



Sen. Sessions Wants to Defund Refugee Admissions Program

Speaking on the Senate floor on November 19, Senator Jeff Sessions (shown, R-Ala.) strongly condemned President Obama's request for funding for refugee resettlement, basing his opposition on both economic and security threats found in the president's plan. In his speech, Sessions outlined the reasons behind his opposition to more federal spending for refugee resettlement:



Refugees are among the most costly immigration program for several reasons. Refugees are instantly eligible for federal welfare and entitlements. They are low-skilled and frequently lack any kind of formal education. There is a great cost involved — about \$6.5 billion lifetime cost per each 10,000 refugees. The President said he will bring in at least 85,000 this year and perhaps 100,000 or more next year.

There are enormous security concerns as well. We have seen a number of refugees implicated in terrorist activity inside the United States.

Yet, in this environment of increasing federal debt, wage stagnation driven by excess labor supply, and ISIS terrorists trying to infiltrate the U.S. as refugees, President Obama has announced a unilateral expansion of the refugee program to begin admitting large numbers of Syrian refugees. This at a time when 83 percent of voters say projected growth in immigration should be curbed.

Sessions has long been one of the Senate's most vocal opponents of our nation's loose immigration policies, especially when it comes to newly arrived immigrants taking jobs that would otherwise go to American workers. For example, back in April, he and Senate Minority Whip Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) led a bipartisan coalition of senators who sent a letter to then-Attorney General Eric Holder, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, and Labor Secretary Thomas Perez, asking them to investigate Southern California Edison's use of the H-1B guest-worker program to replace American workers. A section of Sessions' Senate webpage headed "Defending American Workers" states that he is committed to immigration reform that "curbs the unprecedented flow of immigration that is sapping the wages and job prospects of those living and working here today." The post also says that Sessions has been a leading opponent of President Obama's "unconstitutional executive amnesties, which gives jobs and benefits to illegal workers at the expense of struggling families."

With the rise of the refugee crisis stemming from the turmoil in Iraq and Syria, and especially since the November 13 terrorist attacks in Paris in which ISIS is suspected of playing an important role, Sessions



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and many others concerned about our nation's weak or non-existent security screening of aliens have shared their concerns. In his speech, Sessions addressed the matter of security as follows:

The President persists in this plan even though his own officials, testifying before my Immigration Subcommittee, conceded there is no database in Syria with which to vet refugees.... The FBI director tells us there are now active ISIS investigations in all 50 U.S. states.

Our subcommittee has identified dozens of examples of foreign-born immigrants committing and attempting acts of terror on U.S. soil. Preventing and responding to these acts is an effort encompassing thousands of federal agents and attorneys and billions of dollars: in effect, we are voluntarily admitting individuals at risk for terrorism and then, on the back end, trying to stop them from carrying out their violent designs.

Sessions quoted a warning made by the former head of the Citizenship and Immigration Services union (which represents immigration caseworkers) more than a year ago: "It is also essential to warn the public about the threat that ISIS will exploit our loose and lax visa policies to gain entry to the United States."

And Sessions is not alone in the Senate in having such reservations about the Obama refugee plan. He continued:

Senator [Ted] Cruz [R-Texas] and I sent the Administration a list of 72 individuals charged or convicted of terrorism in just the last year. We asked for the immigration histories of each individual. Stuningly, the Administration refused to respond.

It would be unthinkable for Congress to acquiesce to the President's refugee funding request when he refuses to even publicly disclose the immigration history of these 72 terrorists, many of whom are involved with ISIS.

Cruz, a leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016, has had his own run-ins with the president concerning the administration's refugee plan. On November 16, his campaign released a video highlighting Cruz's challenge to Obama for a debate on the administration's proposed plan to admit tens of thousands of Syrian refugees. The description of the video on Cruz's Senate website notes that FBI Director James Comey has acknowledged that these refugees cannot be properly vetted.

The notice on Cruz's website states that the challenge to a debate comes in response to President Obama having referred to Cruz "and millions of Americans who oppose the Administration's plan" as "offensive" and "un-American." In the video, the feisty Cruz responds: "Mr. president, if you want to insult me, you can do it overseas, you can do it in Turkey, you can do it in foreign countries, but I would encourage you, Mr. president, come back and insult me to my face. Let's have a debate on Syrian refugees right now, we can do it anywhere you want."

Sessions stated that the answer to stopping the administration's Syrian refugee program lies in the power of the purse. He notes that every year, the president submits a request to Congress to fund his refugee admissions program and that the president is dependent on these funds to carry out his plans.

Both the junior and senior Alabama senators, Sessions and his Republican colleague, Richard Shelby, concur on a strategy to stop the administration's Syrian refugee program: "The answer is for Congress to include in the year-end funding bill a clear requirement that the President must submit his annual refugee plan to Congress for approval. Under this plan, Congress must approve how many refugees are



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brought in and from where.”



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