

NLWJC - Kagan

DPC - Box 034 - Folder 002

Immigration - Refugees

immig -
we helped

Stephen C. Warnath

02/24/97 02:35:19

PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP
cc: Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP
Subject: Re: refugee self-sufficiency 

The refugee self-sufficiency report is acceptable, although unbearably modest. Maybe it is better to characterize it as unobjectionable as a nonevent; It doesn't really say much of anything.

The reason that HHS forwarded it to the President was to comply with the President's directive for HHS' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to draft a report on this subject. It was due at the end of last year.

It basically proposes a series of consultations with relevant parties to put together a plan for helping refugees move toward self-sufficiency and assimilation into American communities. It also pledges money to advance naturalization efforts for refugees who often face more difficulty in becoming citizens in this country.

The report is disappointing to me because I thought that this would reflect a well-considered comprehensive review of policies and set out additional steps that we could take as an Administration on this issue. I pictured that it might identify possible interagency, intergovernmental cooperative efforts and public/private initiatives on matters like English as a Second language (which helps both with obtaining jobs and with passing the tests necessary to become a U.S. citizen.)

I think HHS took an unambitious approach here because they are facing reauthorization in Congress soon for their refugee resettlement program. Also, ORR is a small office that apparently just wasn't capable of putting together the larger approach that I envisioned. As I understand it, the report is unobjectionable to other agencies (State, Justice) because it doesn't really say anything.

Thus, this report represents the beginning of the process of development of additional policies tailored for the problems of refugees, rather than a report setting out new steps. Over the past couple of weeks, I have been working with NSC and the relevant agencies to get a meaningful process put into place to do this.

I might add that now that big legal immigration cuts are not going to go forward on the Hill, these issues probably will be getting more attention this year in Congressional hearings. Also, the Commission on Immigration Reform expects to issue a report on refugee and migration issues in April that we will need to be prepared to respond to.

Hope this is helpful. Thanks.

P.L.

(EK)

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 2/19 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: _____

SUBJECT: HHS Response to Presidential Memorandum on Naturalization
of Aug 22, 1996

	ACTION	FYI		ACTION	FYI
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	McCURRY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BOWLES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	McGINTY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
McLARTY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	NASH	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PODESTA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RUFF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MATHEWS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SMITH	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RAINES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	REED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
BAER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SOSNIK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ECHAVESTE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	LEWIS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EMANUEL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YELLEN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GIBBONS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	STREETT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HALE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SPERLING	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HERMAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	HAWLEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HIGGINS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	WILLIAMS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HILLEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RADD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
KLAIN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Clegg</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
BERGER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LINDSEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS:

For any appropriate action

RESPONSE:



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

FEB 13 1997

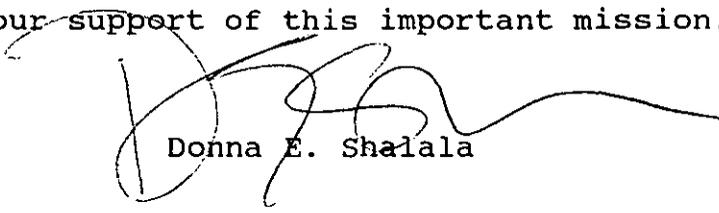
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to provide you with the enclosed report that recommends steps to further promote social adjustment, economic self-sufficiency, and naturalization of refugees and asylees.

Your continued support of the domestic refugee resettlement program has been critical to building public confidence and support for the resettlement of those who are forced to flee persecution and make new lives in the United States. The priority for the domestic refugee resettlement program is, and must continue to be, to help refugees obtain self-sufficiency and social adjustment as quickly as possible after their arrival in the United States. Working with staff of the White House Domestic Policy Council, National Security Council; our partners at the Departments of State, Justice, and Education; with State and local governments; and with the private voluntary agencies that resettle refugees, we will continue to improve on our efforts to provide newly arrived refugees with the best possible start in their new homeland.

Thank you again for your support of this important mission.



Donna E. Shalala

Enclosure

REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT

ADDITIONAL STEPS TO INCREASE REFUGEE SELF-SUFFICIENCY, SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT, AND NATURALIZATION

ISSUE

On August 22, 1996, President Clinton issued a memorandum on the subject of naturalization. Included in this memorandum was a directive that Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with other agencies as appropriate, present:

"...a report setting out a strategy of additional steps that we can take to promote social adjustment in the United States, economic self-sufficiency, and naturalization [of refugees and asylees]."

The priority for the domestic refugee resettlement program is, and must continue to be, to help refugees obtain self-sufficiency and social adjustment as quickly as possible after their arrival in the United States.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is cognizant of the role that the domestic refugee resettlement program plays in foreign and domestic policy. Concern over immigrant and refugee use of welfare and the rate of integration into American society has made it clear that in order to maintain public support for refugee resettlement in the future, the self-sufficiency rate and civic integration of refugees need to improve.

The domestic refugee resettlement program will expire this fiscal year. The reauthorization process provides an opportunity for a thorough review of the current domestic refugee resettlement program. The review will consider changes to the current program that promote the social adjustment, economic self-sufficiency, and naturalization of refugees and asylees, and provide a basis for new legislation.

