



Durbin, Duckworth join call for full funding of refugee programs

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and 22 of their colleagues in a letter to Senate appropriators, calling for robust funding for programs affecting refugees and other vulnerable migrant populations. The letter follows President Trump’s [budget request](#) for fiscal year 2019, which seeks to slash funding for critical humanitarian programs. The President’s proposed cuts would underfund key refugee resettlement accounts at a time when the world is grappling with the largest refugee crisis since World War II.

“The United States must not falter in its commitment to humanitarian aid when 65.6 million people are displaced worldwide and need help,” wrote the senators. “As you know, the United States has a proud tradition of funding life-saving humanitarian assistance, and such support is beneficial to both our country and the international community. It advances our national security interest by working to support humanitarian assistance in conflict zones, as well as the stability of our allies and partners hosting refugees – strengthening our strategic security goals. We are concerned that underfunding these accounts will create a funding void that may not be filled.”

U.S. Senators Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Tom Carper (D-DE), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Jeffrey Merkely (D-OR), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Tina Smith (D-MN), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Benjamin Cardin (D-MD), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Christopher Coons (D-MD), and Margaret Hassan (D-NH) joined Durbin, Duckworth, and Blumenthal in the letter to Senate appropriators.

The letter is available below:

March 28, 2018

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As you consider funding for appropriations for Fiscal Year 2019, we request that you include robust funding for programs affecting refugees and other vulnerable migrant populations. This funding helps support our national security and foreign policy interests by maintaining support for international humanitarian assistance and displacement assistance, including refugee resettlement. It is crucially important that the Committee allocate adequate funding to the Department of Health and Human Service's Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account and the Department of State's International Affairs accounts, including the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA), the Emergency Refugee and Migration (ERMA), and the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) accounts.

Once again, the Administration has proposed eliminating the ERMA account, which provides vital funding for the United States to respond to unforeseen humanitarian emergencies. At a time of global instability, support for ERMA is necessary to respond immediately to unanticipated crises and deliver lifesaving assistance. This account strengthens regional stability and promotes our national security interests. Many nations hosting substantial numbers of refugees are among the least developed nations which do not have adequate resources to support these populations on their own and therefore require ERMA support. Eliminating this critical account would betray our humanitarian commitments and damage relations with countries that look to the United States for assistance as a world leader.

The United States must not falter in its commitment to humanitarian aid when 65.6 million people are displaced worldwide and need help. As you know, the United States has a proud tradition of funding life-saving humanitarian assistance, and such support is beneficial to both our country and the international community. It advances our national security interest by working to support humanitarian assistance in conflict zones, as well as the stability of our allies and partners hosting refugees – strengthening our strategic security goals. We are concerned that underfunding these accounts will create a funding void that may not be filled. It is more important than ever for the United States clearly reaffirm its commitment to providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance to the world's most vulnerable populations. Accordingly, we request that the Committee allocate the following funds:

- \$2.188 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services' Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account;
- \$3.604 billion for the Department of State's Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account;

- \$50 million for the Department of State's Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account; and
- \$4.4 billion for the U.S. Agency for International Development's International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account.

The United States has a proud moral tradition and heritage of aiding refugees who need our help when their homelands are in turmoil – a tradition and heritage which we must maintain in the face of today's horrific conflicts in the Middle East and beyond.

Draconian cuts to the international affairs budget as proposed by the Trump Administration will not make us safer, and in fact is a direct threat to our national security because of the vacuum in support and leadership such cuts create. As such, we urge you to provide strong funding in Fiscal Year 2019 to the critical agencies that support our national security interests and serve the world's most vulnerable populations. Thank you for consideration of these requests.