

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 16, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Elaine Duke
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Eric Hargan
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Tillerson, Acting Secretary Duke, and Acting Secretary Hargan:

We write today regarding President Trump's Executive Order entitled "Presidential Executive Order on Resuming the United States Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) with Enhanced Vetting Capabilities." While we agree that protecting our Nation must be your top priority, we have serious concerns about the methods outlined in this Executive Order.

This Executive Order states that the Administration intends to restart the USRAP after an internal inter-agency review process. However, this Order only further undermines, dismantles, and stalls the process of resettling refugees. This new policy effectively bars admission to the U.S. of people from 11 nations and stateless Palestinians having resided in those countries with limited exemptions, while simultaneously diverting resources from processing refugees from these countries.

The designated countries made up 44 percent of the arrivals in Fiscal Year 2017. Given current conditions in barred countries like Iraq, Syria, Somalia, and Iran, new arrivals from these countries would likely make up an even higher percentage in Fiscal Year 2018. As a result, even Iraqis who worked for the U.S. military will face further delays and uncertainty preventing them from accessing safety. The new policy also puts an indefinite hold on the processing of I-730 applications from refugees, preventing refugees already living in the United States from reuniting with their spouses and children.

Further, the decision to continue to bar refugees from a set of countries, the vast majority of which are from Muslim-majority countries, sends a dangerous message that America does not care about vulnerable people fleeing violence and persecution. This message will continue to fuel anti-American propaganda and terrorist recruitment efforts, making Americans less safe both at home and abroad.

Refugees are already among the most securely-vetted of all travelers to the United States. The vetting process includes numerous screenings that can take approximately two years and refugees have no say in which country they will be resettled. We are concerned that the additional 90-day delay in this Order for the nationals specified, combined with cumbersome new data collection for all refugees, will create substantial logistical barriers for refugee applicants and put vulnerable families in danger.

Given these concerns, we respectfully request a prompt response to the following questions:

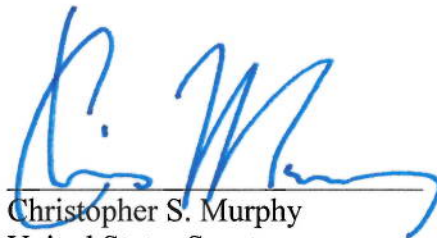
- 1) What specific measures are your agencies implementing to ensure that refugee admissions meet the 45,000 target set by the Presidential Determination for FY18?
- 2) How will the Administration ensure that new data collection requirements do not prevent refugees in the final stages of the resettlement process, including those from the 11 named countries, from facing substantial or indefinite delays due to the expiration of unrelated portions of their application?
- 3) How does the Administration plan to ensure the U.S. keeps its promises to our Iraqi wartime partners who currently rely on the USRAP for their own safety and that of their families?
- 4) Why was the determination made to place an indefinite hold on the processing of I-730 applications from refugees seeking to reunite with family members?

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senate



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senate

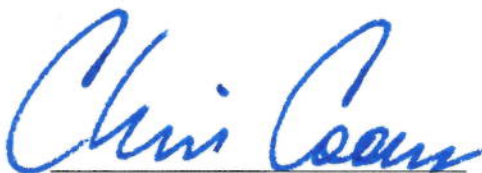


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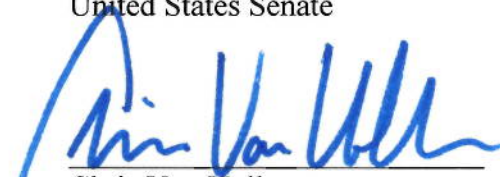

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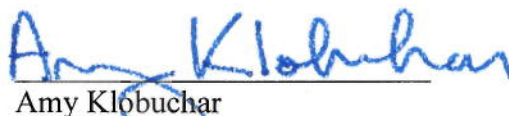

Benjamin L. Cardin
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Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate

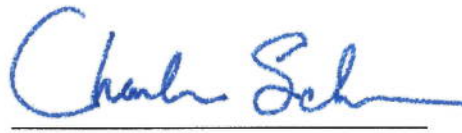

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