This report provides background on the current domestic refugee resettlement program, recent initiatives and recommendations on initial steps that HHS will take pursuant to the President's directive to promote the social adjustment, economic self-sufficiency, and naturalization of refugees and asylees.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the domestic refugee resettlement program is to provide newly arrived refugees with the best possible start in their new homeland. As refugee admissions expanded in the 1970's, the existing federal welfare programs were increasingly utilized to provide cash and medical assistance to refugees and to help them move toward self-sufficiency. The current design of the

refugee program was created when the domestic resettlement program was codified in the Refugee Act of 1980 and the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) was established in the HHS.

Currently, the Department of State funds voluntary agencies to provide refugees with initial resettlement assistance -- helping to orient them to the United States, find housing, enroll children in school, etc. After the initial resettlement phase, refugees are provided employment and social adjustment services through a variety of federal and state programs. About half of the newly arriving refugees have been provided these services through the Aid For Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) program and other mainstream public assistance programs. Other refugees ineligible for AFDC for non-financial reasons may be eligible for the Refugee Cash and Refugee Medical Assistance programs for eight months after their arrival in the United States. This program is entirely funded by the federal government through the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement.

RECENT INITIATIVES

HHS has taken many steps over the past few years to improve the self-sufficiency and social adjustment rate of refugees. For example, in 1995, ORR issued regulations that directed States to target refugee-specific services to those refugees who have been in the United States for five years or less. The result is that resources are more focused on newly arrived refugees. Fiscal year 1996 was the first year that States were required to submit outcome goal plans, which has led to a greater focus on increasing self-sufficiency outcomes. In addition, ORR has encouraged states to provide refugee-specific services for those served by mainstream welfare programs and has required ORR-funded services to be culturally and linguistically appropriate for all refugee populations.

Demonstration projects funded under the "Wilson/Fish" statutory authority (Section 412(e)(7) of the Immigration and Nationality Act), have been particularly successful in helping refugees gain self-sufficiency. Key to the success of projects in Kentucky, Massachusetts, and San Diego, California has been the integration of cash assistance with case management; the provision of intensive, up-front services; and the coordination of case management and employment services.

Outcomes have been especially good in these projects: in Kentucky, it usually takes less than 70 days for employable adult refugees to find a job at above minimum wage; in San Diego, during its first year of operation, nearly three-quarters of the refugees enrolled in the project became self-sufficient before the end of 12 months.

Another alternative to the State-administered program is the Matching Grant Program. It is also run by the voluntary agencies, integrating cash assistance with employment services for refugees during their first four months after their arrival. Currently the matching grant program serves approximately 25 percent of all refugee arrivals. In calendar year 1995, 41 percent of the Matching Grant participants were self-sufficient by the fourth month following arrival in the United States. In 1996, this program was enhanced through increased Federal funding to provide

more comprehensive services to refugees and was expanded to provide intensive up-front services to refugees in additional sites.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve refugee economic self-sufficiency, social adjustment, and naturalization -- and build upon recent initiatives -- we recommend the following:

1) *Economic Self-Sufficiency:* The Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) will conduct a series of consultations on the domestic refugee resettlement program that focus principally on how best to achieve early economic self-sufficiency with an increased emphasis on accountability for outcomes.

We recommend that the consultations take the following into account:

- As stated above, concern over immigrant and refugee use of welfare has made it clear that in order to keep the door open for refugees, the self-sufficiency rate and rate of integration of refugees need to improve.
- The successful models described above (and other models of effective self-sufficiency services for refugees) offer lessons and experiences to build on in moving towards more effective services to promote self-sufficiency and integration.
- Decreasing refugee admissions and increasing ethnic diversity of arriving populations mean that the resettlement program needs to be more flexible to maintain culturally and linguistically appropriate services. The bulk of refugee admissions were former Soviets and Southeast Asians. The refugee service system was established over the years primarily to meet the needs of these two groups. Now, the United States admits many different populations -- such as Somalis, Iraqis, Bosnians, and Sudanese. At the same time, the number of refugees from Southeast Asia and the former Soviet Union is decreasing. There are many volatile regions in the world, making it difficult to predict who will be admitted as refugees and asylees.
- Refugees have unique experiences and come with a range of backgrounds -- from engineers with advanced technical degrees to illiterate farmers -- all of whom need refugee-specific services. Neither welfare nor welfare reform was designed specifically for newcomers who are fleeing persecution.

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2) *Social Adjustment:* The Office of Refugee Resettlement, together with the voluntary agencies and the Department of State, State Refugee Coordinators, service providers, refugees and others, will develop and implement policies and strategies for the placement and resettlement of refugees in communities that afford refugees the best opportunities for social adjustment and self-sufficiency.

ORR will continue to ensure that funding for services and assistance is made available to those communities where refugees resettle.

In addition, ORR will award grants for English language training and social and cultural adjustment services for underserved refugee groups, such as older refugees, pre-literate refugees, or homebound women. These services will help these refugees attain the level of English proficiency needed to be able to participate in other services and to have an understanding and appreciation of the American culture so that they can become citizens and participate fully in mainstream American civic life.

3) *Naturalization:* ORR will set aside \$1 million to launch a new partnership program to provide matching funds for providers who leverage State, local, or private funds for citizenship education. ||

In addition, ORR will stress the importance of citizenship and naturalization in the refugee resettlement program and encourage its grantees to provide civics education and naturalization assistance through the refugee social services and targeted assistance programs.

To expand naturalization application processing, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) will be invited to collaborate with ORR in building the capacity of community-based organizations, particularly mutual assistance associations, to assist refugees in obtaining citizenship.