

Church World Service urges Congress to affirm the dignity of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and all who have been uprooted from their homes. The U.S.'s historic position as a leader providing humanitarian relief to displaced people overseas and welcoming those who arrive to our shores fleeing persecution strengthens our communities, advances U.S. diplomatic and national security interests, and promotes human flourishing. With over [130 million](#) people – including 37 million refugees – expected to be displaced worldwide this year, and amid ongoing challenges to the right to seek asylum in the U.S., now is a critical time to call for bold investments in our welcoming infrastructure and policies that live up to our nation's legacy of welcome.

During the 2024 August recess, CWS urges Congress to:

1. Hold the administration accountable for strengthening paths to permanent protections

Congress must encourage the Biden administration to invest in the strength and long-term resilience of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) against future cuts and setbacks by urging it to establish more flexible and durable funding sources and codifying the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). Congress must also urge the administration to reverse its recent extreme, anti-asylum policies, and should hold the administration accountable for enacting reforms that reduce lengthy processing delays and expand our capacity to fairly and humanely welcome refugees, asylum seekers, and other humanitarian arrivals fleeing persecution.

2. Support legislation that welcomes refugees and strengthens access to humanitarian pathways

- **The Afghan Adjustment Act (AAA) ([S.2327/H.R. 4627](#))**. Proposed as an amendment to the annual National Defense Authorization Act ([S.Amdt 2682](#): The Fulfilling Promises to Afghan Allies Act), the bipartisan legislation would establish a clear and streamlined path for displaced Afghans to apply for permanent status in the U.S. and expand pathways to protection for Afghans who remain left behind and at risk. | *Lead sponsors: Sen. Amy Klobuchar & Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks*
- **The Refugee Protection Act (RPA) (*reintroduction forthcoming*)**. The Refugee Protection Act would fortify the long-term strength of the refugee resettlement program and the asylum system. The bill would also expand protections to those who have assisted U.S. troops and immigrant children and families. | *2022 Lead sponsors: Sen. Patrick Leahy (ret) & Rep. Zoe Lofgren*
- **The Climate Displaced Persons Act (CDPA) ([S. 3340/H.R. 6455](#))** creates a pathway to protection for people displaced by the effects of climate change and establishes an interagency strategy to mitigate the global impacts of a changing climate on displacement and humanitarian emergencies. | *Lead sponsors: Sen. Edward Markey & Rep. Nydia Velazquez*

Other critical legislation: The Climate Displaced Persons Act, the Reuniting Families Act, The Stateless Protection Act, and the House Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act.

3. Ensure robust funding for the refugee resettlement program and prevent cuts to vital programs and services that help vulnerable newcomer populations integrate and thrive

Congress must equip our local communities with resources they need to ensure newcomers can flourish, and must work to strengthen the U.S. Refugee Admissions program and support displaced people overseas.

- **Robustly fund the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account** – Through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), REA directly funds local communities' efforts to provide [core integration services](#) to forcibly displaced newcomer populations including refugees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, Afghan and Ukrainian humanitarian parolees, unaccompanied children, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders and others. ORR services include job training, English language classes, [school-based support](#) for children and families, and trauma-informed case management services. REA funding currently faces tremendous precarity and key programs could face devastating cuts unless Congress acts to address the shortfall.
- **Strengthen investments in refugee foreign assistance accounts** – **The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)** account supports refugee processing and initial reception and welcome in the U.S. and the **Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA)** account allows the U.S. to respond quickly to emerging crises.
- **Restore and extend benefits eligibility for arriving Afghan and Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees** – In September, most Afghans and Ukrainians paroled into the U.S. after October 1st, 2023, became cut off from benefits Congress had previously authorized for these populations. Congress temporarily restored Ukrainians' eligibility for this crucial support through the end of the fiscal year, but it has yet to do so for Afghans. CWS urges Congress to support authorization language to restore access to benefits for arriving Afghans and extend benefits reauthorization for arriving Ukrainians through September 30th, 2025.

4. Support newcomers' access to safe and affordable housing through sustainable means

Obtaining housing has become one of the most significant challenges in ensuring refugees can integrate and thrive in their new communities. Through legislation, funding, and oversight, Congress must respond to the particular housing access challenges refugees and newcomers face by:

- **Holding the administration accountable for ensuring interagency coordination to counter housing discrimination and support improved housing access for refugees and newcomers.** Congress must urge the administration to build on progress like the [HUD-ORR memorandum of understanding](#) and the interagency [fact sheet on renting to refugees and other newcomers](#), as well as support additional enforcement of fair housing laws to counteract housing discrimination.
- **Support authorization language and robust funding to maintain and expand affordable housing for newcomers and other vulnerable populations,** including by [investing](#) in affordable housing programming, implementing HUD-specific Full-Time Employees to uphold newcomer-specific portfolios, and establishing and funding a Newcomer Housing Voucher.

5. Invest in the continuum of programs and services at the border and in the interior that supports arriving asylum seekers and the communities that welcome them

- [The Case Management Pilot Program \(CMPP\)](#) provides trauma-informed services like mental health care, human trafficking screening, and legal orientation programming to meet newcomers' basic needs and equip them for economic self-sufficiency. Compared to detention and surveillance-based alternatives, CMPP is cost-effective, results in more efficient asylum adjudication processes, and more successfully promotes asylum seekers' attendance in court and meaningful participation in their legal obligations.
- [The Shelter and Services Program \(SSP\)](#) supports border shelters' efforts to provide coordinated, effective reception for arriving asylum seekers, that meets new arrivals' most immediate needs for necessities like food, clothing, basic medical aid, and a safe place to go upon release from DHS custody.
- [The Destination Reception Assistance Act \(DRAA\)](#) is a recently-introduced bill that would establish the Destination Reception Services Program to support cities that are welcoming significant numbers of new arrivals with resources for medium-term integration, such as housing services, mental health care, and legal assistance.

We also urge Congress to support funding to reduce U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [backlogs](#), address barriers to obtaining work authorization, and reject punitive, enforcement-based policies and restrictions on access to protection.

6. Ensure unaccompanied children and their families and caregivers receive the support they need so that children have safe and stable homes

Unaccompanied children and their families need child-appropriate, trauma-informed, and culturally and linguistically competent care and services that help them thrive in their homes and communities. Through funding, oversight, and legislation Congress must ensure the safety and well-being of immigrant children by:

- **Robustly funding our communities' capacity to welcome and protect unaccompanied children by investing in [post-release services, home studies, child advocates, legal representation, mental health services, and local services](#) that support children and their families.** Congress should adequately fund the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account that funds ORR for the refugee resettlement and unaccompanied children programs.
- **Hold the administration accountable for prioritizing the reunification of Afghan parents or guardians overseas with their minor children currently in the U.S.** There are currently thousands of unaccompanied Afghan children who came to the U.S. after the fall of Kabul in August of 2021. A majority of these children are still waiting to be reunified with parents and legal guardians who were left overseas. Congress should urge the administration – including ORR and the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) – to communicate transparently with children and their families about their status within the family reunification process.

Additional Resources: [Housing Policy Asks](#), [Unaccompanied Children Policy Asks](#), [CWS Border Solutions](#), [Factsheet on Benefits Eligibility for Afghans](#)