



Written by [James Murphy](#) on January 12, 2020

## Texas Governor: State Will Refuse New Refugees in Accordance With Trump Executive Order

Citing a “broken federal immigration system,” Texas Governor Greg Abbott made it clear that his state will not accept any new refugees in 2020. The decision makes Texas the first state to refuse new refugees since President Trump signed [Executive Order 13888](#), in September.

More than 40 governors from both parties have already consented to allow more refugees to be settled in their states. With his letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Abbott and Texas are the first to refuse new refugees.



States yet to say yes or no to new refugees include Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Wyoming. All of those states have Republican governors.

Executive Order 13888 states that locales must “consent, in writing, to the resettlement of refugees within the State and locality, before refugees are settled in that state and locality under the program.”

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“Texas has carried more than its share in assisting the refugee resettlement process,” Abbott, a Republican, wrote in his letter to Pompeo.

“Since FY2010, more refugees have been in Texas than in any other state. In fact, over that decade, roughly 10% of all refugees resettled in the United States have been placed in Texas,” Abbott wrote.

Abbott couldn’t resist a shot at a U.S. Congress more interested in phantom impeachments than tackling the border issue. “Texas has been left by Congress to deal with disproportionate migration issues resulting from a broken federal immigration system.”

Groups who work to resettle refugees widely condemned Abbott’s decision. “Texas has a long history of welcoming refugees. For years, more refugees have settled in Texas than any other state in the country. This is a shameful decision by Gov. Abbott which is unworthy of the great state’s reputation for being bold and hospitable,” said Mark Hetfield of the refugee resettlement organization [HIAS in a statement](#).

The National Immigration Forum attacked Abbott’s decision from an economic standpoint. “At a time of historically low state unemployment rates, why would Texas turn away refugees with an entrepreneurial spirit that contributes to local communities and economies?” [asked Ali Noorani](#), the executive director of the organization.

And of course, Texas Democrats blasted the decision as well. Texas Democratic Party spokesman Abhi Rahman complained that refugees “are not political pawns and bargaining chips to advance anti-immigrant policies.”

HIAS, Church World Service, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service — all refugee



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resettlement organizations — have come together to challenge Executive Order 13888 in federal court in Maryland. A decision in that case is expected in the next two weeks.

Since 2004, Texas has taken in nearly 90,000 refugees — second only to California. [A 2016 study by Pew Research Center](#) showed that approximately 1.6 million illegal immigrants resided in Texas. In the last three years, that number has likely grown. So, as Governor Abbott points out, it's not as if Texas is not pulling their fair share of new residents — legal or not — in the immigration crisis.

President Trump was right to sign Executive Order 13888, not because we make laws in America by executive order, but because the decision about whether or not a state or locality brings in large groups of refugees belongs in that state or locality — not in the offices of resettlement agencies in Washington, D.C.

Immigration — legal immigration — is an honored part of our country's heritage. So is taking in refugees from war torn and impoverished lands. For sure, such refugees are the saddest cases and care should be used to find them good homes. But it cannot be a free-for-all. If a state or locality insists it can't take any more refugees for now, that should be the final word on the subject.

Maybe when federal authorities do their job and finally end the problem of illegal immigration into the United States, Texas can again begin to take in more refugees. But that decision belongs to Texas.

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