



LEGISLATIVE ALERT

July 30, 2014

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 12.5 million members of the AFL-CIO and our community affiliate Working America, I urge you to vote yes on the motion to proceed to the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2014 (S. 2648). Emergency funding is necessary to care for child refugees from Central America and should be debated on the Senate floor.

Since its founding, the United States has served as a beacon of hope and freedom for those fleeing political instability, repression, violence, poverty, and natural disasters. From great thinkers like Albert Einstein, to prominent diplomats like Madeleine Albright, to local business owners and union members, refugees have contributed greatly to our society and enriched our national fabric. We should not turn our backs on this rich tradition or our commitments under international law. Our commitments to refugees cannot be honored through expedited legal proceedings and removals envisioned in Senator Cornyn's misnamed HUMANE Act (S. 2611) or the supplemental before the House (H.R. 5230). Children must be apprised of their rights in their native language and in an age appropriate manner; screened by trained professionals for exposure or vulnerability to abuse, violence, or trafficking; and provided legal counsel, not left to fend for themselves in our dysfunctional immigration system.

While a comprehensive approach is necessary to address the root causes of such large-scale refugee situation, including the long-term impact of U.S. trade policies, the Departments of Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, and State have immediate needs that must be addressed before Congress recesses. The Emergency Supplemental includes funding that will help identify children eligible for protective status and ensure they will not be returned to danger. In particular, the funding for the Department of Justice will provide much needed legal representation for children.

Preserving due process is paramount. The AFL-CIO rejects any amendments that would limit due process for vulnerable populations at the border or run counter to established U.S. and international norms regarding the detainment of children and refugees. In particular, the essential protections in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPPRA) should either be strengthened or maintained, but should under no circumstances be rolled back.

For the reasons stated above, the AFL-CIO urges you to allocate the additional funding necessary to properly care for child refugees from Central America and oppose any efforts to undermine TVPPRA protections.

Sincerely,

William Samuel, Director
Government Affairs Department