 13% of refugees were entrepreneurs in 2015, compared to just 9% percent of the U.S.-born.
- 40% of all Fortune 500 companies were founded by refugees, immigrants or their children.

### **Refugees have been directly impacted by COVID-19:**

- The realities of migration and displacement mean that COVID-19 poses specific risks to the health, economic survival, and physical safety and well-being of those refugees living in the most vulnerable of settings. Limited space means social distancing can be difficult, if not impossible, for people in migrant shelters, refugee camps, immigration detention, or urban slums and informal settlements.
- Limited to no access to essential hygiene supplies -- like soap and water, or hand sanitizer -- increases the risk of contracting COVID-19 faced by refugees in these most vulnerable situations.
- Refugees are often employed in industries that are considered essential services and face health risks simply by reporting for work, particularly if workplace safeguards (e.g., personal protective equipment) are not in place.

- Information about COVID-19 and how to prevent its spread is not consistently available in languages spoken by refugees; nor is information easily accessible by those who are unable to read and write. For some who experience symptoms of COVID-19, including refugees living in places where they face local hostility or discrimination may limit access to testing and treatment. Migrants and refugees with serious, pre-existing health conditions will also suffer, as limited public and non-profit health services shift to the COVID-19 emergency response.

#### **U.S. communities support refugee resettlement and want to see it restored to historic norms:**

- Communities across the country support refugees. Faith leaders, educators, business leaders, and local, state, and national elected officials, as well as thousands of community members have demonstrated welcome for refugees in every state.
- We urge Members of Congress to:
  - Cosponsor the bipartisan resolution that commemorates the 40th Anniversary of the Refugee Act of 1980 and celebrates the contributions of refugees over these many years ([H.Res.902](#) / [S.Res.545](#) - click on these links to see the periodically updated list of cosponsors);
  - Provide a supplemental \$642 million for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in FY2020 through the Refugee and Entrant Assistance account to ensure vulnerable populations like refugees don't fall through the cracks and can receive housing, food, and the care they need;
  - Hold the administration accountable to operating the resettlement program in good faith and restoring both the resettlement program and asylum protections to historic norms, and to welcoming asylum seekers and stateless individuals, preventing family separation, and ending detention of asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants, in favor of community-based alternatives;
  - *(For Representatives Only)* Join the bipartisan congressional refugee caucus by emailing [rachel.calanni@mail.house.gov](mailto:rachel.calanni@mail.house.gov) (led by Reps. Lofgren (D-CA-19), Diaz-Balart (R-FL-25), Neguse (D-CO-2), and Chris Smith (R-NJ-4)).

#### **Talking Points Bipartisan Resolution on U.S. Refugee Program:**

- This is the 40th Year Anniversary of the Refugee Act of 1980 which created the US Refugee Admissions program, a time to celebrate the positive contributions refugees have made to our nation. ([H.Res.902](#) / [S.Res.545](#) /Note: these congress.gov links also provide periodically updated list of cosponsors)
- During the COVID-19 crisis, as we work to keep people safe, refugees are also working on the frontlines and in essential jobs, including 161,000 working in health care, and 170,000 in the food supply chain. (See [Refugee Workers on the Frontlines and as Essential Workers](#), New American Economy, April 22, 2020.)
- Refugees have helped our armed forces on the frontlines. Many seeking refuge are persecuted for helping our military. This includes refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan who are endangered for working with US peacekeepers and humanitarian agencies.
- Supporting refugees and refugee resettlement is helping to support religious freedom. The U.S. refugee program has long been a means to protect those fleeing persecution for promoting democracy and free speech, or those persecuted for practicing their religious faith, such as many Christians in the Middle East, or Jews from the former Soviet Union.
- The refugee program is an American program, reflecting common U.S. values and interests. It also helps us to meet our diplomatic and strategic interests and our economic interests.
- If you have any questions or would like to cosponsor this letter and or the resolution itself, please contact Alex Guajardo with Rep. Garcia at [alex.guajardo@mail.house.gov](mailto:alex.guajardo@mail.house.gov) or Rebekah Rodriguez with Rep. Curtis at [rebekah.rodriguez@mail.house.gov](mailto:rebekah.rodriguez@mail.house.gov).

