

FY 2023 Appropriations Recommendations to Rebuild and Strengthen U.S. Refugee Admissions Program

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The world is facing record displacement figures of [more than 84 million](#) people forced from their homes with enormous refugee overseas assistance needs. Of those, there are [more than 31 million refugees](#), [1.5 million](#) of whom are in need of resettlement, but fewer than 1% of refugees will ever be resettled to a third country. In 2021, most new refugees came from [five countries](#): Central African Republic, South Sudan, Syria, [Afghanistan](#), and Nigeria. The escalation of conflict in Ukraine has triggered an immediate and steep rise in humanitarian needs with [millions of refugees](#) who fled Ukraine since February. The need for long-term protections for refugees has never been greater. However, the U.S. resettlement program has sustained devastating cuts and in 2021 refugee resettlement in the United States fell to its lowest level since Congress created the modern system in 1980.

Today, resettlement agencies are beginning to rebuild the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) at a time when they are simultaneously continuing to resettle Afghan evacuees. The U.S. must both rebuild and strengthen the resettlement program and mobilize the public resources required to do so. It is critical that Congress offers bold leadership to realize the promise of restoring U.S. global leadership in refugee protection. Program highlights for the refugee-related accounts are [available here](#). These tables were updated on March 29, 2022 to include the [FY23 President's budget request](#).

State / Foreign Operations Refugee Related Account Needs

The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), U.S. Department of State: PRM directs U.S. refugee admissions policies, coordinates overseas processing, is responsible for the transportation and initial reception of refugees in the United States, and administers U.S. funding to UNHCR and other overseas programs that assist refugees. U.S. overseas assistance programs meet basic needs of refugees and other vulnerable populations, including water and sanitation, nutrition and health care, emergency shelter, and family reunification, while also promoting self-reliance of refugees through education and economic opportunities and supporting their host communities. The U.S. resettlement program represents an important element of both refugee protection and durable solutions when repatriation and local integration are not possible. The USRAP focuses on providing initial reception and placement services for refugees, and on assisting them achieve economic self-sufficiency. [USRAP priorities](#) in [FY 2023](#) include expanding access to the USRAP for at-risk Afghans; increased resettlement of LGBTQI+ refugees; improving access for at-risk Uyghurs, Hong Kong refugees, and Burmese dissidents; and continued expansion of pathways to protection for Central Americans; and possible large-scale resettlement of Burmese Rohingya in Bangladesh.

Refugees and Displaced Persons Accounts	FY20 Enacted	FY21 Enacted	FY22 Enacted	FY23 President's Budget Request	FY23 RCUSA Requests
Migration and Refugee Assistance	\$3,782,000,000 ¹	\$4,032,000,000 ²	\$4,032,000,000 ³	\$3,912,000,000	\$5,200,000,000
International Disaster Assistance	\$4,395,362,000	\$4,395,362,000	\$6,955,460,000 ⁴	\$4,699,362,000	\$5,270,000,000
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance	\$100,000	\$500,100,000 ⁵	\$2,276,200,000 ⁶	\$100,000,000	\$2,000,000,000 ⁷

¹ Includes a base amount of \$3.4 billion passed in the FY20 appropriations bill and an additional \$350 million that Congress provided for MRA in the CARES Act to respond to COVID-19 related needs in FY20. Assuming that the COVID-19 crisis, response, and aftermath continue into FY21, RCUSA recommends that this same amount is supplemented in MRA's FY21 budget to continue to meet those needs.

² The American Rescue Plan (ARP) included an additional \$500 million for MRA. [H.R.3237 - Emergency Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021](#) provided an additional \$100 million for MRA.

³ The September CR provided an additional \$415 million, in addition to [other State Department accounts](#). The [December CR funded](#) other State Department accounts.

⁴ The September CR provided an additional \$400 million, in addition to [other State Department accounts](#). The [December CR funded](#) other State Department accounts.

⁵ [H.R.3237 - Emergency Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021](#) provided an additional \$500 million for ERMA.

⁶ The September 2021 CR provided an additional \$1.076 billion, including \$100,000,000 to respond to other unexpected and urgent humanitarian emergencies and \$976.1 million for Operation Allies Welcome (OAW). The December 2021 CR provided an additional \$1.2 billion for OAW.

