

CITY OF LA VISTA
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL REPORT
DECEMBER 3, 2019 AGENDA

Subject:	Type:	Submitted By:
AUTHORIZE EXECUTION OF CONSENT LETTER - EXECUTIVE ORDER 13888	◆ RESOLUTION ORDINANCE RECEIVE/FILE	PAM BUETHE CITY CLERK

SYNOPSIS

A resolution has been prepared authorizing the Mayor to execute a consent letter as required by Executive Order 13888 to continue local refugee resettlement.

FISCAL IMPACT

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND

On September 26, 2019 President Trump issued Executive Order 13888 requiring written consent from governors and mayors for future resettlement under the Department of State's Reception and Placement Program. The affirmative consent will ensure that La Vista is included in the national resettlement plan next year.

There is at least one refugee with family ties in La Vista that has been vetted and cleared for resettlement in the future. The three resettlement agencies in Nebraska (Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska and Refugee Empowerment Center) are requesting the consent of the elected chief official of La Vista.

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA VISTA, NEBRASKA, AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE A CONSENT LETTER AS REQUIRED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER 13888 TO CONTINUE LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT.

WHEREAS, on September 26, 2019 President Trump issued Executive Order 13888 requiring written consent from governor and mayors for future resettlement; and

WHEREAS, the City has determined that it is desirable to consent to the resettlement of refugees in La Vista under the Department of State's Reception and Placement Program; and

WHEREAS, there is at least one refugee with family ties in La Vista that has been vetted and cleared for resettlement in the future; and

WHEREAS, three resettlement agencies in Nebraska (Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska and Refugee Empowerment Center) are requesting the consent of the elected chief official of La Vista;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of La Vista, Nebraska, does hereby authorize the Mayor to execute a consent letter as required by executive order 13888 to continue local refugee resettlement.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 3RD DAY OF DECEMBER 2019

CITY OF LA VISTA

Douglas Kindig, Mayor

ATTEST:

Pamela A. Buethe, CMC
City Clerk

November 22, 2019

Dear Mayor Kindig,

Thank you for your service and dedication to the people of Nebraska. Likewise, thank you for your participation in the conference call with the League regarding the impending request for consent to continue local refugee resettlement.

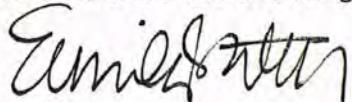
As discussed on the call, on Sept. 26th President Trump issued [Executive Order 13888](#) requiring written consent from governors and mayors for future resettlement. There is at least one refugee with family ties in your community that has been vetted and cleared for resettlement in the future. On behalf of the three resettlement agencies in Nebraska (Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska, and Refugee Empowerment Center), this letter constitutes as official request of your consent as the elected chief executive of your city. Attached is the template language that is required for written consent. Please edit only the highlighted areas and print on your office letterhead.

To ensure that your community is included in the national resettlement plan next year, we are asking that your affirmative consent be mailed to Secretary Pompeo with a *copy to Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska*—either scanned returned to this email or mailed to the address at the bottom of this page—no later than December 25th. Governor Ricketts has been briefed on this issue and his official response is expected soon.

Attached are some additional resources for your review including a handout on the security and vetting process for refugees, an economic impact report for Nebraska, and a factsheet on the state refugee resettlement program.

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of this important issue. We stand ready to answer any questions you may have and are happy to make ourselves available for a conference call or in-person meeting.

On behalf of the Nebraska refugee resettlement providers,



Emily Sutton

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Katie Hile

Regional Director
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Amanda Kohler

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Center
402.554.0759
akohler@refugeeempowerment.org

**Please email or mail a copy of your letter to:*

*Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska
C/O Emily Sutton
1941 S 42nd Street, Ste 402
Omaha, NE 68105*

Although we are communicating with you about the implementation of Executive Order 13888 (EO), communication about, or participation in, the implementation of the EO is not in any way an endorsement of the legality of the EO.

Refugee Council USA

The United States Handpicks and Stringently Screens and Vets Refugees Before They Enter the Country

STAGE ONE:

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees first registers the vast majority of refugees, interviews them, takes biometric data and background information as part of a “Refugee Status Determination” or RSD, a process for determining whether a person is a refugee. Cases are referred to one of 37 resettlement countries, including the United States, for consideration. Refugees do not choose to be resettled or decide which country accepts them. The United States also directly identifies many refugees classified as being of “special humanitarian concern” to the United States.

