



**CHURCH WORLD SERVICE**

May 29, 2009

Honorable Members of Congress,

I am writing on behalf of Church World Service, a 63-year-old faith-based humanitarian organization that extends disaster assistance, social and economic development and refugee protection to people around the world. CWS is a partner in the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, working with its 33 community-based affiliates, member denominations and their congregations to welcome refugees and help them adjust to their new lives. Church World Service strongly supports the refugee related provisions in H.R. 2410, The Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011.

Sections 104, 233, 234, and 235 of H.R. 2410 would make urgently needed reforms to refugee processing procedures. The provisions contained in these sections will go a long way to correct many of the problems in the program. Reforms in programs relating to family unification, refugee processing, cultural orientation, and English language training will improve the lives of refugees around the world, including those resettled in the United States. As an organization with first-hand knowledge of how these reforms would improve the U.S. Refugee Program, we commend the House Committee on Foreign Affairs for including these reforms in H.R. 2410, and urge all members of the House and Senate to support these initiatives.

The United States has a history of commitment to humanitarian issues, and by enacting these reforms to the U.S. Refugee Program, Congress can affirm this commitment. These provisions will increase funds for the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account. U.S consular offices and non-governmental organizations will have the funds to improve resources and training to refer refugees to the United States for resettlement. Section 233 includes reforms that would reduce bureaucratic barriers to reuniting refugee families and children. This act seeks to enhance the impact of the congressional refugee consultation process and ensure refugees will depart on time and not be delayed while waiting for the Presidential Determination, as well as increase the authorized ceiling for the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account. Provisions in section 234 would improve cultural orientation programs and provide English classes and job training to refugees who are preparing for resettlement to the United States. We also support section 235, which would help Iraqi refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The United States has a special obligation to assist these displaced Iraqis.

The refugee-related provisions in H.R. 2410, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, are powerful steps in the right direction to modernizing the U.S. Refugee Program. We support these reforms and look forward to engaging with members of congress to enact additional legislation that will assist refugees already in the United States. Once again, we thank the House Committee on Foreign Affairs for their leadership on these important reforms, and urge the entire House and Senate to support and enact these provisions.

Sincerely,

Erol Kekic

Director, Immigration and Refugee Program  
Church World Service

**Immigration and Refugee Program**

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