

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

November 16, 2015

The Honorable Jeh Johnson  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
301 7th Street Southwest  
Washington, DC 20024

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of the Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Johnson and Secretary Kerry,

I write to you today regarding our nation's security and the existing measures in place to guarantee Americans' and Nevadans' safety as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. State Department carry out the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). In light of the tragic and barbaric terrorist attacks in Paris, France, as well as Beirut, Lebanon, it is more important now than ever to ensure the U.S. is doing all that it can to thoroughly review every application for refugee referrals.

As the global community works to address the growing refugee crisis that has resulted from the violence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other extremists in the Middle East, the U.S. must be acutely aware that terrorists may use the refugee admittance process as an opportunity to reach U.S. soil to carry out attacks on Americans. As a Senator from Nevada, I want to ensure the safety of my state given that it is home to Las Vegas, a top tourist destination in the U.S. with over 40 million visitors annually, as well other popular tourist locations within the state such as Lake Tahoe. While this Administration has claimed that the threat of ISIS is waning, Friday's attacks have made clear that its influence is still strong, and this extremist group is determined to find ways to commit acts of terrorism against America and other Western nations.

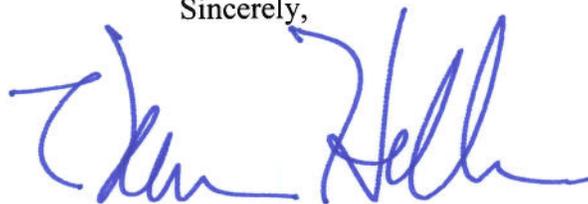
Despite concerns from many in Congress and the American public regarding the threat of ISIS and the safety of our nation, the Administration has maintained its commitment to admitting additional Syrian refugees to the U.S. While I recognize the importance of assisting these individuals during a time of crisis, I also strongly believe Congress must conduct thorough oversight to determine whether the existing vetting process by DHS and the State Department is robust enough. To ensure this oversight, as well as the safety of Nevadans, I respectfully request a timely response to the following questions related to the existing refugee admittance process:

1. How many Syrian refugees have been admitted to the U.S. in total between 2011 and today? How many of those Syrian refugees were re-located to Las Vegas or any other location in Nevada? Please identify the number of refugees in each specific location in Nevada, as well as the location and number of Syrian refugees in states bordering Nevada.

2. On a location-by-location basis, what are the demographics of the Syrian refugees being admitted to the U.S.? Does the USRAP prioritize any specific demographics, such as religion or women and children, when admitting refugees into the U.S.?
3. When refugees are re-located to cities like Las Vegas, does DHS or the State Department follow up with the domestic resettlement agencies to verify the status of the refugee, including employment, self-sufficiency, location of residence, and cultural adjustment?
4. Are there mechanisms in place for the DHS or the State Department to determine whether refugees move to other locations in the U.S. after being relocated? How many Syrian refugees are currently living in Nevada, regardless of where they were originally relocated by the U.S. government?
5. Is there a process in place to fast-track admittance of a refugee if they have a family member already accepted as a refugee in the U.S.?
6. What is the process used to ensure Syrian refugees have never been affiliated with a terrorist group or extremists? Is this a coordinated effort among multiple intelligence agencies? Please describe this process in detail.
7. Given the recent attacks in Paris, will the Administration be revisiting the USRAP process to enhance the verification requirements to ensure our national security?
8. Does DHS or the State Department, through the screening process, also ensure that any family members of the refugee, who may not be accompanying them, do not have affiliations with a terrorist group or extremist?
9. Does the Administration plan to establish or utilize a parole program as a way to fast-track admittance of Syrian refugees? Would such a process first receive Congressional approval? Would such a process still include robust verification requirements to protect U.S. national security?
10. Does the U.S. work in coordination with other allied nations to ensure their refugee admittance process also includes robust verification so that potential terrorists are not granted greater access to that nation or its allies?

Again, I appreciate your attention to this serious matter as we work toward the shared goal of ensuring the safety of our country. I respectfully request a response by November 23, 2015.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER  
U.S. Senator