#### **Talking Points on \$642 million Supplemental Funding for Refugee and Entrant Assistance Account:**

- Refugees, asylees, Afghan/Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa Recipients, Cuban Haitian Entrants, Human Trafficking Victims, and others known as Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Populations of Concern (hereafter referred to as refugees), have recently settled in the United States, and just like all of us in the U.S., they share the vulnerabilities and challenges related to COVID-19.
- Refugees often work in jobs that cannot be carried out virtually, and thus, with the local shutdowns, many refugees are among the rising number of unemployed in the American economy.
- Other refugees stepped up to work in essential jobs in health care, groceries, shipping, elder care, meat and other food processing, trucking, etc. Indeed, 161,000 refugees work in health care and 170,000 work as part of the U.S. food supply chain. This makes them vital, as all essential workers are vital, to our national

perseverance during the COVID-19 crisis. But also, like all essential workers, their work puts them and their families at health risk.

- Unfortunately, those who most recently arrived in the U.S. who are laid off due to work closures or who cannot work because of illness do not have access to meaningful unemployment relief because they either have short work histories in this country and qualify only for small amounts under state programs, or because they are so recently arrived that they do not qualify for either unemployment or pandemic relief; and some also are not eligible for Economic Impact Payments from the Internal Revenue Service or have obstacles to accessing it.
- Moreover, as newcomers, and as individuals, many of whom have already lost their country of birth, loved ones, and possessions and as survivors of persecution, torture and/or other trauma, they have transitional needs as they move from being a refugee to building a normal life. Also, for many of them rapid employment within 4-6 months, the usual mechanism for building resilience and achieving self-sufficiency through the U.S. resettlement program, has been temporarily disrupted, thwarted or delayed by the health threats and economic impacts of COVID-19.
- In ordinary times, ORR has the mandate, infrastructure, and professional and cultural capacities to facilitate resilience and self-sufficiency among these individuals. In crisis times, ORR is in the best position to most efficiently help them address unemployment, link them with safe employment, and with transitional support for basic survival needs including housing, transportation, child education, and health care.
- We urge Congress to provide \$642 million in supplemental funding to ORR: To serve the estimated 620,978 members of ORR populations of concern who have arrived in the last five years and are under the ORR mandate to provide them transitional support to build resilience and self-reliance.
  - \$313.9 million in Transitional and Medical Services (including \$295 million to allow Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance for up to 18 months, to meet unemployment relief gaps, and \$18.9 million for Match Grant for emergency transitional expenses).
  - \$249.5 million for Refugee Support Services, including \$49.5 million to expand the case management system, and the rest for emergency housing, education, and health needs for refugees.
  - \$78.6 million for further emergency/recovery response, including to maintain local ORR infrastructure.
- It enables ORR to link refugees to safe employment, augment basic needs stemming from COVID-19 unemployment, including housing, food, health care, transportation, education.
- Leaving out some communities leaves all communities at greater risk. Thus, at this time of national health and economic crisis, it is important that all populations, including refugees and other ORR Populations of Concern, are able to fully participate in efforts that slow and mitigate COVID-19 and put us all in the best position to preserve and rebuild our nation's health and economy.

#### **All people have the legal right to seek protection from persecution and violence.**

- We stand opposed to any proposal that bans asylum seekers (such as [MPP](#), [PACR](#), [HARP](#), the [new anti-asylum CDC rule](#)) or limits access to protection based on prior convictions or removals.
- Families are fleeing their communities due to violence, desperation, and persecution, and have faced incredible challenges in hopes of seeking protection. We are called to uphold our moral and legal obligations, not turn our backs or close our doors.
- People fleeing violence in Central America should be welcomed, not illegally turned away or criminalized for seeking protection. They should not be coerced or threatened with family separation or incarceration, either. This is a false, cruel choice.
- The United States should uphold principles of due process for immigrant families and children. Congress should support community-based residential care, post-release services, and home studies that offer unaccompanied children a family-based care environment.
- Families belong in communities, not prison. We have stood strongly against family separation and family detention because it hurts some of the most vulnerable among us.
- The administration should focus on processing asylum cases equitably and efficiently, as we have the largest backlog of asylum cases (1+ million on record between EOIR & USCIS).

## 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, more than 70 million displaced people have been forced from their homes, more than any time in recorded history, including over 25 million refugees;

WHEREAS, by definition, refugees are people who have fled their country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

WHEREAS, resettlement provides safe haven in a third country when refugees cannot return home and cannot rebuild their lives in the country where they first fled due to lack of access to safety, shelter, health care, education, or protection;

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, and members of minority groups that are experiencing oppression in the host country (for example, religious minorities or LGBTI individuals) – 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 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]**.

