

# Facts about the Refugee Resettlement Program

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1. The office of Refugee Resettlement (RRP) is in the Administration for Children and Families, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Established in 1948 to bring 250,000 Europeans displaced by WWII, it coordinated efforts of the U.S. State Department (Reception and Placement Program) to bring people to the United States, in a manner consistent with U.S. foreign policy, local sentiments and humanitarian concerns.
2. The Refugee Act of 1980, which incorporates the United Nations' definition of "refugee" and allows the U.N. to select most of the refugees who enter the U.S. almost completely eliminating the State Department's former role in selecting particular refugees. The FBI is tasked with vetting refugees applying for admission, but in February, Assistant Director Michael Steinbach told Congress that Syrians cannot be vetted, because it is a "failed state." Nevertheless, 14 U.S. Senators have asked the President to accept 65,000 additional Syrians by the end of 2016.
3. The RRP has become an important agency for transforming America. How this is being done is explained in the White House Report of April 15: "Strengthening Communities by Welcoming all Residents: A Strategic Action Plan on Immigrant & Refugee Integration."<sup>1</sup>
4. The RRP uses federal contractors (voluntary agencies called Volags). There are nine, most with religious affiliations, including the Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Hebrew and an association of Evangelical churches. There are two Volags operating in SC: World Relief (Evangelical) and Lutheran Social Services. Top salaries for executives can go to a half million dollars. Most income comes from taxpayers. To keep paying staff, the money must keep flowing in, and thus, contractors must keep refugees flowing in.
5. In 1991, Congress slashed the budget for the RRP; to keep the program solvent without cutting refugees, the federal government no longer picks up all the costs.
6. Churches play an important role in helping contractors meet the matching requirements for federal grants. In-kind donations from community partners count as matching funds. Some volags raise no cash at all.
7. The State Department does not permit "Spreading the Gospel," or as the State Department's website states: "While some of the agencies (Volags) have religious affiliations, they are not allowed to proselytize." As federal contractors, they are affected by new regulations coming from the White House to require religious groups receiving federal funds to provide abortions and contraception to female refugees whose vulnerability to rape is huge. Apparently only pregnancy is of concern.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/final\\_tf\\_newamericans\\_report\\_4-14-15\\_clean.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/final_tf_newamericans_report_4-14-15_clean.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/ra/receptionplacement/index.htm>

8. Contractors use local leaders to create “Receiving Communities.” Mayors like Stephanie Rawlings - Blake in Baltimore and Stephen K. Benjamin in Columbia, who are eager to welcome refugees are honored by the White House. Volags are seeking places to grow immigrant communities as well as new places to plant seedling communities. But when “Receiving Communities” reach a comfortable capacity, they are not able to stop the flow. Under current law, by law, they are not stakeholders. See Lewiston, Maine.
9. Resettlement sites get refugees directly from abroad, they also get secondary migration. Refugees are immediately given “protected status,” social security cards and must apply for green cards. In many places they are encouraged to vote.
10. In South Carolina, State Senators Lee Bright, Shane Martin, Harvey Peeler, Tom Corbin, and Katrina Shealy proposed and passed a general proviso to the State budget (117.32) which enhances home rule to permit/require county councils to approve a resettlement program before state controlled funds can go to refugees enrolled in that program. While this is now the law in the State of South Carolina, it will not effect refugees who are self-sufficient. South Carolinians can check with their county councils to find out if they are planning to approve a refugee resettlement program.