
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 248 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY RAFFERTY, SCARNATI, SCAVELLO, AUMENT, FOLMER,
ARGALL, GORDNER, SMUCKER, EICHELBERGER, BARTOLOTTA, MENSCH,
McILHINNEY, YAW, WARD, BROOKS, TOMLINSON, DINNIMAN, STEFANO,
VULAKOVICH, HUTCHINSON, VOGEL, GREENLEAF, WHITE, CORMAN AND
BAKER, NOVEMBER 20, 2015

REFERRED TO STATE GOVERNMENT, NOVEMBER 20, 2015

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the
2 President of the United States and the Secretary of the
3 United States Department of Homeland Security to discontinue
4 the resettlement of Syrian refugees in this Commonwealth
5 until such time as systems are in place to conduct effective
6 and thorough security and background checks on Syrian
7 refugees and to send a report detailing the increased
8 measures to the states that are under consideration to
9 receive Syrian refugees.

10 WHEREAS, In order to address the migrant crisis in Syria, the
11 Federal Government has indicated that the United States will
12 accept at least 10,000 Syrian refugees during fiscal year 2016;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, This Commonwealth has an abundant and successful
15 history of embracing immigrants; and

16 WHEREAS, The most important responsibility of government is
17 to protect the safety and security of its residents; and

18 WHEREAS, On November 13, 2015, coordinated terror attacks
19 were carried out in Paris, France, killing at least 129 people
20 and injuring more than 350 people; and

1 WHEREAS, On November 14, 2015, the Islamic State (ISIS), a
2 deadly terrorist organization based in Raqqa, Syria, claimed
3 responsibility for the attacks and pledged further attacks
4 worldwide; and

5 WHEREAS, French police discovered a Syrian passport belonging
6 to a Syrian asylum seeker who entered Europe through Greece near
7 the body of a suicide bomber; and

8 WHEREAS, Despite our sympathy for the plight of innocent
9 Syrians trying to escape the horrors of their war-torn region,
10 this raises concerns that the security vetting procedures used
11 in addressing the Syrian migrant crisis are completely
12 inadequate; and

13 WHEREAS, On February 11, 2015, Francis X. Taylor, Under
14 Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis for the United States
15 Department of Homeland Security, stated, "We are concerned about
16 any group of people coming to the United States who may be
17 coming to the United States for nefarious purposes"; and

18 WHEREAS, Under Secretary Taylor also testified that officials
19 "want to make sure that if we are asked to vet individuals from
20 any part of the world to come to the United States, that we have
21 applied the most rigorous screening that's available within the
22 U.S. government"; and

23 WHEREAS, On February 11, 2015, Nicholas J. Rasmussen,
24 Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, testified in
25 front of the United States House of Representatives' Committee
26 on Homeland Security that Syrian refugees are

27 clearly a population of concern and, as Under Secretary
28 Taylor said, what we want to be able to do is apply the
29 full weight of U.S. intelligence community holdings to
30 the vetting and screening process so that we can unearth

1 any information that we may have in our holdings that
2 gives us concern about particular individuals;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, On February 11, 2015, Michael B. Steinbach,
5 Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, Federal Bureau of
6 Investigation, United States Department of Justice, testified in
7 front of the United States House of Representatives' Committee
8 on Homeland Security that

9 You have to have information to vet, so the concern in
10 Syria is that we don't have systems in place on the
11 ground to collect the information to vet. That would be
12 the concern we would be vetting--databases don't hold the
13 information on those individuals, and that is the
14 concern;

15 and

16 WHEREAS, Pennsylvanians recognize the desperate plight of the
17 hundreds of thousands of refugees and want to aid those who are
18 fleeing war and terror, however, at the same time, increased
19 security measures are necessary following the recent terror
20 attacks in order to protect the security, safety and basic
21 freedoms of the residents of this Commonwealth; therefore be it

22 RESOLVED, That the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
23 urge the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the
24 President of the United States and the Secretary of the United
25 States Department of Homeland Security to discontinue the
26 resettlement of Syrian refugees in this Commonwealth until such
27 time as systems are in place to conduct effective and thorough
28 security and background checks on Syrian refugees and to send a
29 report detailing the increased measures to the states that are
30 under consideration to receive Syrian refugees; and be it

1 further

2 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to
3 the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the President
4 of the United States and the Secretary of the United States
5 Department of Homeland Security.