

Talking Points for Congressional Advocacy — Summer 2025 Recess



Revised August 11, 2025

Overview

Our nation's programs to welcome and protect refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants here in the U.S. and around the world have been dramatically dismantled since January. Refugee admissions have been largely halted leaving tens of thousands stranded, USAID has been shut down, Temporary Protected Status and Humanitarian Parole for many countries has been terminated, and it is all but impossible to apply for asylum when approaching the US by land. Moreover, immigrants all over the United States now live in fear of being apprehended, sent to detention, and deported, all without access to due process.

Two major bills – one on domestic policy and one on foreign aid – have just narrowly passed Congress, putting the safety of refugee and immigrant communities at even greater risk. The massive domestic spending bill will “hurt millions of people throughout the country, with a laser focus on gutting immigrant communities,” said Naomi Steinberg, HIAS Vice President of U.S. Policy and Advocacy. “The bill is essentially a slush fund that will turbo-charge more raids, detentions, and rapid-fire deportations that defy basic due process norms. Simultaneously, it leaves refugee communities without access to support for basic needs. This is a dark day for the country, and we must bear witness to the terror this bill could bring.” Just days later, Congress voted to endorse the president's request to eliminate billions in foreign aid via a process known as “rescissions.” “This vote represents a stunning and cruel abdication of U.S. moral and humanitarian leadership that will have life-and death consequences for millions of people around the world,” said Noah Gottschalk, HIAS Vice President of International Policy and Advocacy. “Denying food, clean water, and medicine to people experiencing conflict, crisis, and forced displacement won't make the US stronger or more prosperous; on the contrary, it will make our world less stable, and all of us less secure.” As Members of Congress are in their districts for August recess, these talking points provide suggestions to express your concerns to them about these critical issues.

Background and Talking Points: Due Process and Deportation

What's Happening?

- On July 4th President Trump signed the “One Big Beautiful Bill” into law, allocating an unprecedented amount of federal spending - over \$150 billion - to advance the administration's campaign of mass detention and deportation without accountability, due process and respect for the rule of law. Since January, ICE has apprehended and deported an average of over 20,000 immigrants each month, including individuals with lawful status. This is more than a *threefold* increase from 2024. The majority of immigrants held in detention have no prior criminal convictions and are held in ICE facilities in poor living conditions. Mass deportation has caused widespread fear in communities, more family separation, and the loss of a valuable workforce. These policies have impacted over 15 million people across the country.
- The “One Big Beautiful Bill” has also stripped refugees and asylees, whom the U.S. has granted humanitarian protection, of access to critical programs that support them on their path to self-sufficiency and success. Refugees and asylees have lawful status in the United States and have resettled with their families in a country they now call home. Under the bill, however, they will no longer be eligible for

Medicaid (health insurance) and SNAP (food assistance), lifesaving programs that greatly improve health outcomes, educational attainment, and workforce participation.

- The administration has exhibited a careless disregard for due process that guarantees immigrants at risk of deportation have the opportunity to contest their removal, a legal requirement of the U.S. constitution as well as domestic and international law. Many people are deported to countries where they are at risk of human rights abuses, persecution, or torture, often in countries to which they have no prior connection. Asylum and the right to seek humanitarian protection in the U.S. has essentially disappeared. More recently, the U.S. Supreme Court has greenlighted many of these efforts.
- For additional information and policy asks around about the inhumane conditions in immigration detention you can take a look at this [2-pager](#) from the Interfaith Immigration Coalition.

What Can Congress Do?

- We need Congress to conduct oversight of ICE and CBP to ensure the administration follows the law. This includes holding hearings with witnesses and writing public letters to the White House and agencies to increase accountability and transparency of their lawless actions. Congressional members should also organize delegations to visit the southern border and ICE detention facilities to increase transparency.
- Educate the public and uplift the stories of constituents, families, and children who have been impacted by the harm of mass detention and deportation.
- Introduce legislation that is pro-immigrant and pro-asylum. This includes bills that will increase access to representation, improve detention facility conditions, protect unaccompanied children, and restore the right to seek asylum.
- Invest in a system that provides immigrants the opportunity to contribute to their communities through more lawful pathways to permanent status or humanitarian protection.
- Work to reform our immigration courts so that they are fairer and more efficient, protecting the right to seek protection while addressing the enormous backlog in cases.

Background and Talking Points: The US Refugee Admissions Program

What's Happening?

- Refugee arrivals through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), including Private Resettlement through Welcome Corps, have been mostly put on pause since January 27, 2025.
- Quickly following the ban, HIAS joined 11 other plaintiffs, and sued the administration, asking for refugee processing and admissions to start again.
- Despite the court's rulings that the administration must admit a small number of refugees, so far, only a handful have been admitted.
- The Lautenberg program has also been paused due to the administration's refugee ban. This is of particular importance given the rapidly deteriorating conditions for religious minorities in Iran right now.
- While the litigation is ongoing, the issue of refugee resettlement to the U.S. was further complicated by the administration's assertion that its most recent Travel Ban applies to refugees from impacted countries.

- The administration is seeking to gut funding for longer-term integration support for refugees and asylees by zeroing out the Office of Refugee Resettlement's refugee cash and medical assistance, Matching Grant, and Refugee Support Services programs.

What Can Congress Do?

- Do not let the halt of refugee arrivals get lost in the shuffle of all the other harmful immigration actions taken by the administration. Fully utilize Congress' oversight role and keep the pressure on the administration to answer for why they have indefinitely stopped the USRAP in its tracks. Hold them accountable and fight for transparency from them.
- Fight to ensure that funding for key resettlement-related accounts isn't gutted during the FY26 appropriations process, including funding for refugees and asylees who are already legally in the U.S. and are eligible for access to longer term integration support through funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement
- Push the administration to restart the admission of Iranian religious arrivals through the Lautenberg program
- Push the administration to adhere to the legal mandate to issue a Presidential Determination for refugee admissions for the next fiscal year.
- Make sure that Congress hears from constituents about how local communities want to continue to welcome refugees and the positive impacts resettled refugees have had in their communities.

Background and Talking Points: Foreign Aid

What's Happening?

- The suspension of foreign aid is unprecedented and breathtakingly cruel. It has stopped ongoing, lifesaving programs in their tracks, leaving millions of people around the world vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and hunger. On top of this, President Trump, with the support of all but handful of Republicans in the House and Senate, just rescinded \$8 billion in foreign aid that Congress had approved just a few months earlier, including crucial funding for food, clean water, medicine, education, HIV/AIDS prevention, mental health support, hygiene kits, and other vital resources.
- The effects on HIAS and our partners have been immediate and devastating, including ending life-saving programs for displaced and at-risk children, mental health and psychosocial support for refugees experiencing high levels of distress, economic inclusion programs that supported refugees in establishing new lives, and protection against trafficking and violence for women and girls around the world.
- The President has requested even further cuts in the upcoming 2026 fiscal year, which altogether would signify an [87% drop](#) in foreign aid, but Congress has the opportunity to reject these cruel cuts and uphold this country's longstanding tradition of protecting refugees across the globe.

What Can Congress Do?

- Fight to uphold America's proud bipartisan tradition as the world's largest provider of foreign aid by 1) providing robust support in the FY26 budget and 2) rejecting any further rescissions requests from the Trump administration. Foreign assistance funding represents less than 1% of the entire federal budget, and it saves millions of lives.

- To make this a reality, Congress needs to hear from constituents like you about how [local communities approve of international humanitarian assistance](#), particularly when used to improve people's health, help women and girls, educate children, and help poor countries develop their economies.