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Protecting Refugees • Advancing Human Rights

The Refugee Protection Act of 2019
Restoring Justice and Compassion for Refugees

The world is experiencing the worst refugee crisis in recorded history, with nearly 26 million refugees forcibly displaced from their home countries by persecution and armed conflict. Among the global refugee population are thousands of women, children, LGBTQ people, and others fleeing epidemic levels of domestic violence, sexual assault, and gang brutality in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. Many leave everything they know behind to seek asylum at our southern border, in hopes of finding safe haven for themselves and their families in the United States. In the face of such profound human suffering, we should be welcoming refugees into our communities. Instead, the Trump Administration has slammed the door on asylum seekers and gutted our refugee admissions program.

The Refugee Protection Act (RPA) of 2019 presents a comprehensive vision for restoring and improving both our domestic asylum system and our overseas refugee admissions program. It was introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy and Representative Zoe Lofgren on November 21, 2019, with an additional 15 Senators and 30 Members of the House as original cosponsors. The Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS) endorses the RPA and applauds leaders in Congress who support the bill. We encourage all Members of Congress to sign on as cosponsors and revive our country's founding commitment to offer refuge to those fleeing persecution.

MORE ABOUT THE REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

The Refugee Protection Act will restore due process and dignity for asylum seekers by:

- Reversing former Attorney General Jeff Sessions' devastating *Matter of A-B-* decision, which has severely undermined the asylum claims of those fleeing domestic violence, sexual assault, and gang brutality;
- Putting an end to "Asylum Ban 2.0," the Administration's rule barring asylum for virtually all non-Mexicans arriving at the southern border;
- Allowing those denied asylum due to the Administration's cruel Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) or asylum bans to reopen their cases;
- Eliminating the illegal practice of "metering," which restricts the number of asylum seekers permitted to request protection at border;
- Prohibiting any criminal prosecution of asylum seekers for merely crossing the border and ensuring that asylum seekers are not subjected to needless, punitive detention; and
- Guaranteeing access to counsel for immigrant and asylum-seeking children.

The bill will also bolster the Refugee Admissions Program and expand protections for refugees by:

- Requiring the president to set an annual refugee admission goal of at least 95,000;
- Ensuring more robust Congressional oversight of the president's decisions with respect to the program;
- Admitting refugees of special humanitarian concern from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras; and
- Expanding protections for foreign nationals who cooperate with U.S. law enforcement or assist U.S. troops.

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