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Subject: Update: Pending Legislation in South Carolina

Larry and Irving,

I hope that you are having a nice holiday weekend. As you likely know, there are several bills that have been filed in South Carolina which could have a significant impact on refugee resettlement activities in the state. Two bills have been filed in the Senate and have been referred to Committee. Therefore, I wanted to ensure that you were aware of the bills and their current status at the legislature. I have put the information regarding the bills below. They are scheduled for debate on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week. I have notified the directors of World Relief in Spartanburg and Lutheran Services Carolinas of the bills.

After you have had a chance to review this information, please have someone contact me to discuss the bills and any information you have that would assist us in providing factual information relevant to the bills. You can reach me anytime this week via email or on my cell phone at (803) 603-1223.

All the best,
Karen

The first bill, S.928, would require the cessation of activities relating to refugees by agencies of the State “United States Department of State has reexamined the security concerns and established new processes for accepting refugees into the program.” The full text of the bill is below in red, as well as a link to it.

SECTION 1. All agencies of the State of South Carolina shall immediately cease any involvement relating to refugees placed in this State as of the effective date of this act pursuant to the federal Refugee Resettlement Program until the United States Department of State has reexamined the security concerns and established new processes for accepting refugees into the program.

SECTION 2. No agency of the State of South Carolina shall accept nor aid in the acceptance of any new refugees after the effective date of this act pursuant to the federal Refugee Resettlement Program until the United States Department of State has reexamined the security concerns and established new processes for accepting refugees into the program.

SECTION 3. The State Law Enforcement Division, in conjunction with local law enforcement agencies, shall confirm that any refugees placed in South Carolina by the federal government pursuant to the Refugee Resettlement Program do not pose a public safety risk. The State Law Enforcement Division must report to the General Assembly its findings regarding public safety risks as soon as practicable.

SECTION 4. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor

http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess121_2015-2016/bills/928.htm

The second bill, S.997, would require refugees resettled in this state to provide personal identifying information to DSS and update it regularly. SCDSS would be required to maintain the information on its public website.

Additionally, the legislation would impose civil liability on voluntary resettlement organizations and their directors for certain enumerated actions. The full text of the bill is below in red, as well as a link to it.

SECTION 1. Chapter 1, Title 43 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

"Section 43-1-730. (A)(1) Refugees placed in this State pursuant to the federal Refugee Resettlement Program are required to register with the Department of Social Services within thirty days of entering the State.

(2) In order to register with the department, the refugee shall provide the refugee's name, address, telephone number, job status, name and contact information of the refugee's employer, if any, all state, local, or federal assistance provided to the refugee, criminal record, and any other information that the department determines to be relevant. Within ten days of any of the information required for registration changing, the refugee must update his registration.

(3) The registration information required in item (2) shall be maintained by the department on a database available to the public on the department's internet website."

SECTION 2. Title 15, Chapter 5 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

"Section 15-5-220. (A) For the purposes of this section, 'person' shall mean any individual, firm, partnership, limited liability company, association, corporation, receiver, trustee, any group or combination acting as a unit, the State, any state agency, any instrumentality, authority, political subdivision, or municipality.

(B) A person that provided sponsorship or resettlement services to a refugee being relocated to this State from a country recognized by the federal government as a state sponsor of terrorism who causes the death of or personal injury to the person or destroys, damages, or steals property, real, personal or mixed, belonging to the person, is entitled to recover damages in a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction from the voluntary resettlement organization and the organization's directors, individually."

SECTION 3. As of the effective date of this act, no state or local funds may be expended to directly or indirectly benefit a refugee placed in South Carolina under the Refugee Resettlement Program. Funds may not be expended pursuant to this provision until separate legislation authorizing the expenditures is enacted.

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess121_2015-2016/bills/997.htm

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