

## **REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

### **HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**MEETING DATE:** July 20, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Refugee Resettlement

**PRESENTER:** Commissioner Grady Hawkins

**ATTACHMENTS:** Yes

- 1) Times-New Article
- 2) Housing Resources
- 3) Homeless Statistics
- 4) Vetting Process
- 5) WHKP Editorial
- 6) Role of States in the Refugee Resettlement Process

#### **SUMMARY OF REQUEST:**

Commissioner Hawkins has requested this item be included on the agenda for Board discussion.

Recent events both nationally and local suggest some discussion related to re-settlement of refugees in our community is necessary. At least two major questions need to be discussed:

- 1) What impact does refugee re-settlement have on county services?
- 2) How re-settlement is decided?

The County already has unmet needs in housing; homeless; student poverty, and other needs that should be addressed. We should also be familiar with the vetting process.

#### **BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

No Board Action requested, this item is for information only.

#### **Suggested Motion(s):**

*No motion suggested.*

## **Facts**

### **By The Numbers: Henderson County Public Schools' Percentage of Needy Students**

2006-07 School Year: 43 percent  
2007-08 School Year: 44.04 percent  
2008-09 School Year: 47.88 percent  
2009-10 School Year: 51.95 percent  
2010-11 School Year: 53.26 percent  
2011-12 School Year: 54.87 percent

*(Source: HCPS 2013 School District Profile)*

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## More Henderson County children living in poverty

**All 13 Henderson County elementary schools will qualify for Title I funding this fall**

By MOLLY MCGOWAN  
 Times-News Staff Writer

Published: Sunday, June 1, 2014 at 4:45 a.m.

When the next academic year begins in Henderson County Public Schools, educators and administrators will again face what has proved one of the most challenging tests for the school district.

"When you have schools with higher concentrations of poverty, their needs are much higher," said

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Kathy Revis, adding, "We've seen an increase in our school-age poverty."

For the first time in recent history, all of Henderson County's 13 elementary schools will receive Title I funding, which is indicative of the economic hardship local families — and children — are facing.

The federal program provides financial assistance to schools with high percentages of children living in poverty. A school's eligibility is determined by the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price meals.

Looking at the most recent data, Child Nutrition Director Christina Dodd said about 54 percent of students in kindergarten through 12th grade are eligible for the free and reduced meals. Dodd said in the 11 years she's been with the school system, "It's gone up around 15 percent."



MIKE DIRKS/TIMES-NEWS

Title I and Homeless Education Direction with Henderson County Public Schools, Matt Gruebmeier, points out the schools in Henderson County with high numbers of students who qualify for free or reduced meals. Those numbers are used to determine how much Title I money the district receives.

For the 2014-15 school year, Henderson County Schools has been allocated \$3,072,377 in Title I funding — a 2 percent increase from last year. That money can be used for educational resources for students, such as additional teachers, resources and programming.

Hendersonville Elementary was the most recent school to become eligible for Title I funds and will be designated as a targeted assistance school.

Revis explained this means the school will only be able to spend its Title I dollars on children who have been identified as needing the extra assistance based on their performances in school. After its first year of funding, the federal money can then be applied school-wide, as it is in the county's other 12 elementary schools.

According to Matthew Gruebmeier, Title I and homeless education director for HCPS, this funding choice can help schools work to end the cycle of poverty.

“We want to put our money where it's most powerful,” Gruebmeier said.

Gruebmeier said the school district chooses to spend its Title I allocations largely on supplemental instruction in reading, including additional reading specialists and extra books for elementary classrooms.

“Lots of kids will read better and more accurately if they like the book that they're reading,” Gruebmeier said. “If you have a better library in your classroom, then you're going to be a more effective teacher because the material you're using is going to be more attractive to your students.”

He also noted that book selections at school are necessary for the children who may not have as many reading options in their own homes.

To help students beginning crucial grade levels, several elementary schools opt to use their Title I funds to hold special “jumpstart” education sessions in August for children ready to enter either kindergarten or third grade.

"Those are big transition years," said Jennifer Shelton, principal of Fletcher Elementary, which hosts a Third Grade Jump Start in early August for rising third-graders.

Shelton said Fletcher typically spends \$2,000 of its Title I allotment on the four-day program, paying for transportation and teachers who help students brush up on math facts and reading comprehension.

Shelton said Fletcher holds the program for rising third-graders, since it's the first year students will encounter end-of-year testing, and this year's third-grade classes will be the first impacted by the Read to Achieve legislative initiative; if the students aren't proficient in reading by third grade, they're retained or must attend summer reading camps.

Kindergarten is similarly demanding for younger children, since kindergartners are now required to be able to read by year's end. So some Title I money is spent on reading programs aimed at the youngest readers, including Kindergarten Jumpstart sessions in elementary schools.

Additional resources outside the school system, including organizations like Smart Start of Henderson County, aim to prepare very young children with reading skills they'll need when they enter kindergarten.

According to early kindergarten assessments this year, 53 percent of kindergartners tested below benchmark levels for reading measures, and only 43 percent of rising kindergartners were proficient in print awareness — understanding that letters symbolize sounds, words are read left to right on a page, and the roles the author and illustrator play, said Erica Woodall, outreach coordinator for Smart Start of Henderson County.

Woodall said the local Smart Start program recently began an early literacy program with both parent education and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which mails age-appropriate books each month to registered children from birth until their fifth birthdays.

"We are trying to get books into the homes of all children," Woodall said. "We want to prepare all children for success in school."

Though Title I funds are spent specifically on elementary schools in Henderson County, free and reduced breakfasts and lunches are part of the National School Lunch Program and serve students of all grades.

The HCPS Child Nutrition Program is reimbursed each month by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the provision of free and reduced meals through the National School Lunch Program. For the 2013-14 school year through the end of April, HCPS has been reimbursed \$3.7 million, said HCPS Child Nutrition Director Christina Dodd.

Twelve of the district's elementary schools have at least 35 percent of their children eligible for the free and reduced meals, and Glen C. Marlow has a slightly lower 33.52 percent eligible.

According to the HCPS 2013 School District Profile, which includes data provided by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction and U.S. Census information, the school system's percentage of needy students has steadily increased each school year, from 43 percent in 2006-07 to 54.87 percent the 2011-12 school year.

Most all of the schools in the system participate in backpack programs, whereby local community sponsors provide bags of food for food-insecure children to take home over the weekend. The individual programs at every school are each a little different, but they were all kick-started by the grassroots effort of two Fletcher Elementary parent volunteers.

Linda Featherstone and Rob Rusnak started The Backpack Bunch for Fletcher students seven years ago, establishing Henderson County's first weekend supplemental meal program. These days, she said, Fletcher First Baptist Church delivers 85 bags a week.

"Everybody's (food) comes from somewhere different," she said.

"We have a connection through First United Methodist Church," said Judy Holt, school counselor at Bruce Drysdale Elementary.

She said the church gathers the food items from The Storehouse, MANNA FoodBank or individual donations, and delivers about 160 bags to Bruce Drysdale each Friday.

Featherstone said the backpack programs have grown from providing 50 bags to 1,800 system-wide each Friday.

Also available on Fridays to club members are the dinner meals served by Feed the Kids Coalition at the Boys & Girls Club of Henderson County. Each Friday, the nonprofit feeds 200 to 300 children, said Feed the Kids Coalition chairperson Susan O'Brien.

"We have 11 faith-based communities that shop, prepare the meals, deliver them to the Boys & Girls Club, and serve them Friday," she said.

Since childhood hunger doesn't stop when school lets out in June, the school system and various community organizations also try to provide hot meals or bagged lunches over the summer.

"We know from statistical information that 25 percent of students in North Carolina are what they call 'food-insecure,' " Dodd said. "During the summer months when they don't have school meals, they're at a larger risk for going without nutritious meals."

She said HCPS students who receive free or reduced meals during the school year can receive similar free meals over the summer, through the USDA Summer Food Service Program. Last summer, HCPS served 450 to 500 meals a day through the program, Dodd said.

"We participate at several of our school sites, and we also support The Salvation Army and The Boys & Girls Club (of Henderson County)," she said.

