

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 30, 2015

The Honorable Paul LePage
Governor
State of Maine
#1 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Governor LePage:

As part of our ongoing conversation with Governors across the country regarding the refugee resettlement program, I am writing today to follow up on a Governors call I hosted on November 17.

On the call and in follow up conversations and correspondence, we have provided Governors a detailed description of the process for vetting refugees and we continue to believe the security vetting for this population is extraordinarily thorough and comprehensive. It is the most robust screening process for any category of individuals seeking admission into the United States. The process is multi-layered and intensive, involving multiple law enforcement, national security, and intelligence agencies across the Federal Government. Additional precautions have been added with regard to Syrian refugees and we continually evaluate whether more precautions are necessary.

Notwithstanding this thorough vetting process, I wanted to follow up on requests from Governors for more consistent and official communication from the Administration about the placement process.

To that end and given NGA's role as the collective voice of the nation's Governors on matters related to national policy, I am proposing establishing a new process through the NGA for the U.S. Department of State to accept individualized requests from Governors for more regular access to refugee resettlement information.

Upon receipt of a Governor's request, the State Department would compile a tailored report for the individual state submitting the request. The report would include information on refugees resettled during the prior month and fiscal year-to-date.

In addition, at the request of the Governor, the State Department would provide this information on a monthly recurring basis via a password protected website. The monthly report would include the total number of refugees resettled in the state broken down by nationality, age range and gender.

This proposal responds to Governors' input while protecting the privacy of refugee families.

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are prepared to brief Governors on the refugee resettlement process and to discuss working together to improve the program at NGA's next convening. Additionally, the Secretary of Homeland Security is prepared to work with NGA to provide further information to Governors on the refugee vetting process and to discuss options for enhanced collaboration.

Finally, enclosed with this letter is a brief overview of the resettlement process here in the United States, as well as contact information for points of contact within the key Federal agencies responsible for administering and supporting the refugee resettlement program.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to maintain this successful program that over the last four decades has made the United States a leader in welcoming refugees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DMcDonough", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Denis R. McDonough
Assistant to the President
and White House Chief of Staff