STAGE TWO:

The U.S. government then conducts its own extremely rigorous screening process involving the following steps, each of which is explained in more detail below:

- Department of Homeland Security Interviews
- Enhanced Review for Syrian Refugees
- Consular Lookout and Watch List Checks
- Security Advisory Opinions from Law Enforcement & Intelligence Agencies
- National Counterterrorism Center Checks with Intelligence Agency Support
- DHS and FBI Biometric Checks
- Department of Defense Biometric Screening
- Additional Vetting via Interpol and Other Countries
- Additional Screening on Entry

- Department of Homeland Security Interviews:** Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officers interview refugees in person to determine whether they can be approved for resettlement in the United States. These interviews occur while refugees are still abroad. These officers receive specialized training and intelligence briefings that include comprehensive instruction on fraud detection, interviewing techniques, credibility analysis, and country conditions.
- Enhanced Review for Syrian Cases:** DHS has instituted additional layers of review for Syrian refugee applications. Before being scheduled for an interview with a DHS officer, Syrian cases are reviewed at DHS headquarters. All cases that meet certain criteria are referred to the DHS Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (FDNS) for additional review and research. FDNS conducts open-source and classified research on referred cases and synthesizes an assessment for use by the interviewing officer to inform lines of inquiry. FDNS also engages with law enforcement and the intelligence community for assistance with identity verification and acquisition of additional information.
- Consular Lookout and Watch List Check:** Biographic checks are conducted against the State Department’s Consular Lookout and Support System (CLASS), including watch list information.
- Security Advisory Opinions from Intelligence and Other Agencies:** DHS seeks Security Advisory Opinions (SAOs) from a number of law enforcement and intelligence agencies for refugees from reportedly 11 nationalities and other cases that meet certain criteria.

Refugee Council USA

- National Counterterrorism Center Checks with Intelligence Agency Support:** Interagency Checks, known as “IAC’s,” are conducted with the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) for all refugee applicants within a designated age range, regardless of nationality. In addition, expanded intelligence community support was added to the IAC process in July 2010, and recurrent vetting was added in 2015 so that any derogatory information identified after the initial check has been provided to DHS for appropriate review and action.
- DHS and FBI Biometric Checks:** Fingerprints are screened against the vast biometric holdings of the FBI’s Next Generation Identification system and are screened and enrolled in DHS’s Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT). Through IDENT, the applicant’s fingerprints are screened not only against watch list information, but also for previous immigration encounters in the United States and overseas, including cases in which the applicant previously applied for a visa at a U.S. embassy.
- Department of Defense Biometric Screening:** Biometric screening is also conducted through the Department of Defense (DOD) Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS). ABIS contains a variety of records, including fingerprint records. ABIS screening now covers all refugee applicants who fall within prescribed age ranges.
- Interpol:** The vetting process—including the CLASS and IDENT systems—checks against international intelligence community holdings from Interpol. Interpol’s Foreign Terrorist Fighter database includes detailed identity particulars of individuals provided by 52 countries. Further, Interpol’s Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database includes details of nearly 54 million stolen, lost, blank and other documents.
- In addition to Interpol,** the U.S. government maintains separate security and intelligence sharing relationships with many countries, facilitating checks on information gathered on refugees after they initially flee their country.

STAGE THREE:

- Medical Screenings:** All refugees approved for resettlement in the U.S. are required to undergo medical screenings conducted by the International Organization for Migration or a physician designated by the U.S. Embassy. This screening ensures that the applicant does not have any communicable diseases that could pose a public health threat, and, as such, prohibit his or her admission to the U.S.
- Cultural Orientation:** Refugees approved for resettlement are provided cultural orientation while they await final processing, preparing them for their journey to and initial resettlement in the U.S.
- Matching Refugees with a Sponsor Agency:** As part of the USRAP’s public-private partnership, every refugee is assigned to a local resettlement office in the U.S. that meets them at the airport, sets up an apartment, and assists them with integration upon arrival to the U.S.

STAGE FOUR:

- Additional Screening Checks on Entry:** Before they travel to the United States, refugees are subject to screening conducted by DHS-U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) National Targeting Center and the Transportation Security Administration’s Secure Flight program. In addition, CBP manages the Treasury Enforcement Communications System database, which is an information sharing platform allowing CBP officers to check against a range of connected databases upon an individual’s arrival, including information from Interpol and the Terrorist Screening Center’s Terrorist Screening Database.