One such program is provided by Feed the Kids Coalition, which prepares free lunches for children during the break in federal funding for school meals and the Summer Food Service Program.

"We do 300 lunches a day, for eight days, during that period," O'Brien said. "We're trying the best we can to kind of fill that last gap."

Whether it's providing extra meals, or extra reading teachers and materials, HCPS administrators and organizations with children's best interests in mind continue to "fill the gap" for needy students — in hopes they've intervened early enough.

"There's a quote, 'The road out of poverty runs by the schoolhouse door,' and that's what we believe," Revis said. "We feel that this is their best hope for breaking out of that generational poverty cycle."

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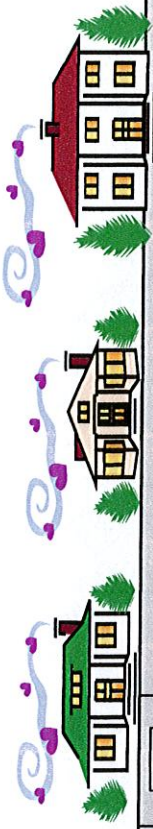
Reach McGowan at [molly.mcgowan@blueridgenow.com](mailto:molly.mcgowan@blueridgenow.com) or 828-694-7871

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# Housing Resources in Henderson County

Updated 7/28/2011



Name	Location	Telephone	# of Units	Unit sizes	Notes
<b>PERMANENT SUBSIDIZED HOUSING</b>					
<b>Public Housing</b>					
Hendersonville Housing Auth.	203 N. Justice St., H'ville	828-692-6175		yes	Office open Mon-Thurs.
<b>Section 8 Rental Assistance</b>					
Western Carolina Com. Action	P.O.Box 685, H'ville	828-693-1711			Waiting list is open, M-F 9-4PM
<b>Privately owned subsidized units</b>					
East Winds Apartments	20 Country Road 1753, H'ville	828-697-2473			Elderly
<b>Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Developments with Project-Based Rental Assistance</b>					
Hillside Commons	12 Hope Cir., H'ville	336-544-2300	36		Elderly(62) Rent based on 30% of adjusted income for those eligible
Parkside Commons	E.Blue Ridge Rd., E. Flat Rock		25		Elderly(55)
Highland View Apts	King Creek Blvd., H'ville		28		Family
<b>USDA-Rural Developments</b>					
Hillside Commons	189 Hillside Commons Dr., H'ville	828-696-2774	36	1,2	Elderly(62) Rent based on 30% of adjusted income for those eligible
Meadow Garden Apartments	102 Highland Lake Dr., H'ville	828-692-3520	42	1,2	Family,
Smokey Ridge Apartments	109 Hall St., H'ville	828-697-2910	56	1,2,3	Family Rent based on 30% of adjusted income for those eligible
Sugar Loaf Apartments	10 Hope Cir., H'ville	828-697-0808	44	2,3,4	Family Rent based on 30% of adjusted income for those eligible
<b>Targeted only to the Homeless (Shelter Plus Care, HUD Supportive Housing, etc.)</b>					
MHA in NC		919-981-0740			Independent apts., for persons with disabilities
<b>PRIVATE LANDLORDS WHO ACCEPT SECTION 8 VOUCHERS</b>					
<b>Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Developments</b>					
Cedar Bluff Apts	28 Cedar Bluffs Dr., H'ville	828-698-2711	64		Family
Parkview Apts	110 Glover Street, H'ville	704-692-4744	32		Family
<b>Other Private Landlords</b>					
			36.3		

