

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

November 30, 2015

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NHLA Position on H.R. 4038, the American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act of 2015

Dear Senator:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 40 leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations, to urge you to vote against H.R. 4038, the American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act of 2015, which would effectively block the resettlement of any refugees from Iraq and Syria in the United States. By discriminating against people solely on the basis of their national origin, H.R. 4038 betrays our nation's values and principles while doing nothing to advance our security; existing refugee resettlement procedures already include lengthy security background checks by federal intelligence and security agencies.

NHLA's mission calls for unity among Hispanics nationwide to provide the Latino community with greater visibility and a stronger voice in our nation's affairs, including the need for fair and sensible refugee and immigration policies. NHLA will closely monitor the result of votes on H.R. 4038 and consider their inclusion in future NHLA congressional scorecards or other informational outreach efforts.

Latinos are all too familiar with the shortcomings of our nation's existing refugee policies to adequately protect those fleeing violence and persecution. With limited exceptions, migrants seeking refuge from violence in Latin America have also long experienced, and continue to endure, policies that discriminate against them based on their country of origin.

Most recently, the 2014 arrival of unaccompanied minors and families fleeing extraordinary violence in Central America triggered short-sighted reactions similar to what we are seeing today in regards to the Middle East, including proposals to change our laws to turn away refugees coming to the United States from particular countries. Fortunately, legislative changes did not materialize in 2014, and we cannot allow similarly flawed legislative proposals to succeed this year either. Consistent with our calls for fair treatment of migrants from Latin America, we oppose the unfair treatment of those fleeing violence from any nation.

We should not let fear blind us from considering the extraordinary plight of those seeking refuge in the United States. Those fleeing Iraq and Syria include individuals who have refused to cooperate with terrorists, women who have survived sexual violence, and children who risk being trafficked. Our nation should be proud to do its part to help these individuals escape the desperate situations they face.

Instead of attempting to cripple attempts to implement fair and secure refugee resettlement policies, Congress should work constructively with the Administration to address the root causes of the refugee flows from Iraq and Syria.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alianza Americas
American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
Cuban American National Council
Farmworker Justice
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Inter-University Program for Latino Research
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Latino Justice PRLDEF
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Council of La Raza
National Hispana Leadership Institute
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Puerto Rican Coalition
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
U.S.- Mexico Foundation

Please feel free to contact NHLA through Andrea Senteno of MALDEF, at asenteno@maldef.org or 202-572-0467, regarding this letter. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Saenz
MALDEF, President and General Counsel
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair



Jose Calderón
Hispanic Federation, President
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair