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In the letter, Heller writes:  *“Despite concerns from many in Congress and the American public regarding the threat of ISIS and the safety of our nation, the Administration has maintained its commitment to admitting additional Syrian refugees to the U.S.  While I recognize the importance of assisting these individuals during a time of crisis, I also strongly believe Congress must conduct thorough oversight to determine whether the existing vetting process by DHS and the State Department is robust enough.”*  Senator Heller also sent a letter to Governor Brian Sandoval, encouraging him to reject Syrian refugees being relocated to the State of Nevada until it is clear this program effectively protects against terror threats. In the letter, Heller writes:  *“I hold the responsibility to ensure the safety of Nevadans above all else…Until my questions have been sufficiently answered by DHS and the State Department and I believe that this program no longer presents a threat to Nevadans, I encourage you to reject any further acceptance of Syrian refugees in the State of Nevada.”*  PDF copies of each letter are attached to this release.  **Full text of letter to Governor Sandoval:**  The Honorable Brian Sandoval  Governor of Nevada  State Capitol Building  101 N. Carson Street  Carson City, NV 89701  Dear Governor Sandoval,  Like you, I hold the responsibility to ensure the safety of Nevadans above all else.  I write to you today to share my concern for the safety of Nevadans as it relates to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) carried out by the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and request that you reject further acceptance of Syrian refugees under this program until certain questions about its effectiveness are answered.  Our state and nation are facing increased threats from extremists like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), especially in light of the tragic terrorist attacks in Paris, France.  As our nation looks to combat terrorism, I believe we must do what we can to reduce these threats and ensure Las Vegas, Reno, and other parts of the state are secure.  However, I have serious concerns about the effectiveness of the USRAP program in ensuring the safety of our nation and believe that there are many questions that still need to be answered about the program before the further issuance of refugee status.  ISIS may use such a program to reach U.S. soil to carry out attacks on Americans, and I want to ensure Nevada, given its status as a tourist destination with over 40 million visitors annually, is protected.  That is why, through Congressional oversight, I have sent a letter to the State Department and DHS asking for clarification on the verification requirements during the USRAP process, the number and demographics of Syrian refugees currently admitted under this program in Nevada and across the nation, and what measures are taken to thoroughly vet every applicant for ties to terrorism.  While I recognize the merits of assisting refugees during a time of crisis, I also need assurances that the safety of Nevadans will not be compromised as a result of accepting refugees.  Unfortunately, at this time, there are too many unanswered questions about the effectiveness of this program and ultimately the number of Syrian refugees who may have come to our state after being resettled elsewhere in the U.S.  Until my questions have been sufficiently answered by DHS and the State Department and I believe that this program no longer presents a threat to Nevadans, I encourage you to reject any further acceptance of Syrian refugees in the State of Nevada.  The safety of Nevadans should be our top priority, and the Administration must prove to Congress and the American public that the USRAP process is working in Nevadans’ best interests before committing to bringing in additional Syrian refugees.  Again, I appreciate your attention to this serious matter as we work toward the shared goal of ensuring the safety of Nevada.  Sincerely,  DEAN HELLER  U.S. Senator  **Full text of letter to Secretary of State John Kerry, and Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson:**  The Honorable Jeh Johnson  Secretary of Homeland Security  301 7th Street Southwest  Washington, DC 20024  The Honorable John Kerry  Secretary of the Department of State  2201 C St. NW  Washington, DC 20520  Dear Secretary Johnson and Secretary Kerry,  I write to you today regarding our nation’s security and the existing measures in place to guarantee Americans’ and Nevadans’ safety as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. State Department carry out the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).  In light of the tragic and barbaric terrorist attacks in Paris, France, as well as Beirut, Lebanon, it is more important now than ever to ensure the U.S. is doing all that it can to thoroughly review every application for refugee referrals.  As the global community works to address the growing refugee crisis that has resulted from the violence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other extremists in the Middle East, the U.S. must be acutely aware that terrorists may use the refugee admittance process as an opportunity to reach U.S. soil to carry out attacks on Americans.  As a Senator from Nevada, I want to ensure the safety of my state given that it is home to Las Vegas, a top tourist destination in the U.S. with over 40 million visitors annually, as well other popular tourist locations within the state such as Lake Tahoe.  While this Administration has claimed that the threat of ISIS is waning, Friday’s attacks have made clear that its influence is still strong, and this extremist group is determined to find ways to commit acts of terrorism against America and other Western nations.  Despite concerns from many in Congress and the American public regarding the threat of ISIS and the safety of our nation, the Administration has maintained its commitment to admitting additional Syrian refugees to the U.S.  While I recognize the importance of assisting these individuals during a time of crisis, I also strongly believe Congress must conduct thorough oversight to determine whether the existing vetting process by DHS and the State Department is robust enough.  To ensure this oversight, as well as the safety of Nevadans, I respectfully request a timely response to the following questions related to the existing refugee admittance process:   1. How many Syrian refugees have been admitted to the U.S. in total between 2011 and today? How many of those Syrian refugees were re-located to Las Vegas or any other location in Nevada? Please identify the number of refugees in each specific location in Nevada, as well as the location and number of Syrian refugees in states bordering Nevada. 2. On a location-by-location basis, what are the demographics of the Syrian refugees being admitted to the U.S.? Does the USRAP prioritize any specific demographics, such as religion or women and children, when admitting refugees into the U.S.? 3. When refugees are re-located to cities like Las Vegas, does DHS or the State Department follow up with the domestic resettlement agencies to verify the status of the refugee, including employment, self-sufficiency, location of residence, and cultural adjustment? 4. Are there mechanisms in place for the DHS or the State Department to determine whether refugees move to other locations in the U.S. after being relocated? How many Syrian refugees are currently living in Nevada, regardless of where they were originally relocated by the U.S. government? 5. Is there a process in place to fast-track admittance of a refugee if they have a family member already accepted as a refugee in the U.S.? 6. What is the process used to ensure Syrian refugees have never been affiliated with a terrorist group or extremists? Is this a coordinated effort among multiple intelligence agencies? Please describe this process in detail. 7. Given the recent attacks in Paris, will the Administration be revisiting the USRAP process to enhance the verification requirements to ensure our national security? 8. Does DHS or the State Department, through the screening process, also ensure that any family members of the refugee, who may not be accompanying them, do not have affiliations with a terrorist group or extremist? 9. Does the Administration plan to establish or utilize a parole program as a way to fast-track admittance of Syrian refugees? Would such a process first receive Congressional approval?  Would such a process still include robust verification requirements to protect U.S. national security? 10. Does the U.S. work in coordination with other allied nations to ensure their refugee admittance process also includes robust verification so that potential terrorists are not granted greater access to that nation or its allies?   Again, I appreciate your attention to this serious matter as we work toward the shared goal of ensuring the safety of our country.  I respectfully request a response by November 23, 2015.  Sincerely,  DEAN HELLER  U.S. Senator  ###  [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_fb.png](http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Senator-Dean-Heller/325751330177) [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_tw.png](http://twitter.com/SenDeanHeller) [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_yt.png](http://www.youtube.com/user/SenDeanHeller) |