For a graphic representation of the above steps, see White House infographic: [The Screening Process for Refugee Entry into the United States](#)

Refugee Council USA

Refugee Resettlement Advances the United States' National Security Interests and Supports Key U.S. Allies

"[R]esettlement initiatives help advance U.S. national security interests by supporting the stability of our allies and partners that are struggling to host large numbers of refugees."

— Letter to Congress from a bipartisan group of the nation's top national security experts

"The process that is currently in place is thorough and robust and, so long as it is fully implemented and not diluted, it will allow us to safely admit the most vulnerable refugees while protecting the American people. Fortunately, these goals are not mutually exclusive."

— Janet Napolitano and Michael Chertoff, former DHS secretaries

"A U.S. initiative to resettle Syrian refugees in the United States affirmatively advances U.S. national security interests. Increased resettlement and aid helps protect the stability of a region that is home to U.S. allies."

— Ryan Crocker, former ambassador to Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kuwaiti

Refugees in Nebraska

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Refugees



Refugees have an enduring legacy on the American communities they have come to call home, and cities and towns across the United States have seen firsthand the significant positive economic impact that has come with resettling this population. Refugees have entrepreneurship and homeownership rates that far exceed that of other immigrants. Many aging and once declining communities—from Utica, New York to St. Louis, Missouri—have credited young, entrepreneurial refugees with reinvigorating their local economy and commercial main streets.

POPULATION

12,924

Number of likely refugees in Nebraska in 2015

Between 2016 - 2018 a total of

2,843

refugees were resettled in Nebraska

Top Five Countries of Origin of Refugees Resettled Between 2016 - 2018

1. Burma	25.8%
2. Iraq	23.3%
3. Bhutan	13.5%
4. Somalia	9.2%
5. Syria	7.0%

Year	Number of refugees resettled
2016	1782
2017	799
2018	262

TAXES AND SPENDING POWER IN 2015

\$290.1M

Refugee Household Income

\$221.0M

Total Spending Power

State & Local Taxes Paid

\$26.6M

Federal Taxes Paid

\$42.5M

Total Taxes Paid

\$69.1M



UNITED STATES IN 2015 ...

POPULATION

3.4M

Number of likely refugees

Share of refugees who have been in the U.S. for 16 to 25 years and became citizens



Share of refugees who have been in the U.S. for more than 25 years and became citizens



WORKFORCE

Immigrants and refugees are more likely to be of working age than their counterparts.



TAXES & SPENDING POWER

\$77.2B

Refugee Household Income

\$56.3B

Total Spending Power

State & Local Taxes Paid

\$6.4B

Federal Taxes Paid

\$14.5B

Total Taxes Paid

\$20.9B

Breakdown of Refugees in the Workforce by Industry

Manufacturing	20.3%
Health Care	14.2%
General Services	10.0%
Retail Trade	9.9%
Tourism	8.8%

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Rates of Entrepreneurship, 2015

U.S.-Born 9.0%

Non-Refugee Immigrants 11.5%

Refugees 13.0%

181,463

Refugee entrepreneurs

\$4.6B

Business Income of Refugee Entrepreneurs

Facts about Refugee Resettlement

Resettlement is a refugee's last option for safety

- Resettlement is a last resort for refugees when they cannot safely return to their home country and they cannot stay in the country that they initially fled to.
- To be considered for resettlement, a refugee must first receive a refugee status determination by the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) by demonstrating they are fleeing persecution based on their ethnicity, nationality, religion, political opinion, or social group.
- There are 27 different countries currently resettling refugees, including the United States. Refugees selected by the United States undergo the most extensive vetting processes of any traveler before coming to the U.S.

Refugees give back to their new communities

- Refugees start working as soon as possible, pay taxes, start businesses, purchase homes, and become U.S. citizens. The average workforce participation rate of refugees is 82%, (above the national average of 62%).
- 40% of all Fortune 500 companies were founded by refugees, immigrants or their children and 13% of refugees were entrepreneurs in 2015, compared to 9% percent of the U.S.-born.
- Many industries, like hospitality and meatpacking, rely on refugee workers. Across the U.S., the low number of refugee arrivals is putting a strain on businesses
- Over a 20-year-period, refugees contribute, on average, \$21,000 more in taxes than the initial investment to resettle them. In 2015, refugees contributed \$21 billion in U.S. taxes. In the same year, refugees contributed \$26.6 million in state and local taxes paid in Nebraska alone and have a total spending power of \$221.0 million, according to the New American Economy.

