

Talking Points for Congressional Advocacy — August 2025 Recess



Overview

Our nation's commitment to refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants has been dramatically dismantled since January. Refugee Admissions have been halted leaving tens of thousands stranded, USAID has been dismantled, 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, many drawn to the United States for the beacon of freedom we represent now live in fear of being sent to detention arbitrarily or back to danger they fled.

Now, after passage of a massive spending bill designed to force the President's domestic policy wish list through Congress, the safety of refugee and immigrant communities is even more at risk. The 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."

Background and Talking Points: Due Process and Deportation

What's Happening?

- In July, Congress passed the "One Big Beautiful Bill" into law allocating an unprecedented amount of federal spending - over \$150 billion - to advance the Trump administration's campaign of mass detention and deportation without accountability and respect for the rule of law.
- Since January, ICE has apprehended and deported 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. Mass deportation has caused widespread fear in communities, more family separation, and the loss of a valuable workforce. Over 15 million people are impacted directly.
- 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 central tenet of the U.S. constitution as well as domestic and international law. Many people are being 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 all but disappeared.

What Can Congress Do?

- We need Congress to have 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.
- 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-refugee. 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. Direct spending on a legal process that more equitably and efficiently adjudicates cases rather than more detention facilities and rapid-fire deportations.

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, under 20 have been admitted.
- 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 of 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
- 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 issued a

“rescissions” memo to Congress requesting the elimination of \$8.3 billion in foreign aid for the 2025 fiscal year, 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 signaled his intent to request even further cuts in the 2026 fiscal year, which altogether would signify an [87% drop](#) in foreign aid.

What Can Congress Do?

- Call for a full rejection of the rescission package and prevent \$8 billion in cuts to foreign aid for the 2025 fiscal year.
- Fight to ensure that funding for foreign assistance isn’t gutted in the budget for the 2026 fiscal year. Foreign assistance funding represents less than 1% of the entire federal budget, and it saves hundreds of thousands of lives.
- Make sure that Congress hears from constituents about how [local communities approve of international humanitarian assistance](#), particularly when used to improve people’s health, help women and girls, educate children, and helping poor countries develop their economies.
- Keep the pressure on the administration and publicly speak out about how humanitarian assistance is provided to support security as well as economic and political development of recipient countries and people.