

# 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. 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. Local officials who can give consent likely includes mayors but could also include county executives or other appropriate officials in a locality. 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.

## 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."

**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, 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.

**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 and the proposed refugee admissions goal of 18,000, please visit our [Talking Points](http://bit.ly/EOPDTalkingPoints) primer: <http://bit.ly/EOPDTalkingPoints>. Additional resources debunking the administration's harmful "resettlement vs. asylum" narrative is available [here](http://bit.ly/PDFactsheet): <http://bit.ly/PDFactsheet>.

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

**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@cwsqglobal.org](mailto:ediaz@cwsqglobal.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).

**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](http://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](#)
- [New American Economy Report: From Struggle to Resilience](#) (see page 29 for state data appendix)
- [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](#)