The Admissions Program is secure

- Refugees are the most thoroughly vetted individuals in the U.S., going through all screenings before they arrive. Vetting includes biometric and biographic checks; interagency intelligence sharing; screenings against multiple domestic and international terrorist and criminal databases; background investigations by the FBI, Department of Defense, State Department, and National Counterterrorism Center; and in-person interviews by Homeland Security officers. Please see the attachment for additional information on the robust security and vetting procedures.

Consent Considerations:

- *Failing to provide consent could result in a reduction of state and local collaboration on refugee resettlement.* A lack of consent does not mean that refugees will cease to live in a community or cease to arrive to a community. However, without refugee resettlement

infrastructure in a state or city, the existing required, ongoing consultations with state and local stakeholders will cease.

- *Failing to provide consent could lead to unfunded mandates for states and localities.* If an area ceases to officially resettle refugees, federal resources to support refugee integration and community infrastructure for current and future arrivals, such as school services, will dry up.
- *Failing to provide consent will lead to family separations.* Resettlement agencies will be restricted about where they can place arriving refugees and may not be able to place a refugee with their family where they will be most successful. Furthermore, individuals, regardless of their immigration status, do not have to get the permission of state or local officials before they move into a jurisdiction.
- *Failing to provide consent could generate substantial local confusion and friction.* There may be scenarios where local government will provide the necessary consent and the state government may refuse. It is also possible that neighboring localities take differing positions on consent as well. All of this creates local tension and confusion amongst local officials and neighbors. Additionally, programs and resources often cross multiple local jurisdictions as individuals frequently live and work in different locations, meaning the decision of one jurisdiction could negatively impact the federal resources that their neighboring city receives. The current, unified system avoids this unnecessary situation.

Nebraska Frequently Asked Questions

How many refugees are coming to Nebraska?

Nebraska has resettled refugees in our state for over 20 years. We never know exactly how many refugees will resettle in Nebraska; however, based on history, we project approximately 300 - 400 refugees will resettle in Nebraska in 2020 as long as consent is received.

- In 2016, the refugee nation refugee ceiling was set at 85,000 and we welcomed 1,441 refugees into Nebraska.
- For 2019, the ceiling was 30,000 and we welcomed 445 refugees into Nebraska.
- For 2020, the ceiling is set at 18,000. We project resettling 300 - 400 refugees into Nebraska as long as consent is acquired.

What is the country of origin for refugees coming to Nebraska?

The top five countries of origin for refugees coming to Nebraska between 2016-2018 are: Burma (25.8%), Iraq (23.8%), Bhutan (13.5%), Somalia (9.2%), and Syria (7%).

Housing and language barriers are challenges we see in my community. Do agencies assist with meeting these challenges?

Agencies assist with language acquisition for refugees and help them find housing.

Is something with refugee resettlement changing? Why do we need consent now?

Refugee resettlement is something we've done in our state for a long time, and the program has remained virtually the same for many years. Although there are no direct changes to the program, the new Executive Order is providing more control to communities to decide whether they would like to handle the **initial** resettlement of refugees.

Once a refugee is initially resettled, they are free to move around the country (like any other legal resident). This means refugees can still come to Nebraska eventually; however, Nebraska won't be doing the initial resettlement and Resettlement Agencies will not have federal funding to provide refugees with certain supporting services. This makes a big impact on the ability of the three Resettlement Agencies in Nebraska (Catholic Social Services, Refugee Empowerment Center, and Lutheran Family Services), to provide support to refugees and help them integrate into their new community.

What happens if a Mayor or the Governor does not consent?

The Governor's consent is extremely important. Without his letter of consent, no refugees can be initially resettled in Nebraska. Assuming the governor provides consent, the Mayor or Municipality will **also** need to provide consent. Given the December deadline, consent for local and state will need to be pursued simultaneously. We encourage cities to provide consent as soon as is practical and not wait for Governor consent. Governor Ricketts has been briefed on this issue and his staff understands that local and state consent will need to be pursued simultaneously in order for Nebraska to meet the December deadline. If a specific city decided they do not want to resettle refugees; refugees could still be resettled in nearby cities within Nebraska.

[CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER LETTERHEAD]

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington DC, 20520

<DATE>

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

This letter is in reference to [Executive Order 13888](#), “On Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Resettlement.”

As [Mayor/Other Official] of <LOCALITY / STATE> I consent to initial refugee resettlement in [state/city] as per the terms of the Executive Order. I understand that my consent will be publicly released. This consent is valid unless or until withdrawn.

Sincerely,

<NAME>
<POSITION>

CC:
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Carol T. O'Connell
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
U.S. Department of State