

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 608 Session of 2015

INTRODUCED BY VEREB, MARSICO, STEPHENS, HEFFLEY, BAKER, BARRAR, BLOOM, R. BROWN, D. COSTA, COX, SCHLEGEL CULVER, DAY, DUSH, ELLIS, EMRICK, FARRY, FEE, GINGRICH, HAHN, HARPER, A. HARRIS, PHILLIPS-HILL, KAUFFMAN, KNOWLES, METCALFE, METZGAR, MILLARD, MURT, PAYNE, QUIGLEY, RAPP, READSHAW, REGAN, SACCONI, SANKEY, SAYLOR, SONNEY, TALLMAN, TAYLOR, TOEPEL, WARNER, WATSON, WHEELAND, ZIMMERMAN AND MAJOR, DECEMBER 3, 2015

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 3, 2015

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the United States Secretary of Homeland Security to
 2 reconsider the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the
 3 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania until such time as systems are
 4 in place to thoroughly conduct security and background checks
 5 on Syrian refugees and to send a report detailing the
 6 increased measures to the states that are under consideration
 7 to receive Syrian refugees.

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

12 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has an abundant and
 13 successful history of embracing immigrants; and

14 WHEREAS, The most important responsibility of government is
 15 to protect the safety and security of the residents of the
 16 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

17 WHEREAS, On November 13, 2015, coordinated terror attacks
 18 were carried out in Paris, France, killing at least 129 people

1 and injuring more than 350 people; and

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

6 WHEREAS, According to the French police, a Syrian passport
7 belonging to a Syrian asylum seeker who entered Europe through
8 Greece was found near the body of one suicide bomber; and

9 WHEREAS, This raises concerns that the security vetting
10 procedures used in addressing the Syrian migrant crisis are
11 inadequate; and

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

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

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

26 clearly a population of concern and, as Under Secretary
27 Taylor said, what we want to be able to do is apply the
28 full weight of U.S. intelligence community holdings to
29 the vetting and screening process so that we can unearth
30 any information that we may have in our holdings that
31 gives us concern about particular individuals;
32 and

1 WHEREAS, On February 11, 2015, Michael B. Steinbach,
2 Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, Federal Bureau of
3 Investigation, testified in front of the United States House of
4 Representatives' Committee on Homeland Security that:

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

11 and

12 WHEREAS, Increased security measures are necessary following
13 the recent terror attacks in order to protect the security,
14 safety and basic freedoms of the residents of the Commonwealth
15 of Pennsylvania; therefore be it

16 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the
17 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania urge the United States Secretary of
18 Homeland Security to reconsider the resettlement of Syrian
19 refugees in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania until such time as
20 systems are in place to thoroughly conduct security and
21 background checks on Syrian refugees and to send a report
22 detailing the increased measures to the states that are under
23 consideration to receive Syrian refugees; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to
25 the United States Secretary of Homeland Security.