

## **Advocating for Refugee Protection and Resettlement The Episcopal Church**

### **Overview**

In the simplest terms, a refugee is someone who has had to flee their home to escape persecution, war, or other disaster and seeks refuge, or protection, elsewhere. The legal definition of refugee in the United States is based on international treaties and domestic U.S. law. Under the Refugee Act of 1980, a person is a refugee if they are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin because they have suffered or fear they will suffer persecution based on nationality, race, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Refugees come from all over the world, depending on current crises and conflicts. Right now, there are 25.4 million individuals identified by UN Refugee Agency as refugees.

### **Episcopal Church Policy on Refugee Issues**

The Episcopal Church has official policy from General Convention on protecting refugees dating back to the 1930s. Those policies have spanned from decrying discriminatory and restrictive immigration policies to affirming the importance of congregation-level engagement in welcoming refugees and immigrants. The Episcopal Church affirms the sanctity of asylum and condemns policies that aim to criminalize all migrants or weaken human rights protections for migrants. With a deep understanding of the dignity of every human being, The Episcopal Church strongly denounces the xenophobia that undergirds much of the anti-migrant and anti-refugee policies and treatment that exists around the world.

To address large-scale crises and to offer life-saving protections, the Episcopal Church has long supported a robust refugee resettlement program for those fleeing their countries to escape persecution, oppression, and war. Through the Episcopal Migration Ministries, our Church has worked in public-private partnership with the U.S. Government to resettle nearly 95,000 refugees since the 1980s. The Episcopal Church is committed to continuing this tradition of welcoming refugees to peaceful homes and hopeful futures in the United States.

### **Priority Issue Areas**

#### *Setting the refugee admissions number*

Each year, the President, in consultation with Congress, sets an annual target for refugee admissions known as the Presidential Determination (PD). By law, the PD is meant to be based on the global humanitarian need and national interest. Since the U.S.'s refugee admissions program was formalized in 1980, the average PD has been 95,000, fluctuating at different points to respond to increased global need. On September 17, 2018, Secretary of State Pompeo announced the Administration will set the PD at 30,000 for FY19. Last year, the President set the PD for FY18 at 45,000, a historic low, and estimates indicate only around 21,000 refugees will be resettled by September 30th, less than 50% of the FY18 PD. The Episcopal Church has pushed back against these restrictions on refugees in the strongest possible terms through advocacy to Congress and the Administration.

### *Maintaining the infrastructure of the resettlement program*

Services such as language and job training, mentorship, and healthcare assistance offered through Episcopal Migration Ministries' network of affiliate and community partners ensure refugees are able to have the tools they need to succeed in their new communities. To facilitate this delivery of services in the resettlement program, the State Department contracts with the nine national refugee resettlement agencies (RAs), called "Reception and Placement" (R&P) contracts, based on the RAs plans to serve refugees in the upcoming fiscal year. This year, the State Department has indicated that not all nine RAs will receive R&P contracts to resettle refugees in Fiscal Year 2019. The Office of Government Relations interfaces with the U.S. federal government and Congress to ensure that these programs and services provided to refugees are robustly funded and that this critical public-private partnership which has successfully helped resettled refugees integrate into communities across the U.S. for decades is preserved.

### *Protecting and supporting refugees globally*

In 2016, the United Nations developed the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The New York Declaration was a critical commitment from member states of the UN to work toward safe, orderly, and regular migration for refugees and migrants and it set up the process for the development of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration. The Office of Government Relations and the Episcopal Church's liaison to the UN worked to influence this important benchmark. We continue to focus our work on ensuring that member states implement and uphold agreements made in the New York Declaration and the Global Compacts, long after the summits end.

### *Addressing root causes of migration through peacebuilding and international development*

The Episcopal Church is committed to addressing extreme poverty, conflict and suffering around the world. We work in partnership with Episcopal congregations, companion dioceses, and the Anglican Communion to advance U.S. government policies that support the world's most vulnerable. We work to foster global reconciliation and ensure that all might eventually live safe, secure, prosperous lives. We address food insecurity by ensuring that federal programs, from child nutrition programs to international food assistance, serve those most in need and are efficiently administered. We support legislation and policies that aim to prevent domestic violence and gender-based violence in foreign countries, and that protect the human rights of LGBT persons. These efforts are aimed at preventing refugee crises from emerging in the first place and to uplift the dignity of every human being.