## Sample Mayoral Proclamation

*This could be used by cities/counties that have already passed a resolution previously -  
but want to mark World Refugee Day.*

### World Refugee Day 2020

WHEREAS, World Refugee Day is an annual commemoration adopted by the United Nations in 2000 to honor and raise awareness of refugees; and

WHEREAS, the city/county of **[NAME]** is 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; and

WHEREAS, more than 70 million displaced people have been forced from their homes worldwide, more than any time in recorded history, including over 25 million refugees; and

WHEREAS, refugees are people who have fled their country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group; and

WHEREAS, resettlement provides safe haven in a third country when refugees cannot return home and cannot rebuild their lives in the country where they first fled due to lack of access to safety, shelter, health care, education, or protection; and

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, and members of minority groups that are experiencing oppression in the host country (for example, religious minorities or LGBTI individuals) – and takes place after eligible refugees undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting, and medical screening process; and

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; and

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, I, MAYOR OF THE **[CITY/COUNTY]** OF **[NAME]**, do hereby proclaim June 20, 2020, as World Refugee Day.

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

Mayor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Advocacy Resources & Contact Information for Advocacy Staff

### Advocacy Materials

- State Action Toolkit for a Refugee and Immigrant Inclusive Response to COVID-19: <https://bit.ly/StateCOVIDToolkit>
- State Legislative & Administrative Actions in Response to COVID-19: <https://bit.ly/StateCOVID19Actions>
- COVID-19 / Coronavirus Resources for Refugees: <http://bit.ly/COVIDHealthResources>
- COVID-19 Legislation: Quick Facts and Analysis for Refugees and Resettlement Offices: [bit.ly/COVIDLegislativeAnalysis](http://bit.ly/COVIDLegislativeAnalysis)
- COVID-19 Relief Cash Payment for Non-Filers: <https://bit.ly/COVIDNonFiler>
- COVID-19 Relief Legislation & Refugee Impact [RCUSA Webinar](#)
- Challenges Refugees Face in Accessing COVID Relief Provisions: <https://bit.ly/COVID19RefugeeChallenges>
- Interfaith Immigration Coalition Demands to Protect Immigrant Communities: <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/2020/03/18/covid-19-faith-groups-call-for-end-to-medical-prejudice-against-immigrants/>

### National Sign On Letters Demonstrating Commitment to Refugees

- 150+ Groups Supporting Refugee Priorities in COVID-19 Legislation: <https://greateras1.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Organizational-Sign-On-Ltr-re-COVID-4-Refugee-Priorities.pdf>
- Letter from 1,000+ Faith Leaders to Include Immigrant and Refugee Communities in COVID Response: <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/2020/04/20/faith-leaders-include-immigrants-in-covid-19-protection/>
- 550+ Advocates Say Coronavirus Response Undermined by Excluding Immigrant Families: <https://www.nilc.org/2020/04/21/advocates-say-coronavirus-response-undermined-by-excluding-immigrant-families/>

### State-by-State Resources

- RCUSA State Profiles on Refugee Resettlement: [www.rcusa.org/state-refugee-profiles](http://www.rcusa.org/state-refugee-profiles)
- [Map of WRD events](#) across the country
- Map of refugee stories across the country (forthcoming)

### Additional Advocacy Toolkits

- #AllOfUs Social Media [Toolkit](#)
- My Neighbor is Muslim Toolkit: <http://lirs.org/myneighborismuslim/>
- RCUSA 116th Congress Toolkit: <http://rcusa.org/advocate-now>

### The following advocacy staff represent organizations working with refugees:

- Church World Service: Jen Smyers, [jsmyers@cwsglobal.org](mailto:jsmyers@cwsglobal.org)
- Episcopal Migration Ministries: Rushad Thomas, [rthomas@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:rthomas@episcopalchurch.org)
- HIAS: Liz Mandelman, [elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org](mailto:elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org)
- International Rescue Committee: J.C. Hendrickson, [JC.Hendrickson@rescue.org](mailto:JC.Hendrickson@rescue.org)
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: Ronnate Asirwatham, [RAsirwatham@lirs.org](mailto:RAsirwatham@lirs.org)
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: Matt Wilch, [mwilch@uscceb.org](mailto:mwilch@uscceb.org)
- U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants: Mario Bruzzone, [mbruzzone@uscmail.org](mailto:mbruzzone@uscmail.org)
- Ethiopian Community Development Council: Clare Mountfort, [CMountfort@ecdCUS.org](mailto:CMountfort@ecdCUS.org) and Jessica Chapman, [jchapman@ecdCUS.org](mailto:jchapman@ecdCUS.org)
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