Name	Location	Telephone	# of Units	Unit sizes	Notes
<b>TRANSITIONAL HOUSING</b>					
<b>RECOVERY HOUSING</b>					
<b>EMERGENCY SHELTERS</b>					
Henderson Rescue Mission	Hendersonville	828-697-1354			
Salvation Army	239 3rd Ave., Hendersonville	828-693-4181			
Name	Location	Telephone	Services		
<b>HOMEOWNERSHIP</b>					
Housing Assistance Corp.	602 Kanuga Rd., Hendersonville	828-692-4744	First time homebuyer counseling, credit repair		
Habitat for Humanity	1111 Keith St., Hendersonville	828-694-0340			
USDA Housing Loans		828-693-1734	Direct loans for purchase or repair, must be low income and eligible		
<b>OTHER RESOURCES</b>					
Dept. Social Services	1200 Spartanburg Hwy #300, H'ville	828-697-5500			
Veteran Services		828-697-4817			
United Way of Henderson	722 5th Av., Hendersonville	828-692-1636			
Pisgah Legal Services	440 S. Church St., Hendersonville	828-692-7622	Toll free: 1-800-489-6144; Disability and homeless assistance programs		
Dispute Settlement Center	101 S. Grove St., Hendersonville	828-697-7055	Mediates disputes before they get to court		
Fair Housing/County Manager	100 N. King St., Hendersonville	828-697-4809	Local Human Relations Commission TDD# 1-828-697-4580		



URBAN MINISTRY CENTER

(<http://www.urbanministrycenter.org>)

610,042

homeless in the United States



35%

have no shelter

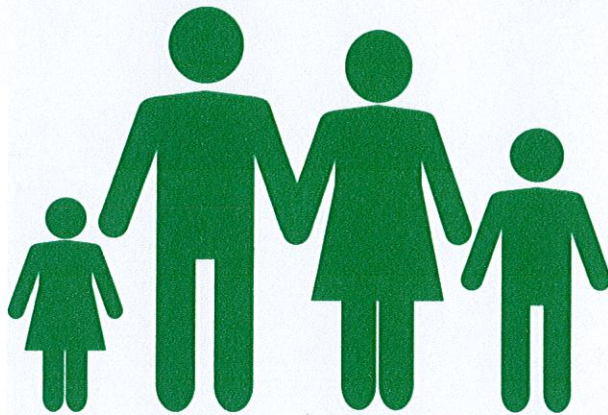
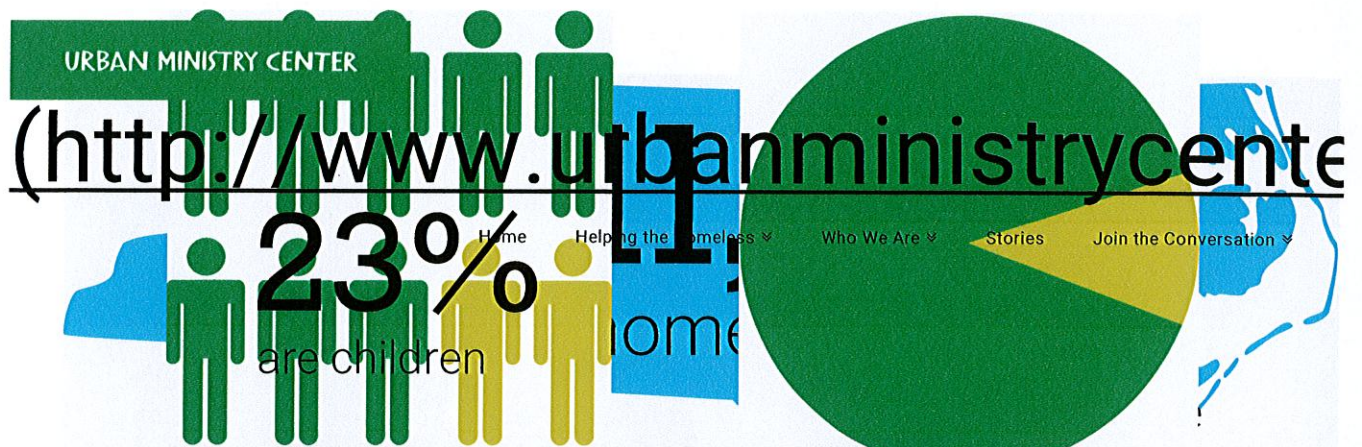


