

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

November 16, 2015

The Honorable Brian Sandoval
Governor of Nevada
State Capitol Building
101 N. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Governor Sandoval,

Like you, I hold the responsibility to ensure the safety of Nevadans above all else. I write to you today to share my concern for the safety of Nevadans as it relates to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) carried out by the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and request that you reject further acceptance of Syrian refugees under this program until certain questions about its effectiveness are answered.

Our state and nation are facing increased threats from extremists like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), especially in light of the tragic terrorist attacks in Paris, France. As our nation looks to combat terrorism, I believe we must do what we can to reduce these threats and ensure Las Vegas, Reno, and other parts of the state are secure. However, I have serious concerns about the effectiveness of the USRAP program in ensuring the safety of our nation and believe that there are many questions that still need to be answered about the program before the further issuance of refugee status. ISIS may use such a program to reach U.S. soil to carry out attacks on Americans, and I want to ensure Nevada, given its status as a tourist destination with over 40 million visitors annually, is protected.

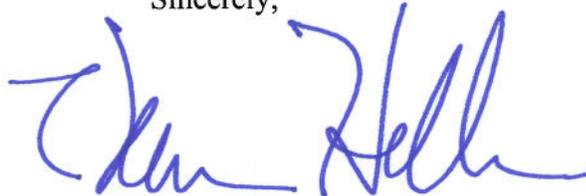
That is why, through Congressional oversight, I have sent a letter to the State Department and DHS asking for clarification on the verification requirements during the USRAP process, the number and demographics of Syrian refugees currently admitted under this program in Nevada and across the nation, and what measures are taken to thoroughly vet every applicant for ties to terrorism.

While I recognize the merits of assisting refugees during a time of crisis, I also need assurances that the safety of Nevadans will not be compromised as a result of accepting refugees. Unfortunately, at this time, there are too many unanswered questions about the effectiveness of this program and ultimately the number of Syrian refugees who may have come to our state after being resettled elsewhere in the U.S. Until my questions have been sufficiently answered by DHS and the State Department and I believe that this program no longer presents a threat to Nevadans, I encourage you to reject any further acceptance of Syrian refugees in the State of Nevada. The safety of Nevadans should be our top priority, and the Administration must

prove to Congress and the American public that the USRAP process is working in Nevadans' best interests before committing to bringing in additional Syrian refugees.

Again, I appreciate your attention to this serious matter as we work toward the shared goal of ensuring the safety of Nevada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean Heller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dean" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Heller".

DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator