



Frequently Asked Questions on the September 26th, 2019 Executive Order Requiring State/Local Consent for Refugee Resettlement

Credit: Sarah Williamson

1. What is the Executive Order Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement (State/Local Refugee EO)¹?

An Executive Order by President Trump issued on September 26, 2019, requiring official consent from state and local government officials for federal government to resettle refugees in their area.

2. What does it do?

The State/Local Refugee EO implements an earlier proposal that would require greater involvement by states and local jurisdictions in the placement and resettlement of refugees. (The earlier proposal was reflected in [EO 13780](#)² from March 6, 2017). The State/Local Refugee EO requires the Secretary of State (DOS) and Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop and carry out a process within 90 days to determine whether both states and localities across the country consent to the resettlement of refugees in their locales. The Secretary of State will then publish any consents/approvals from states and localities.

3. Who will the State/Local Refugee EO impact?

It applies to all refugees coming through the DOS Reception and Placement Program (R&P), basically all refugees who are vetted overseas and brought to the United States by DOS. With limited exceptions, under this new EO, refugees can only be resettled in locations where both the state and local governments consent to their resettlement.

4. Are there any exceptions to the State/Local Refugee EO requiring state and local approval for resettlement?

Yes. The exceptions in the State/Local Refugee EO include situations in which denying resettlement in that locale would be inconsistent with policies and strategies established under federal law covering Office of Refugee Resettlement Programs and other applicable law.³ If the Secretary of State in consultation with the Secretary of HHS and the Secretary of Homeland Security, decides to grant the exception and allow a refugee to resettle in a “non-consent” state or locale, then the Secretary of State has to notify the President.

5. How would applying this exception work?

We do not know at this time. We are reviewing and have inquired for more information on the process that will enable the exception.

6. What is the Catholic position on welcoming refugees and refugee resettlement generally?

Welcoming those escaping persecution, including refugees is a core social Catholic teaching concept. It reflects the belief that every human being is created in the image of God and is therefore entitled to dignity and respect. The Catholic Church views assisting those in need as a fundamental Christian duty that is derived directly from the words and the life of Christ, who himself was a migrant and part of a refugee family. We as Christians are called to welcome our new neighbors with the same love and compassion we would want ourselves to be shown in a time of persecution. Refugees from all over the world are sent to our communities and are fleeing danger, exploitation, and persecution.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) working through local Catholic Charities and thousands of Catholic volunteers has resettled an estimated 1 million of the over 3 million refugees resettled in the modern U.S. refugee program. USCCB strongly supports the vital state and local engagement in resettlement, and the current system that facilitates that crucial role. On the other hand, we are concerned that this policy will invite legal challenges and could negatively impact refugee welcome and family unity and add greatly to both processing uncertainty and refugee processing time.

7. How do I support refugee resettlement in my community at this time?

- **Voice Your Support for Refugees to [Your Elected Leaders](#)**
- **Learn More about Refugees and Refugee Resettlement.** See our [Refugee Resources](#) on our Justice for Immigrants page.⁴
- **Volunteer to Assist and Welcome Refugees.** Look to participate in our [Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees and Immigrants Program](#).⁵
- **Pray for [Refugees](#) and Participate and Lead [Inclusive Activities](#) in Your Parish.** See our resource, [How the Church Assists Immigrants and Refugees](#).⁶

Endnotes

1 *Executive Order, Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement*, September 26, 2019, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-enhancing-state-local-involvement-refugee-resettlement/>

2 Executive Order 13780, Section 6(d), March 6, 2017, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states-2/>

3 “Authorization for programs for domestic resettlement of and assistance to refugees,” 8 USC sec. 1522, available at <https://www.govregs.com/uscode/8/1522> (referenced 8 USC sec. 1522, (a)(2)(B) &(C) and other federal law).

4 Justice for Immigrants, *What We Are Working On: Refugees*, available at <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/what-we-are-working-on/refugees/>

5 Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees, a USCCB initiative that links local parishes to refugee communities of welcome. For more information see <https://brycs.org/promising/0151/>

6 Justice for Immigrants, Community Engagement Resources, *Ways to Assist Immigrants and Refugees*, available at <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Transitioning-to-a-New-Administration-Assisting-Immigrants-and-Refugees-English-5.28.19.pdf>