10%

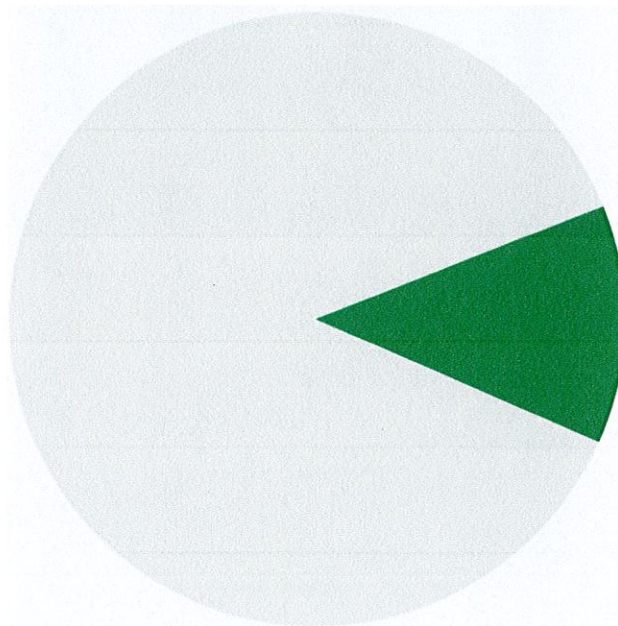
are veterans







1,303  
homeless families  
*Charlotte*



12%  
of NC's homeless  
are chronically homeless



## The Full Text of the Graphic:

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### The Screening Process for Refugee Entry Into the United States

- 1. Many refugee applicants identify themselves to the U.N. Refugee Agency, UNHCR. UNHCR, then:**

- Collects identifying documents
- Performs initial assessment
  - Collects biodata: name, address, birthday, place of birth, etc.
  - Collects biometrics: iris scans (for Syrians, and other refugee populations in the Middle East)

*Recurrent vetting: Throughout this process, pending applications continue to be checked against terrorist databases, to ensure new, relevant terrorism information has not come to light. If a match is found, that case is paused for further review. Applicants who continue to have no flags continue the process. If there is doubt about whether an applicant poses a security risk, they will not be admitted.*

- Interviews applicants to confirm refugee status and the need for resettlement
  - Initial information checked again
- Only applicants who are strong candidates for resettlement move forward (less than 1% of global refugee population).

- 2. Applicants are received by a federally-funded Resettlement Support Center (RSC):**

- Collects identifying documents
- Creates an applicant file
- Compiles information to conduct biographic security checks

- 3. Biographic security checks start with enhanced interagency security checks**

- U.S. security agencies screen the candidate, including:
  - National Counterterrorism Center/Intelligence Community

*Refugees are subject to the highest level of security checks of any category of traveler to the United States.*

- FBI
- Department of Homeland Security
- State Department
- The screening looks for indicators, like:
  - Information that the individual is a security risk
  - Connections to known bad actors
  - Outstanding warrants/immigration or criminal violations
- *DHS conducts an enhanced review of Syrian cases, which may be referred to USCIS Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate for review. Research that is used by the interviewing officer informs lines of question related to the applicant's eligibility and credibility.*

#### **4. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/USCIS interview:**

- Interviews are conducted by USCIS Officers specially trained for interviews
- Fingerprints are collected and submitted (biometric check)
- Re-interviews can be conducted if fingerprint results or new information raises questions. If new biographic information is identified by USCIS at an interview, additional security checks on the information are conducted. USCIS may place a case on hold to do additional research or investigation. Otherwise, the process continues.

#### **5. Biometric security checks:**

- Applicant's fingerprints are taken by U.S. government employees
  - Fingerprints are screened against the FBI's biometric database.
  - Fingerprints are screened against the DHS biometric database, containing watch-list information and previous immigration encounters in the U.S. and overseas.

- Fingerprints are screened against the U.S. Department of Defense biometric database, which includes fingerprint records captured in Iraq and other locations.
- If not already halted, this is the end point for cases with security concerns. Otherwise, the process continues.

**6. Medical check:**

- The need for medical screening is determined
- This is the end point for cases denied due to medical reasons. Refugees may be provided medical treatment for communicable diseases such as tuberculosis.

