

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 22, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Secretaries Pompeo and Nielsen:

We are deeply concerned about the slow pace of refugee resettlement in Fiscal Year 2018 (FY 18). We urge the Administration to make every effort to increase the rate of refugee admissions to meet the number established by the presidential determination for FY18.

We are in the midst of the largest refugee crisis in modern history with nearly 25.4 million refugees worldwide, over half of whom are children.^[1] Refugee resettlement is only available to the most vulnerable – less than one percent of all refugees – when safe return or local integration is not feasible.

Since the enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States has resettled an average of over 80,000 refugees per year. Despite the record-breaking level of displacement worldwide, the United States has admitted just 14,331 refugees in the first eight months of this fiscal year. At this slow pace, the U.S. will fall far short of the proposed refugee admissions level of 45,000 refugees in FY18, already the lowest annual commitment in the history of the program.

Refugees are the most carefully vetted of all travelers to the United States. They do not arrive in the U.S. without first clearing extensive biometric, biographic, intelligence, medical, and law enforcement checks, involving multiple agencies. We must continue to screen refugee applicants thoroughly and address the drivers of mass displacement abroad.

Our nation's founders came to our shores to escape religious persecution, and the United States has a long tradition of providing safe haven to refugees. Following the international community's tragic failure to shelter Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi genocide, the United States has set a positive example for the world by providing safe haven to the world's most vulnerable. Since 1975, the American people have generously welcomed more than three million refugees. With a global refugee crisis unprecedented in scale, the United States must maintain our leadership in welcoming those seeking safety from war and persecution.

For these reasons, we respectfully request your response to the following questions by July 5, 2018:

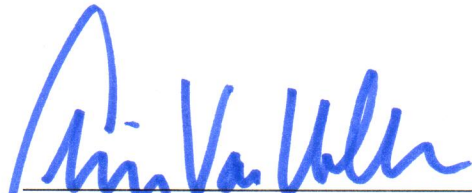
- 1) How many refugees do you expect to resettle during the remainder of FY18?

^[1] <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

- 2) What specific steps will you take, if any, to increase the rate of refugee resettlement for the remainder of the fiscal year?
- 3)
 - a. How many circuit rides have your agencies completed in FY 2018?
 - b. How many are planned for the remainder of the fiscal year?
 - c. How many Refugee Corps officers will join each circuit ride?
 - d. For each of these circuit rides, please also provide information regarding the location and the number of interviews conducted.
- 4) We are concerned about decisions made to reallocate staff and resources away from the program, further impeding refugee resettlement. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has reassigned Refugee Corps officers, who are specially trained to screen refugees abroad, to process domestic asylum cases.
 - a. What are the current staffing levels for the Refugee Corps and the Asylum Corps?
 - b. How many Refugee Corps officers have been reassigned?
 - c. What steps, if any, is the Administration taking to fill the vacancies for reassigned Refugee Affairs Division officer positions?
- 5) On January 29, 2018, Secretary Nielsen announced additional security measures for refugee admissions for nationals from eleven countries.^[2] What steps is the Administration taking to resume the processing of refugees from these eleven countries in a timely manner?
- 6) The admission of Iraqis who aided the United States mission in Iraq slowed considerably, as new applicants now must apply as refugees through the Direct Access Program for U.S.-affiliated Iraqis. What steps is the Administration taking to ensure that wartime partners, who served alongside U.S. Armed Forces and other government personnel, continue to have access to a path to safety in the United States?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

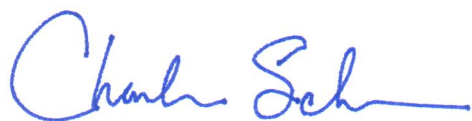


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

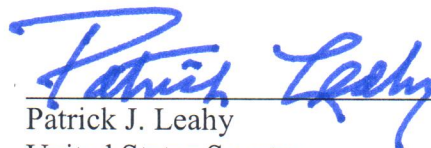


Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

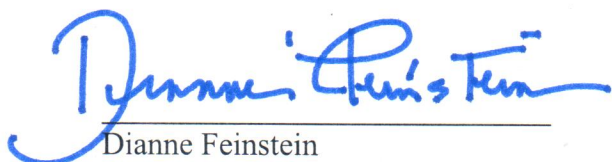
^[2] <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2018/01/29/dhs-announces-additional-enhanced-security-procedures-refugees-seeking-resettlement>



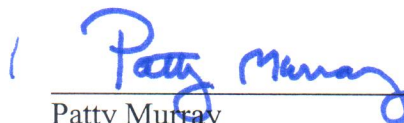
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



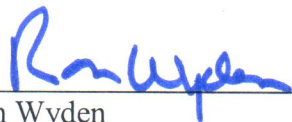
Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator



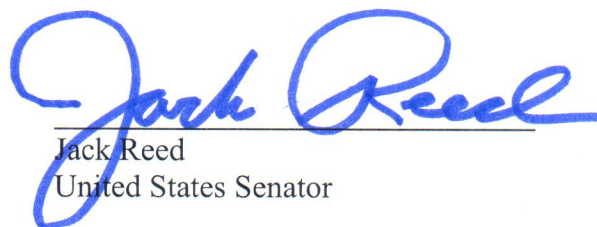
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



