

# Toolkit for Engaging Elected Officials on the “State & Local Resettlement Ban” Executive Order

**Background:** On September 26, the White House issued an [Executive Order](#) (EO 13888) that may drastically reduce, if not entirely stop, the resettlement of refugees in your community. The EO is already creating chaos and confusion about where refugees can be resettled, will lead to family separation for refugee families, and will leave refugees, former refugees and United States citizens without supportive services. To make matters worse, the administration [proposed a refugee admissions goal](#) of 18,000 refugees for the next year, a shamefully abysmal number for the world's most powerful nation that stands in stark contrast to the historic average goal of 95,000 refugees. Together, these actions are likely to destroy the [bipartisan refugee](#) resettlement program for years to come. It's critical that we work together to demonstrate [nationwide, bi-partisan support for refugees](#) and ensure our state and local officials publicly declare welcome for refugees. We need you to make your voice heard at the local level and reach out to your governors, mayors, and county officials and ask them to support refugee resettlement.

**Why is the EO harmful?** The EO fundamentally alters the structure of the U.S. resettlement program by transferring decisions about who can resettle and where from the federal government to state and locally elected officials. Not only will this ultimately lead to a patchwork of conflicting policies running contrary to the purpose of a national resettlement program, but it will also leave thousands of refugees, former refugees, and U.S. citizens without consistent and routine access to integration services and other supports. The EO subjects families and our community members to the whims of politics and exacerbates uncertainty for refugee families and communities alike by requiring local officials to provide written consent before refugees can be resettled. This is an unprecedented and harmful procedure, particularly given that resettlement agencies already consult regularly with state and local stakeholders regarding community needs. In addition, U.S. citizens, immigrants, refugees, and visitors alike are constitutionally allowed to move freely between cities and states. We do not need explicit permission from cities to travel - or relocate.

**What We Know:** Governors and local officials must provide written consent to opt into resettling refugees in their states and localities. Resettlement agencies are responsible to obtain written governor and local consent - the administration will not be communicating directly to governors or local officials. Consent letters will be publicly available on the State Department's website. Consent is needed from the governor of a state in order to continue refugee resettlement anywhere in that state. If a governor gives consent but a locality does not, refugees may be resettled in a different locality where consent is provided. Some family reunification cases that use the “follow to join” Visa 93 process may be exempted from parts of this EO. The EO does not directly apply to Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders.

In terms of local consent, the administration has referred to the county or county-equivalent. In some cases, there are no counties, and in others, counties do not have the authority. Ultimately, the administration will defer to local community's determination of who has authority. If you have already reached out to a mayor's office, please continue to get that consent letter. Our understanding is that in many places, that will suffice. When at all possible, please also obtain consent from a county official as well. Further, if a mayor (or not obviously

a county-level official) is providing written consent, they must either in their letter (or in an accompanying email) confirm that they have the authority to provide consent. The administration is requiring that a list of cities/towns that fall under the jurisdiction of the local body be included within or attached to the letter of consent. This can be prepared by the resettlement office or the official providing the letter, but it must be certified by the consenting official.

## **Your State & Local Officials Need to Hear From You**

When you engage your local officials, we encourage you to **educate** them about the existence and content of the EO and **ask** whether they will provide written consent to resettle refugees. Here are the top two ways to take action:

**1. Tell Your Governor to Declare Welcome for Refugees:** [Click here](#) to contact your governor and tell them to declare that they welcome refugees in your state. Ask them to provide the necessary written consent to the federal government stating that refugees are welcome. A template letter that can be adapted to your state is [available here](#).

**2. Tell Your State & Local Officials to Support Refugees:** Contact your [state legislators](#), [mayors](#), and [county executives](#) (and if you have close connections, to [city, county, and town officials](#) or [other state and local elected leaders](#)). Urge them to issue a public statement saying they support resettlement and to provide the necessary written consent so refugees can remain welcome in your community. A template letter that can be adapted to your locality is [available here](#).

Letters should be addressed to: Secretary Michael R. Pompeo, U.S. Department of State; and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Carol T. O'Connell, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, U.S. Department of State.

The following language should be included in order to provide consent: "As [Governor/Mayor] of [state/city], I consent to initial refugee resettlement in [state/city] as per the terms of the Executive Order. This consent is valid unless or until withdrawn."

**An important note / disclaimer:** Since we do not want our communications to imply that we endorse or agree with the EO, it would be helpful to include the following disclaimer in correspondences: "Communication about, or participation in, the implementation of Executive Order (EO) 13888 is not an endorsement of the legality of the EO."

## **Steps to Organize Meetings with State & Local Officials**

**Template Letter to Officials:** [Click here](#) for a template letter from community members, [click here](#) for a template letter from faith leaders, [click here](#) for a template letter from businesses and [click here](#) for a template letter from Members of Congress, to governors and state and local officials to invite them to declare welcome for refugees.