**7. Cultural orientation and assignment to domestic resettlement locations:**

- Applicants complete cultural orientation classes.
- An assessment is made by a U.S.-based non-governmental organization to determine the best resettlement location for the candidate(s). Considerations include:
  - Family; candidates with family in a certain area may be placed in that area.
  - Health; a candidate with asthma may be matched to certain regions.
- A location is chosen.

**8. Travel:**

- International Organization for Migration books travel
- Prior to entry in the United States, applicants are subject to:
  - Screening from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's National Targeting Center-Passenger
  - The Transportation Security Administration's Secure Flight Program
- This is the end point for some applicants. Applicants who have no flags continue the process.



## 9. U.S. Arrival:

- All refugees are required to apply for a green card within a year of their arrival to the United States, which triggers:
  - Another set of security procedures with the U.S. government.
- **Refugees are woven into the rich fabric of American society!**

*Amy Pope is Deputy Assistant to the President for Homeland Security*

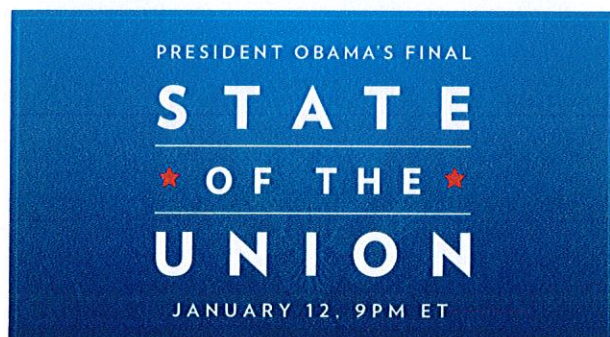
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*Correction: A previous version of the graphic and blog post stated in step 2 that the name of the RSC was the Refugee Support Center. This has been corrected to the proper name, the Resettlement Support Center.*

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Learn more:

- [How We're Welcoming Syrian Refugees While Ensuring Our Safety](#)
- [Watch: Here's What the Refugee Screening Process Looks Like](#)
- [Here's What You Need to Know About Our Strategy to Defeat ISIL](#)



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Hendersonville, NC

70°

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## RE-SETTLING REGUGEES INTO OUR COMMUNITY---A WHKP STATION EDITORIAL

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### Editorial & Opinion

RE-SETTLING  
REGUGEES INTO  
OUR COMMUNITY---A  
WHKP STATION  
EDITORIALRE-SETTLING SYRIAN (AND OTHER)  
REFUGEES INTO OUR COMMUNITY IS A  
BAD IDEA

A WHKP Station Editorial

July 1, 2016

Some western North Carolina churches,  
including St. James Episcopal in

Hendersonville, the Unitarian Universalist Church in Asheville, and others are reportedly looking into re-locating Syrian and other refugees into ours and other communities in the area.

Local officials are staking out their positions on the issue already. Hendersonville Mayor Barbara Volk is in favor of it. City Council member Ron Stephens is opposed to it. And the City of Hendersonville officially wiped its hands clean of the whole thing late Thursday by issuing a statement that reads, in part, the city "...has no legal power to direct, cause, or prohibit the re-settlement of foreign refugees within the City of Hendersonville."

It's not surprising that some well meaning but "left" leaning religious denominations are eager to jump on the bandwagon and open the doors, not only of their churches, but of our whole community, to more outsiders. The immigration issue is far from resolved, and on top of some serious and violent criminals that have already immigrated into our community, Syrian and other refugees that we know precious little about could conceivably bring terrorism right to our doorstep. Terrorists aren't stupid. They know how to infiltrate refugee groups; their intention to wreak havoc on the United States from within is clear; and they know they can depend on well meaning, but shallow thinking, liberals, certainly in some churches, to pave them way for them... all under the pretext of this being the "Christian" thing to do.

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### Featured Audio

Weekly Congressional  
Update with Mark  
MeadowsSyrian Refugees in  
Henderson County A  
WHKP Station Editorial.

Carl Sandburg

### Web Poll

Did President Obama's  
trip to Charlotte to  
campaign for Hillary  
Clinton persuade you  
to vote for her?