⁷ RCUSA calls for authorization for the Secretary of State to draw down on the account to facilitate its judicious use.

Refugee and Entrant Assistance Account Needs

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: ORR administers federal funding to state and local programs that provide refugee resettlement services. It also funds and oversees programs for other populations of concern, including unaccompanied refugee minors, unaccompanied children, asylees, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients, Cuban and Haitian entrants, and victims of torture and trafficking. Funding is needed to provide twelve months of cash and medical assistance for an estimated [233,000 new arrivals in FY 2023](#), including up to 125,000 refugees and 61,000 asylees.

Program Areas	FY20 Enacted	FY21 Enacted	FY22 Enacted	FY23 President's Budget Request	FY23 RCUSA Requests
Transitional & Medical (TAMS)	\$354,000,000	\$354,000,000	\$564,000,000	\$860,000,000	\$2,530,000,000
Refugee Support Services (RSS)	\$207,201,000	\$207,201,000	\$307,201,000	\$500,000,000	\$1,400,000,000
Subtotal (Resettlement)	\$561,201,000	\$561,201,000	\$871,200,000	\$1,360,000,000	\$3,930,000,000
Afghan Parolee Services	{N/A}	{N/A}	\$2,943,728,000 ⁸	\$0	{Integrated into TAMS & RSS}
Afghan Legal Counsel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$250,000,000 ⁹
Trafficking Services	\$28,755,000 ¹⁰	\$28,755,000	\$29,755,000	\$39,497,000	\$50,000,000
Survivors of Torture	\$16,000,000	\$17,000,000	\$18,000,000	\$27,000,000	\$28,000,000
Unaccompanied Children	\$1,303,245,000	\$1,303,245,000	\$8,006,259,000 ¹¹	\$4,901,346,000	\$5,100,000,000
Family Reunification	\$0	\$0	\$0	{Integrated} ¹²	\$533,000,000 ¹³
Supplemental / Contingency	\$0	\$25,000,000 ¹⁴	{N/A}	\$1,547,734,750 ¹⁵ (mandatory)	\$100,000,000 ¹⁶
UC Legal Representation	{N/A}	{N/A}	{N/A}	\$266,000,000 ¹⁷ (mandatory)	{Integrated in UC}
Total	\$1,908,201,000	\$1,910,201,000	\$11,868,942,000¹⁸	\$8,141,577,750¹⁹	\$9,991,000,000

⁸ This figure includes anomalies provided for Operation Allies Welcome (OAW): The September 2021 CR provided an additional \$1.68 billion for Afghans arriving with humanitarian parole (and an additional \$2.5 billion for unaccompanied children (UCs)). The December 2021 CR provided an additional \$1.263.728 billion for Afghan arrivals and \$1.6 billion for UCs.

⁹ Accompanied by legal authority to provide full legal representation to Afghan parolees and asylum seekers.

¹⁰ The line item was broken down by \$19,500,000 to serve foreign nationals and \$8,255,000 to serve domestic TIP survivors.

¹¹ This funding level includes \$3,906,258,000 in base funding, in addition to \$1,600,000,000 + \$2,500,000,000 in anomalies.

¹² "The FY 2023 appropriations language does not reserve a specific amount of funding for separated families. Instead, a general provision provides funds made available to this appropriation may be used to provide mental health and other supportive services for children and parents or legal guardians who were separated at the United States-Mexico border between January 20, 2017 and January 20, 2021." See [CBJ for HHS/ACF](#).

¹³ Accompanied by legal authority to serve families reunified through the Family Reunification Task Force.

¹⁴ [H.R.3237 - Emergency Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021](#) provided an additional \$25 million for the REA account.

¹⁵ The [Congressional Budget Justification for HHS/ACF](#) provides a mandatory spending contingency fund for unaccompanied children authorized for FYs 2023-2025 that would automatically provide additional resources in response to increases in referrals, providing funds to activate and acquire additional bed capacity if required. While the UC population has been most susceptible to sudden fluctuations in recent years, warranting this contingency, RCUSA supports the creation of a contingency fund that can be used more broadly to serve the range of populations for which ORR is responsible. This accounts for the fact that sudden increases and emergency situations are a reality of today's world, as was witnessed with Operation Allies Welcome. The conflict in Ukraine is only a further example.

¹⁶ Accompanied by mandatory Secretary-authorized drawdown and reporting requirement to congressional appropriators.