### **Take Action**

Join the Episcopal Public Policy Network <https://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org> to advocate directly to your elected officials about protecting and supporting refugees.

## **Advocating for Immigration Reform The Episcopal Church**

### **Overview**

Immigrants enter the United States to obtain jobs, feed families, reunite with loved ones, gain opportunities and more. Immigration to the U.S. is generally granted for three reasons: employment, family reunification, and humanitarian protection. The U.S. immigration system is highly regulated and subject to numerical limitations and eligibility requirements. Currently, there is no established pathway to citizenship for undocumented people living in the U.S, and many families live in constant fear of separation. Our immigration system does not reflect the needs of our modern economy, families, or communities seeking to thrive.

### **Episcopal Church Policy on Immigration**

Firmly rooted in our ministry of welcome, the Episcopal Church has become a national leader in immigration advocacy. Informed by their experiences working with and in immigrant communities, individuals, congregations, diocese, deputies and bishops have brought the broken pieces of our immigration system to General Convention. The resolutions passed by General Convention form the immigration policy backbone of the Episcopal Church and guide the work of the Office of Government Relations in their advocacy work and Episcopalian advocates across the country.

### **Priority Issue Areas**

#### *Maintaining family unity*

Family unity is the crux of successful communities. The current Administration has kept families apart through a variety of means, including clamping down on refugee resettlement, but in May 2018 instituted an official policy that led to the separation of thousands of children from their parents at the southern border. Over the course of several months, these family separations garnered incredible push back from people of faith and good conscious. The Episcopal Church held a 12 hour Vigil for Family Unity, advocated directly to Congress about this policy, and continues to engage in advocacy calling for family unity to be the center of our immigration policies.

#### *Building a pathway to citizenship*

For the majority of the 11 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States, there is no accessible legal pathway through which they can adjust their status and therefore remain with their families and seek lawful employment. The Episcopal Church supports nothing less than a pathway to full citizenship for undocumented immigrants wishing to come out of the shadows.

#### *Protecting Dreamers*

The Episcopal Church supports legislation that would provide a path to citizenship for undocumented youth who arrived in this country as infants or children and have grown up as members of our communities. Every child growing up in America deserves the opportunity to grow into full stature as a member of our society and to achieve his or her dreams. Withholding legal status from these children not only hurts them, but it deprives America of future generations of dedicated citizens, innovators, entrepreneurs and public servants.

#### *Enacting reasonable and compassionate enforcement & security measures*

The Episcopal Church supports common sense immigration enforcement policies that respect the dignity and worth of every human being. Those who break our immigration laws in order to do us harm need to be prevented from doing so, but the increased militarization of the border, programs

that encourage racial profiling, and prison-like detention for migrants and families is not the solution. The Episcopal Church supports alternatives to costly and prison-like detention for individuals who pose no threat to public safety, and the end to programs that separate families and erode trust between law enforcement and immigrant communities, such as the 287-g and the Secure Communities program.

#### *Public Charge*

On September 22, 2018, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced a rule that discards longstanding policy about the meaning and application of the “public charge” provisions of immigration law. The proposed public charge rule would punish immigrants going through official immigration processes and their families for applying for or receiving benefits for themselves or their family. This would mean the use of Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicare Part D, the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program or Public Housing, could render a family member ineligible for a green card or unable to keep their family together. The Episcopal Church has spoken out against this and will engage in a public comment period to challenge this proposed rule that will greatly harm the well-being of immigrants.

#### *Establishing long-term solutions for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders*

TPS is an immigration status provided to nationals of certain countries experiencing problems that place their nationals at risk if deported there or that would compromise the foreign government’s ability to absorb the return of its nationals. It provides a work permit and stay of deportation to foreign nationals from those countries who are in the United States at the time the U.S. government makes the designation. In the past year, the Secretary of Homeland Security has eliminated TPS for hundreds of thousands of individuals who rely on those protections. The Episcopal Church is engaged in advocacy

#### **Take Action**

Join the Episcopal Public Policy Network <https://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org> to advocate directly to your elected officials about protecting and supporting immigrants.

Download “Ten Actions to Accompany Undocumented Immigrants”

<https://cqrcengage.com/episcopal/file/oSxFvGnbj1Z/10%20Actions%20to%20Accompany%20Undocumented%20Immigrants%202017.pdf>

*This document was prepared by the Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations*

*Email [lbroemel@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:lbroemel@episcopalchurch.org) with questions*

*Last updated: 11/20/2018*