



December 4, 2015

Dear Representative:

Asian Americans Advancing Justice (Advancing Justice) is a national partnership of five non-profit, non-partisan organizations that work to advance the human and civil rights of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through advocacy, public policy, public education, and litigation. We are based in Washington D.C., Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. **As you consider vital year-end spending legislation, we urge you to reject all harmful immigration appropriations riders, including those that would stop, pause or defund vital refugee assistance.**

We are all shocked and saddened by the recent attacks in Paris and elsewhere but now is not the time to close our hearts and our state to people fleeing violence and terror. We must be careful not to act impulsively in response to recent violence and we must be vigilant against enacting policies targeting people based on their national origin or religion. Due to the legacy of the internment of Japanese Americans in WWII and the treatment of Arab, Middle Eastern and South Asian after 9/11, the Asian American community is all too familiar with hasty actions based on discrimination and fear.

Protecting national security and public safety is important to all of us, but we should not let fear and prejudice guide our decisions about whom to welcome to America. The refugee resettlement program is already the most difficult way to enter the United States, routinely taking individuals several years to be processed. All refugees undergo thorough and rigorous security screenings prior to arriving in the United States, including but not limited to multiple biographic and identity investigations; FBI biometric checks; in-depth, in-person interviews by Department of Homeland Security officers; medical screenings; investigations by the National Counterterrorism Center, and other checks by U.S. domestic and international intelligence agencies. In addition, other measures such as mandatory supervisory review of all decisions, random case assignment, and forensic document testing are in place to maintain the security of the refugee resettlement program.

Policies that would impose unnecessary restrictions or hurdles on the refugee resettlement process waste valuable resources. Advancing Justice is particularly concerned about discriminatory policies targeting Syrian and/or Iraqi refugees or other refugees based on national origin or religion.

America should remain a place of safety for people seeking refuge and peace from around the globe. And we should not allow political games to hold up legislation to continue funding vital federal programs and services. We strongly urge you to reject proposals that would limit or impose unnecessary processes that effectively prevent future refugees from coming to the United States.

If you have questions about our recommendation, please contact Erin Oshiro at Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC (eoshiro@advancingjustice-aaajc.org). Thank you.


Sincerely,



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