

**Helping Refugees Integrate into the United States:  
The Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act**

Rep. Keith Ellison

The United States has a long tradition of helping refugees fleeing persecution resettle into local communities. In 2011, the U.S. welcomed more than 56,000 refugees from countries around the world.

Unfortunately, even the most welcoming local communities are struggling to meet the needs of incoming refugees because of increasingly limited resources. Also, with the current economic situation, achieving self-sufficiency is increasingly difficult for refugees. The United States must recommit to ensuring that vulnerable individuals and families fleeing persecution and war can achieve self-sufficiency, and integrate and contribute to American communities and society.

The Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act reforms both the pre-arrival processing of refugees for resettlement and the post-arrival resettlement program, with a goal of supporting refugees' integration into U.S. communities.

**1) Pre-Arrival Reforms:**

- Streamlines refugee processing abroad, while taking advantage of that processing time to provide refugees with English classes and work orientation training.
- Encourages the appointment of a White House coordinator for federal agencies that works with refugees to coordinate and address refugee protection issues.
- Allows refugees to be admitted to the United States as lawful permanent residents, saving scarce government and NGO resources.

**2) Refugee Resettlement Reforms:**

- Strengthens grant programs to support refugees' integration into local communities. In particular, this bill expands the public-private Matching Grant program, which has been highly successful in helping refugees become economically self-sufficient.
- Creates new grant programs for:
  - helping refugees integrate into their communities, including providing funds for housing, employment, and health care;
  - case management programs to direct refugees to services for which they are eligible; and
  - emergency resettlement needs to aid in the event that the host community needs additional resources to help with new arrivals.
- Removes the expiration of supplemental security income benefits for the most vulnerable refugees.

The Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act provides meaningful reforms and additional resources to continue the United States' tradition of welcoming people who have fled persecution in their own countries and to help them integrate into the United States. To co-sponsor, please contact Erin Begnal ([erin.begnal@mail.house.gov](mailto:erin.begnal@mail.house.gov)) with Rep. Keith Ellison.