



## Texas Threatens Withdrawal From Refugee Resettlement Program

On September 21, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission sent a letter to Robert Carey, director of the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, stating that unless the federal government “unconditionally” approves by September 30 the state’s new plan controlling refugee placements within Texas, the state agency will “exit” the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program.



The commission told Carey that unless the Texas state plan is approved without changes by the end of the month “we will interpret your silence as a rejection of the application.”

The *Houston Chronicle* said that it had obtained a copy of the two-page letter, which was from Charles Smith, executive commissioner of the state commission. The letter advises the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement of the state’s decision not to allow additional refugee resettlements “without assurances from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security and the Director of National Intelligence that the refugees do not pose a security threat to our citizens.”

The *Chronicle* quoted from Smith’s letter further:

We remain willing to place refugees in Texas with the strict contingency that you and other specified federal security officials provide certification that each refugee does not pose a security threat.

Given your proclaimed confidence in your protocols, this appears to be a reasonable request. The State of Texas does not oppose the resettlement of all refugees, but we believe we are justified in our objection to the unmitigated placement of refugees from Syria and countries known to be supporters or propagators of terrorism.

If an agreement from the federal office is not forthcoming, Texas will join Kansas and New Jersey in withdrawing its participation in the refugee program. In the letter, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission provided a timetable for the Texas withdrawal, which would entail stopping all services and benefits that the state has been providing to refugee groups and contractors on January 31 – the first available date to withdraw under the state’s current agreement with the federal government.

The *Chronicle* cited a statement from Texas Governor Greg Abbott, who said that his agency’s letter was sent in response to the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement’s “unwillingness” to approve the state’s new refugee plan, which would require national security officials to ensure that refugees do not pose a security threat to Texas.

“Empathy must be balanced with security,” said Abbott, as quoted by the *Chronicle*.

“Texas has done more than its fair share in aiding refugees, accepting more refugees than any other



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state between October 2015 and March 2016. While many refugees pose no danger, some pose grave danger, like the Iraqi refugee with ties to ISIS who was arrested earlier this year after he plotted to set off bombs at two malls in Houston.”

The *Austin American-Statesman* reported Abbott’s explanation that his state’s ultimatum was made because Texas officials don’t trust the federal government’s system of background checks for refugees “from terrorist-based nations.”

“The federal government lacks the capability or the will to distinguish the dangerous from the harmless, and Texas will not be an accomplice to such dereliction of duty to the American people,” Abbott continued.

“Even with the inability to properly vet refugees from Syria and countries known to be supporters or propagators of terrorism, President Obama is now ineptly proposing a dramatic increase in the number of refugees to be resettled in the U.S.,” said Abbott.

The *American-Statesman* noted that this latest Texas ultimatum follows a series of setbacks in the state’s attempts to curtail the resettlement of Syrian refugees within its borders.

In [several articles](#) about the resistance presented by the governors of Texas and a majority of the other states (including Donald Trump’s running mate, Indiana Governor Mike Pence) to the Obama administration’s refugee plan, we quoted from an open letter that Abbott to President Obama shortly after the deadly terrorist attacks in Paris last November. That letter stated, in part:

As governor of Texas, I write to inform you that the State of Texas will not accept any refugees from Syria in the wake of the deadly terrorist attack in Paris.

Further, I — and millions of Americans — implore you to halt your plans to accept more Syrian refugees in the United States. A Syrian “refugee” appears to have been part of the Paris terror attack. American humanitarian compassion could be exploited to expose Americans to similar deadly danger. The reasons for such concerns are plentiful.

The FBI director testified to Congress that the federal government does not have the background information that is necessary to effectively conduct proper security checks on Syrian nationals, Director Comey explained: “We can query our database until the cows come home, but there will be nothing show up because we have no record of them.”

The *Austin American-Statesman* noted that attempts by Texas to stop the arrival of Syrian refugees have been blocked twice during the past year by U.S. District Judge David Godbey, who said that Texans’ fears of terrorism were based largely on speculative hearsay and that the state failed to provide sufficient evidence showing that terrorists had infiltrated the refugee program.

Following Godbey’s last such ruling in June, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said he was disappointed that the judge’s decision meant “Texas cannot hold the federal government accountable.”

“We are considering our options moving forward to guarantee the safety of Texans from domestic and foreign threats,” said Paxton.

The ruling was also criticized by Texas Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, who said:

“Texas has a right to know who the federal government is bringing to Texas, where they are being placed and what they are doing to guarantee the safety of all Texans.”

In a [recently published article](#), *The New American* posed the question of whether our country was



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actually importing Middle East terrorism into the United States. This week's event indicate that the officials in Texas are concerned that that is exactly what might be happening — and are determined to prevent terrorists from being imported into the Lone Star State.

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