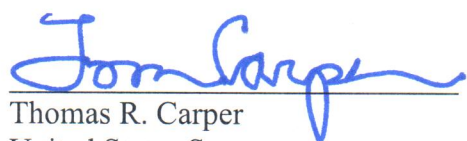
Patty Murray
United States Senator



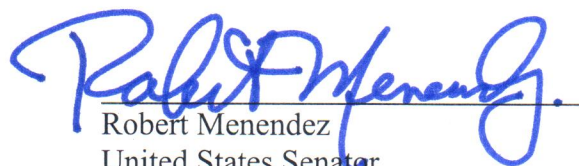
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



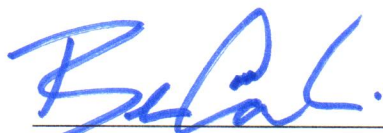
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



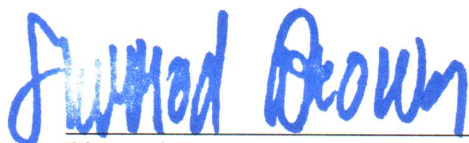
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



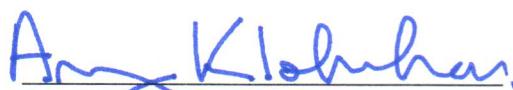
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



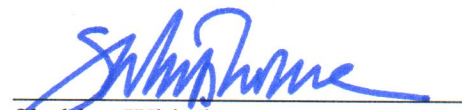
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



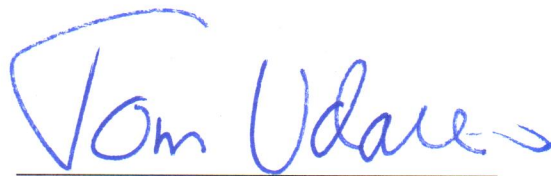
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



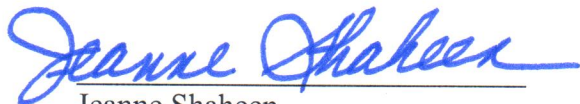
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



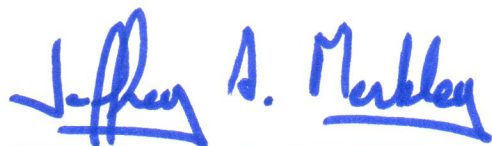
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



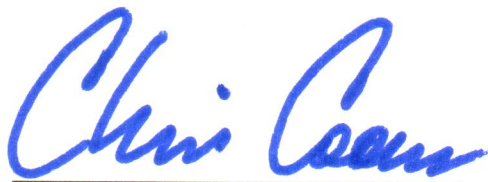
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



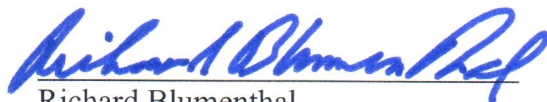
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



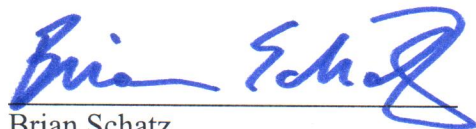
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



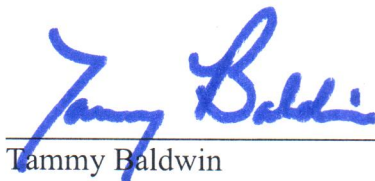
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



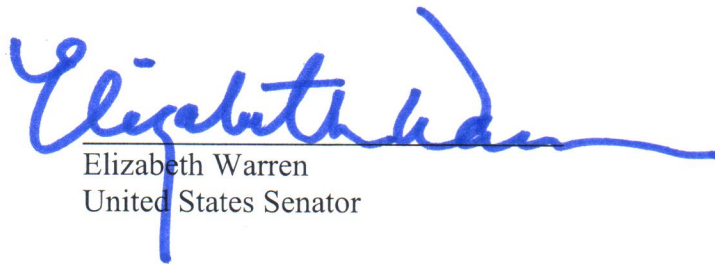
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



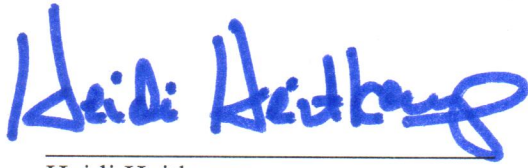
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



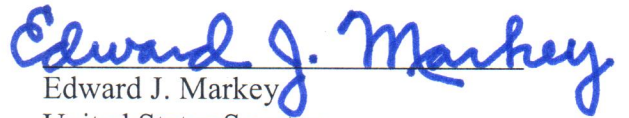
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



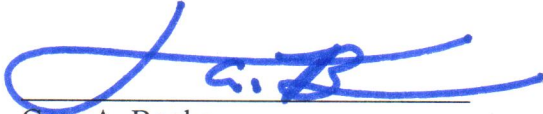
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



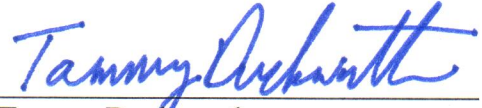
Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator



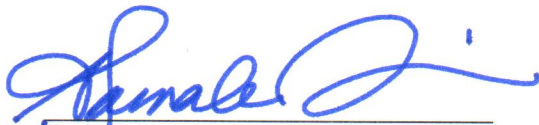
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



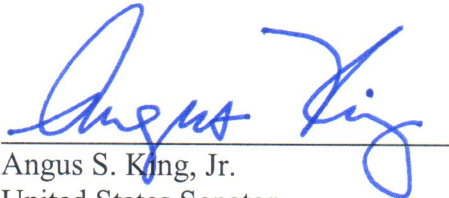
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator