

Refugee Resettlement Talkers

Short link: <http://bit.ly/FY21ResettlementTalkers>

Background: On Friday, April 16, the Biden administration [announced](#) that it will keep the historic-low refugee admissions goal of [15,000](#) in place for this fiscal year, despite promising to raise the goal to 62,500. Although the administration restored [regional allocations](#) based on vulnerability and undid the previous administration's discriminatory resettlement allocations, thousands of refugees will be left in harm's way by leaving the current all-time low admissions goal intact. Due to the delay in announcing this decision, thousands of refugees who were ready for travel to the United States have seen their medical and security checks start to expire, forcing refugees to now have to wait months or years to be resettled and reunited with their loved ones. Later that Friday, the White House [issued](#) another statement, backtracking its earlier announcement and indicating the administration's plans to re-issue a new, higher admissions goal by May 15th. A White House official [told the New York Times](#) that the decision to maintain the 15,000 admissions goal was due to concerns over increases in unaccompanied migrant children seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Top Five Things to Focus On:

1. **We can and should be welcoming more refugees NOW.** We have been preparing for the increase in arrivals that this administration has promised, and our communities are ready to welcome more refugees. There is no reason for this delay.
2. **Waiting to raise the refugee goal has real-world implications.** There are thousands of refugees that have followed all protocols, have been thoroughly vetted, and are desperately waiting to travel to the United States. Many of these have been waiting for years to rejoin loved ones here, the longer the refugee goal isn't raised, the longer they remain vulnerable and separated from their families.
3. **Rebuilding resettlement requires resettling refugees.** The Biden administration is claiming that infrastructure must be rebuilt before more refugees can arrive—but the reality is that we cannot rebuild without more refugee arrivals. Funding for the life-saving refugee resettlement program is tied to refugees being admitted to the U.S. For the capacity of the resettlement system to raise, we need to start welcoming refugees immediately.
4. **We need to see real change, not empty rhetoric.** After pushback, the administration issued new comments saying that it will likely raise the goal on May 15th. These promises and delays have life or death consequences for refugee families. There is no reason why the refugee admissions goal cannot be raised immediately. Every day it causes more refugee security and health screenings to expire, causing a harmful domino effect that can prolong cases and jeopardize refugees' hopes of resettlement. We need action now.
5. **Humanitarian needs at the border are not a valid excuse.** The refugee resettlement program and the asylum protection systems are complementary pathways for people to find protection from persecution and violence. We have the resources and the capacity to both welcome refugees and humanely process asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors at the border. The United States has a long history of operating both programs successfully at the same time.

The harm caused by the delay in restoring regional allocations and increasing the refugee admissions goal is devastating to the refugees who remain in dangerous situations - and their loved ones waiting for reunification.

- This follows a significant delay in signing a revised Presidential Determination on refugee resettlement, which has caused irreparable damage to many refugees who were already approved for resettlement. The harm caused by the delay cannot be overstated—thousands of refugees who were ready for travel to the United States last month have seen their medical and security checks start to expire. This means that they will have to wait months—if not years—to actually be resettled in the United States and reunited with loved ones.
- Although we are encouraged by the restoration of [regional allocations](#) that undo the previous administration's harmfully restrictive resettlement categories, leaving the current admissions goal in place keeps thousands in harm's way. This amounts to a broken promise to the American public and prevents the United States from meaningfully rebuilding this vital humanitarian program.
- There is no moral reason to keep the historic-low refugee admissions goal of 15,000 in place, nor was there any morality in the significant delay in restoring regional allocations. Congress should hold the administration accountable to re-issuing an admissions goal of 62,500 this year, as promised, welcome as many refugees this fiscal year as possible, and truly rebuild the resettlement program to resettle 125,000 in FY 2022.
- It is important to note that there was no reason for the delay in restoring regional allocations and there is no reason to delay increasing the refugee admissions goal. While we welcome the administration

reconsidering their wrongful decision to continue the historic-low admissions goal, however, if they truly wanted to, they could increase that goal today.

- The administration said they wanted to rebuild the resettlement program, all they need to do to make that happen is to re-issue the admissions goal for FY21 of 62,500—as they proposed and consulted with Congress around—and increase refugee arrivals, so they can mitigate the harm this delay has had on refugees and their loved ones.

Refugee Resettlement enjoys bipartisan support.

- Since its inception in 1980, the US Refugee Admissions Program has enjoyed bi-partisan support from Republican and Democratic Presidents, and Congresses led by both parties.
- The average annual admissions goal has been 95,000.

As we face the worst refugee crisis in history, [resettlement](#) is a life-saving program for the most vulnerable.

- Worldwide, there are [reportedly](#) over 79.5 million displaced people, [29.6 million](#) of which are refugees and of those, 40% are children. Currently, [1.445 million](#) refugees need resettlement.
- If a refugee is selected for resettlement in the United States, they will then undergo an extensive security screening and vetting processes before traveling to the United States.
- Resettlement is a refugee's [last option](#) for safety.
- Resettlement is an essential part of a comprehensive strategy to respond to refugee crises. It assists by promoting regional stability, and strengthening [US national security](#).

The United States needs to rebuild the refugee resettlement program.

- We welcomed the administration's early verbal commitment to restoring the refugee resettlement program. It is essential that the administration follow through on this commitment with meaningful actions, such as raising the refugee admissions goal and rescinding the discriminatory resettlement categories.
- A president's power to admit additional refugees after an initial presidential determination is precedented, lawful, and in keeping with the powers Congress intended the president to exercise.
- We celebrate the rescinding of the discriminatory bans and proclamations that have harmed refugees, people seeking asylum, the stateless, immigrants, and families.

The United States can - and should - resettle refugees and welcome unaccompanied children and asylum seekers.

- We cannot turn our backs on those who we have pledged to protect. More than 115,000 refugees are in various stages of the resettlement process. Of those, more than 35,000 refugees are already approved by USCIS for resettlement. To reject them, after they have already waited years for resettlement, would be a betrayal to our country's values and humanitarian obligations.
- The United States has the capacity and resources to support robust resettlement and asylum protections. The administration can and should properly staff both U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) Refugee Corps and the Asylum Division, using funds already allocated, to address the backlog and uphold our commitment to offer the most vulnerable protection.
- We have welcomed far higher numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the past. The United States can, and has, consistently admitted both refugees and asylum seekers the two programs work in tandem as part of a comprehensive humanitarian response to effectively offer care and protection to those in greatest need, wherever they may be.
- These programs operate in tandem and complementarity to one another. One backlog should not create another, and it is immoral to pit vulnerable populations against one another.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is [secure](#).

- The US has the most significant screening and vetting process of resettlement countries, and we welcome the administration's commitment to reduce redundancy and streamline the refugee processing system. We support the administration's intent to initiate an interagency audit of refugee processing and vetting procedures and take rapid measures to institute major improvements and efficiencies, including by rebuilding the UNHCR resettlement referral pipeline and reinvesting in refugee resettlement domestic and overseas infrastructure.

Refugee resettlement agencies work closely with states and local officials and community stakeholders.

- Existing law requires they conduct quarterly consultations with relevant state and local government officials, including the state refugee coordinator, state refugee health coordinator, local governance, public health, welfare, social services, public safety, and public education.