We agree with City Council member Ron Stephens. "Churches, like St. James, do a lot of good. But you can get on a bicycle and from the church find more than they could ever get done with people who need help." We would add that's LOCAL people, with legitimate LOCAL needs. Stephens adds, "I don't know why they (the churches) would expose the community to what possibly could happen". We know why. It's the "feel good" thing to do.

The claim that these refugees, whether from Syria...or Columbia as the mayor points out...phave been "vetted" or supposedly investigated, is of no comfort at all. Santa Barbara and Orlando, not to mention Paris and the Istanbul Airport confirms for us that the so-called "vetting" process is full of holes...large enough for the worst terrorists to slip through, costing hundreds of innocent people their lives.

St. James Church has supported some wonderful things for the community. Their School for Little Folks and the Medical Loan Closet are just two examples of truly Christian things that church has done so very well. Those things have IMPROVED the lives of local people. Importing and re-settling outsiders, possibly infiltrated by terrorists, could ENDANGER local people.

We fully support Council member Stephen's stated intent to do what he can as a Council member to keep this "re-settling" of refugees into our community from happening. If in fact, the City has no legal power on this issue, as their press release stated late Thursday, Hendersonville City Council could at least express their opposition to it in the form of a resolution at their July meeting next Thursday. That would send a message to the "left leaners" and the "re-settlers and show the city that its Council is standing up for the safety and security of our local people.

As always, we invite your comments...on our comments.

By WHKP News Director Larry Freeman 06/30/16 7pm



☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ You've got to be kidding

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**both  
offices  
accepting  
new  
patients**



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The Role of States in the Refugee Resettlement Process (2015)

Amnesty Issue Briefs

+A A-

Overview

Illegal Immigration

Legal Immigration

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Border Security

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Population and

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Societal Issues

Publications

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## The Role of States in the Refugee Resettlement Process (2015)

### BACKGROUND

The Obama Administration's recent decision to increase the number of refugees admitted by the United States, including at least an additional 10,000 refugees from Syria, has left many state and local leaders questioning what they can do to address the impact of refugee resettlement in their communities.

While only the federal government may decide who can enter the United States as a refugee, generally, federal law requires cooperation between federal, state, and local governments when it comes to the *resettlement* of refugees admitted to the United States. Federal law states that the Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (which falls under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), "shall consult" with state and local governments and voluntary non-profit agencies "concerning the sponsorship process and the intended distribution of refugees among the states and localities **BEFORE their placement....**" (See 8 U.S.C. § 1522(a)(2)(A))(emphasis added). Such consultation is to occur regularly, which is defined as no less than quarterly. (*Id.*) Accordingly, state and local governments *should be* consulted with and provided an opportunity to provide input before refugees ever set foot in a community.

Moreover, the Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement must develop and implement, again, in consultation with state and local governments and voluntary non-profit agencies, "policies and strategies for the placement and resettlement of refugees...." (*Id.* § 1522(a)(2)(B)) Federal law goes on to set forth what these "policies and strategies" must consider. In addition to ensuring that refugees are not placed in an area that is already "highly impacted" by refugees, they must take into account:

- the preexisting proportion of refugees and comparable entrants in the area;
- the availability of the area's employment opportunities, affordable housing, and other educational and health care resources;
- the likelihood that refugees will become self-sufficient and free from dependence on public assistance in an area; and
- the area's likelihood of secondary refugee migration. (*Id.* § 1522(a)(2)(C))

Consistent with these policies and strategies, **the federal government shall take into account the recommendations of the state to the maximum extent possible.** (*Id.* § 1522(a)(2)(D))

As such, the federal, state, and local consultation process is the cornerstone of the refugee resettlement process. To be sure, representatives from state and local governments are the best suited to discern the potential impact of refugee placement. **Influxes of refugees may easily overwhelm an already overburdened community's social services and health care agencies, diminish the availability of affordable housing and job opportunities, and strain the capacity of local school districts to meet the needs of existing or anticipated student populations.** The Office of Refugee Resettlement's 2013 Annual Survey of Refugees shows that of the refugees who entered the United States within the last five years, nearly three-quarters receive SNAP benefits, more than half receive Medicaid or Refugee Medical Assistance, and close to a quarter receive housing assistance.

