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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6250

February 5, 2016

Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson,

We write today regarding the Administration's recent announcement of its planned expansion of the Refugee Admissions Program in Central America. We are interested in learning the details of this expansion, particularly what improvements are planned to the program for better utilization by potentially eligible refugees in the covered countries.

On November 14, 2014, Vice President Biden announced the Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee/Parole Program, an in-country refugee/parole program for minors in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras with parents lawfully present in the U.S.[1] This program allows individuals living in the U.S. to request a refugee visa for unmarried children under the age of 21.[2] Additionally, if the second parent in Central America is lawfully married to the parent in the U.S., the second parent will be included with the child's petition, making the second parent a candidate for refugee and parole status.[3]

Pursuant to this program, a parent under one of the following categories can request program access: 1) Lawful Permanent Resident; 2) Temporary Protected Status; 3) Parolee, granted for at least a year; 4) Deferred Action recipient, granted for at least a year; 5) Deferred Enforced Departure recipient; and 6) Withholding of Removal grantee.[4] According to the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, as of January 11, 2016, processing centers have received 6,488 applications: 5,590 in El Salvador, 137 in Guatemala, and 761 in Honduras.[5]

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[1] Ricardo Zuniga, *Promoting Prosperity and Security in Central America,* The White House (Nov. 14, 2014), https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/11/14/promoting-prosperity-and-security-central-america.
[2] U.S. Dep't of State, Office of Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, *In-Country Refugee/Parole Program for Minors in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras With Parents Lawfully Present in the United States,* (Nov. 14, 2014), http://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2014/234067.htm.
[3] *Id.*
[4] Official documents provided by State's Office of Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.
[5] *Id.*

Last week, the Administration announced an expansion of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program in Central America for FY2016.[6] We understand that the President has authorized an additional $70 million from the U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund for these purposes.[7] However, further details of this expansion remain unclear. To ensure that the Committee fully understands the President's most recent proposal, we respectfully request that you provide the following information no later than February 17, 2016:

1. Please describe, in detail, when the expansion of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program will take effect.

2. In FY2015, the Administration allocated 4,000 refugee visas for CAM out of the 70,000 globally available.[8] How many, if any, additional refugee visas does the Administration plan to allocate in FY2016?

3. Exactly how many more Central American refugees will be admitted in FY2016 pursuant to this expansion?

4. Will humanitarian parole still be used for other Central Americans? If so, what are the differentiating factors when granting parole versus refugee status?

5. After being admitted as a refugee, individuals must apply for a green card after one year of coming to the United States. How will this new refugee policy impact the number of people currently applying for deferred action under the DACA or DAPA programs?

6. For FY2016, the Administration allocated 3,000 refugee visas for Latin America and the Caribbean and 6,000 for the unallocated reserve out of the ceiling of 85,000 visas.[9] Please list the regions of the world where the Administration will take *fewer* refugees as a direct result of this expansion.

    a. If different regions of the world will not be affected by this expansion, what specific countries in Latin America and the Caribbean will be provided with *fewer* visas as the Administration prioritizes El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras?

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[6] Carol Morello, *Obama Administration to Expand Number of Refugees Admitted to U.S.*, Wash Post (Jan. 13, 2016), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/obama-administration-to-expand-number-of-refugees-admitted-to-us/2016/01/13/35613e74-ba0b-11e5-99f3-184bc379b12d_story.html.
[7] *Id.*
[8] U.S. Dep't of State, Office of Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, *In-Country Refugee/Parole Program for Minors in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras With Parents Lawfully Present in the United States* (Nov. 14, 2104), http://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2014/234067.htm.
[9] Memorandum for the Secretary of State, *Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2016*, The White House (Sept. 29, 2015), https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/29/presidential-determination-presidential-determination-refugee-admissions.

b. Please include the number of visas the Administration plans to reallocate from the unallocated reserve.

7. Prior to this expansion, has the Administration conducted a review to determine if CAM has been effective? CAM was launched by the Administration to prevent a second surge of immigrants at our border.[10] However, since September, the U.S. has seen a rising number of unaccompanied children and family units arriving at the southwest border.[11] What limitations in CAM have prevented full use of the program by potential applicants? What metrics for success have been developed for both CAM and this new expansion and what data currently suggests this is the best course of action?

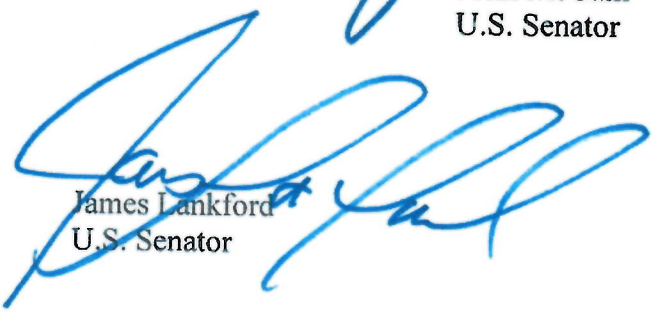
The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized by Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate "the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of all agencies and departments of the Government."[12] Additionally, S. Res. 73 (114th Congress) authorizes the Committee to examine "the efficiency and economy of all branches and functions of Government with particular references to the operations and management of Federal regulatory policies and programs."[13] For purposes of this request, please refer to the definitions and instructions in enclosure.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Brooke Ericson of the Committee staff at (202) 224-4751. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Ron Johnson
Chairman

John McCain
U.S. Senator



James Lankford
U.S. Senator

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[10] Ricardo Zuniga, *Promoting Prosperity and Security in Central America,* The White House (Nov. 14, 2014), https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/11/14/promoting-prosperity-and-security-central-america.
[11] Paul Bedard, *Illegal Youths Crossing Border Jumps 269%, HHS Warns of Running Out of Beds,* WASHINGTON EXAMINER (Nov. 30, 2015), http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/illegal-youths-crossing-border-jumps-269-hhs-warns-of-running-out-of-beds/article/2577279.
[12] S. Rule XXV(k); *see also* S. Res. 445, 108th Cong. (2004).
[13] S. Res. 73 § 12, 114th Cong. (2015).