**Step-by-Step Guide:** [Click here](#) for guidance on how to prepare and organize meetings with governors, mayors, county executives, and other local officials.

**Bring Handouts:** Bring copies of [this letter](#) that is collecting signatures from state and local officials - governors, mayors, state/local legislators, etc. You can also adapt this [template letter](#) for your state and local officials for your meeting. [Click here](#) for refugee resources to accompany your meetings.

**Provide Feedback:** Don't forget to tell us how it went! [Click here](#) to fill out a survey with feedback from your meeting. Contact Elissa Diaz at [ediaz@cwsglobal.org](mailto:ediaz@cwsglobal.org) if you would like help in preparing for and/or following up with your meetings with officials.

## **Additional Resources to Help You Talk to State & Local Officials**

**Talking Points and Messaging Guidance:** For talking points on the executive order, click [here](#). For additional EO and general refugee talking points, please visit our [Talking Points](#) primer. A factsheet debunking the administration's harmful "resettlement vs. asylum" narrative is [here](#).

**Refugee Security Factsheet:** Click [here](#) for a factsheet on U.S. refugee resettlement and security, including security vetting changes made by the Trump administration. [Here is an overview](#) of refugee security vetting process. Here is [written congressional testimony](#) by former DHS officials.

**EO Factsheet:** Click [here](#) for a one page backgrounder and [here](#) for analysis about the EO.

**Power Map:** Who can make the decision you need to influence (your primary target)? Who influences them (your secondary targets)? Who uses influence for/against this decision? A power map is a simple yet powerful tool to map decision makers and focus your energy where it makes the greatest impact. Click [here](#) for a basic template to construct your power map, and click [here](#) for some tips on how to research and map targets.

**Letters from State & Local Officials:** A template letter from state and local officials to the administration that can be easily adapted to your state / locality is [available here](#). Feel free to reach out to Elissa Diaz at [ediaz@cwsglobal.org](mailto:ediaz@cwsglobal.org) for help crafting a tailored letter for your specific officials. In addition, we are still seeking state and local officials - governors, mayors, state/local legislators, etc. - to sign on to [this letter](#). Here are additional statements declaring welcome for refugees by [Governor DeWine](#) (R-OH) and [Mayor Ben Walsh](#) (I-Syracuse, NY).

**Local Resolution Template:** Template resolution language for local municipal, county, or other government bodies that authorize, support, or otherwise give a nod in favor of continuing to resettle refugees in response to the refugee EO can be found [here](#).

**Social Media Guidance:** Check out [our rapid response toolkit](#) on the refugee admissions goal for sample social media posts, graphics, and more: [bit.ly/EOSocialMedia](https://bit.ly/EOSocialMedia).

**Handouts for Meetings with State & Local Officials:** Here is a list of supportive letters and articles that can help you demonstrate community support.

- [State-by-State Profiles of the Resettlement Network and Federal Funding Provided to States](#)
- [State-by-State Support for Resettlement](#)
- [New American Economy Report: From Struggle to Resilience](#) (see page 29 for state data appendix)
- [NAE](#) state-specific [factsheets](#) on the economic impact of refugees
- [IRC economic backgrounder factsheet](#)
- [Letter from 9 Republican and 9 Democrat Senators](#)
- [Bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus Letter](#)
- [Letter from Over 1,300 Faith Leaders and Community Sponsors](#)
- [International Religious Freedom Letter](#)
- [Letter from 500+ Religious Leaders & Faith Groups](#)
- [27 Retired Generals & Admirals Letter](#)
- [Letter from 32 Former Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic, and Policy Experts](#)
- [Gen. Hayden and Gen. Stavridis Op-Ed](#)
- [The Niskanen Center Report](#)
- [The Center for Strategic and International Studies Report](#)
- [Op Ed from Former Governor Rick Snyder](#)

## Evangelical Sign-on Letters Support Refugees in 15 States

### Press Release:

<https://worldrelief.org/press-releases/world-relief-and-the-evangelical-immigration-table-urge-governors-in-15-states-to-accept-refugees>

### All 15 State Letters:

<http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/support-ongoing-refugee-resettlement/>

### Individual State Letters:

IN: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-eric-holcomb-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

OH: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-mike-dewine-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

WI: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-tony-evers-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

WA: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-jay-inslee-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

CA: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-gavin-newsom-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

OK: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-kevin-stitt-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

SC: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-henry-mcmaster-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

IL: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-jb-pritzker-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

IA: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-kim-reynolds-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

GA: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-brian-p.-kemp-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

TN: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-bill-lee-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

FL: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Governor-Ron-DeSantis-EIT.WR-Letter.pdf>

TX: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-greg-abbott-eit.wr-letter.pdf>

NC: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Governor-Roy-Cooper-EIT.WR-Letter.pdf>

AZ: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/governor-doug-ducey-eit.wr-letter.pdf>