In addition to the impact on resources, state and local governments also have good reason to be concerned about the potential national security implications of resettling refugees from known areas of violence and terrorism. Of particular concern is President Obama's refusal to reconsider his pledge to admit at least 10,000 Syrians as refugees in fiscal year 2016, despite warnings from intelligence officials that **there are gaps in our ability to screen** those seeking admission from that country. In February 2015, Michael Steinbach, Assistant Director of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division testified before the House Homeland Security Committee, stating, "The concern in Syria is that we don't have systems in place on the ground to collect information to vet.... You're talking about a country that is a failed state, that does not have any infrastructure, so to speak. So all of the dataset, the police, the intel services that normally you would go to seek information doesn't exist." FBI Director James Comey went on to verify this revelation in later statements before the Homeland Security Committee in October 2015, admitting that, "You can only query what you have collected."

In addition to posing a potential national security threat, the President's plan to admit 10,000 Syrian refugees could also hit Americans' pocketbooks. Robert Rector, Senior Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, estimates that **President Obama's proposal will cost U.S. taxpayers \$130 million per year.** If extended over the next 50 years, he projects it would cost U.S. taxpayers \$6.5 billion over the course of the migrants' lifetime.

### WHAT CAN STATES DO TO INFLUENCE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT?

#### PAGE TOOLS

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- **Determine if refugee resettlement will have an adverse impact on existing residents of a community.** States can accomplish this by gathering data on: 1) the capacity of a community's social service and health care agencies to meet the needs of current residents; 2) whether there is sufficient affordable or low-cost housing available for low-income residents; 3) the capacity of local school districts to meet the needs of existing or anticipated student populations; and 4) whether local economies can absorb new workers without sacrificing job availability for current residents. Additionally, states can encourage or otherwise institute policies to require local officials to document what services are provided to already-settled refugees in the community. Any potential adverse impacts should be included as part of the consultation process.
- **Increase communication with local officials.** Local governments are often best suited to understand how an increase in refugee population would impact their community. State officials should therefore ensure a regular stream of communication with local representatives by meeting at least quarterly with local government officials to determine whether refugee resettlement is best for their community, and to coordinate a state refugee plan.
- **Establish protocol for local government officials to seek a moratorium on new refugee resettlement activities in their communities.** Once it has been determined that a host community lacks sufficient capacity to accept additional refugees without adversely impacting current residents, local government officials should be permitted to apply to temporarily suspend the additional resettlement of refugees.
- **Increase oversight of nonprofit organizations that have been delegated authority to manage refugee resettlement.** States may execute letters of agreement, consistent with federal law, to require mutual agreement and coordination with volunteer or nonprofit organizations in the initial placement of refugees, as well as require regular reporting to state legislatures and local governments on refugee resettlement activities. Localities should also be permitted and encouraged to participate in the oversight of non-governmental entities charged with overseeing refugee settlement. Penalties should be imposed if communication fails to occur.
- **Restore authority to manage refugee resettlement in the state legislatures.** States may revoke authority from nonprofit organizations that have been delegated the task of managing refugee resettlement if these organizations fail to comply with state mandated guidelines or otherwise fail to share information. State and local governments should reassert control and influence over the resettlement process.
- **Require state refugee coordinator to report at least quarterly to the state legislature on the measures taken to ensure that the state's refugee plan is in line with the best interest of current residents.** State refugee coordinators work closely with the federal government to develop resettlement strategies. Accountability should be ensured by requiring regular reporting of activities to the state legislature, as well as to impacted communities and local governments.
- **Withhold state-administered public benefits from newly resettled refugees if resettlement occurs without notice or coordination with state and local officials.** Federal law requires prior consultation and cooperation with state and local governments in developing resettlement policies and strategies. Restricting state-administered public benefits from populations resettled without notice to state and local officials will encourage accountability with the federal government and reduce the likelihood of the federal government constructing resettlement strategies behind closed doors.
- **Refuse cooperation with the Office of Refugee Resettlement.** In cases that represent an overwhelming threat or strain to a community, a state may decide to refuse cooperation all together with federal government until federal officials develop strategies that are in line with state and local interests.



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