¹⁷ The Budget also proposes mandatory appropriations for a fund for UC legal representation. Within the UC discretionary request, the Budget assumes \$100 million for direct legal representation and capacity building efforts (in addition to current levels of legal services and representation). The Budget expands on this discretionary investment with a mandatory proposal for scaling-up UC legal representation towards a goal of achieving universal representation by FY 2027. The total mandatory UC spending in the budget request is \$1,813,734,750.

¹⁸ This figure includes the total FY22 appropriations base and UC anomalies (\$8,925,214,000), which consists of FY22 omnibus baseline (\$4,825,214,000) in addition to the \$4.18 billion anomaly in the September CR and \$2.8 billion anomaly in the December CR, plus the \$2,943,728,000 in anomalies for Afghan parolee resettlement services.

¹⁹ The [Congressional Budget Justification for HHS/ACF](#) indicates that total obligations are calculated at \$8,396,448,818.

Homeland Security / U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Needs

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Highly trained USCIS officers conduct admissions interviews to determine whether refugee applicants and asylum seekers qualify for relief, manage the security clearance process, and process applications for refugees and asylees to adjust their status to permanent residents and citizens.

RCUSA urges the administration to request **\$765 million in funding** for the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for FY 2023, in line with the President's budget request for refugee, asylum, and other application processing.²⁰ This funding is critical to address refugee and asylum backlogs - and to help process parole renewals and adjustment applications. [USCIS estimates there are nearly 100,000 refugees](#) awaiting an interview for continued processing and the [asylum backlog is over one million](#). These backlogs leave refugees waiting in limbo and separate families awaiting reunification, which can be extremely damaging for the mental health of individuals who have already suffered trauma. More than [30,000 Afghans](#) are awaiting adjudication on their humanitarian parole applications. This funding is urgently needed so that USCIS can quickly hire, onboard, and deploy additional officers to address these unprecedented backlogs.

The President's budget [requests](#) funding to support additional staff, equipment, and support services for backlog reduction and the longest processing times. The [Congressional Budget Justification](#) for USCIS indicates that this funding would convert the Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate (RAIO)'s International and Refugee Affairs Division (IRAD) operations to be fully-funded by appropriations. Additional staff, contract support, and international travel are vital for USCIS to meet the refugee admissions goal and support in-person and remote-to-office refugee interviews on circuit rides worldwide. Funding will maximize remote technologies as appropriate; provide timely and in-depth training to adjudicators; and continue COVID-19 mitigation guidance. USCIS's initiatives include improving refugee vetting processes in both efficiency and effectiveness; providing refugee applicants with more transparent access to their own records, reasons for decisions, and the procedures that govern refugee processing; decreasing average processing times for refugee adjudications; and re-institution and expansion of programs impacting Central American Minors.

In FY 2022, the September Continuing Resolution (CR) provided an additional \$193 million to USCIS to support activities related to Operation Allies Welcome, as well as an additional amount to USCIS for application processing, the reduction of backlogs within asylum, field, and service center offices, and support of the refugee program offices at a rate for operations of \$250,000,000. The December CR provided additional funding for DHS operations in the amount of \$147,456,000 for OAW. The FY22 Omnibus further provided USCIS \$275,000,000 for application processing to address USCIS backlogs and delays.

Add 25,000 Afghan Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs)

The Afghan SIV program and the permanent 1059 SIV program provide a pathway to safety for individuals who face threats because of their service to the U.S. Government. Local Afghan employees and Iraqi and Afghan translators/interpreters are vital to the U.S. mission and provide life-saving assistance to U.S. troops, diplomats, and humanitarian workers in a variety of capacities. Congress must allocate visas on a regular basis to allow the State Department to continue to process visas. In light of the U.S. withdrawal and the imminent danger under which U.S. allies in Afghanistan live, RCUSA urges Congress to allocate 25,000 visas in the FY23 funding bill. RCUSA also urges Congress to increase the annual allotment of visas for the 1059 program from 50 to 150 visas.

²⁰ The [FY23 President's budget requests](#) \$903,622,000 for [USCIS Operations and Support](#), \$765 million of which would go toward application processing, such as reduction of backlogs within USCIS asylum, field, and service center offices, additional support for asylum adjudication workloads, and support of the refugee program.