



## An important message from Deacon Tom



Catholic Charities  
OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

July 23, 2014

Deacon Thomas A. Roberts  
*President & Chief Executive Officer*

Dear Friends and Supporters:

I am sure that you are as disturbed and alarmed as I am by what we are seeing and hearing regarding the plight of so many vulnerable children that are fleeing to the United States, risking their lives to find some chance for survival. It is heartbreaking to learn of the stories of inhumane treatment, rape and murder that so many of these children are facing, leaving them with no other choice but to venture out on their own, despite the risks and perils of abuse, neglect and slaughter that they face by trying to get here for some chance of sustaining the God given gift of life itself.

If there has ever been a time for us as believers in God, and as Americans, to have the courage to welcome and care for the vulnerable among us, now is the time to act. We hear in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew: *"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me"*. We can also look to the quote on the pedestal of our Statue of Liberty for inspiration and direction: *"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door"*. Now is the time to act.

Some of you may not know that Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada is federally recognized as the State Refugee Office in Nevada. As the leading agency, Catholic Charities oversees the resettlement of 1,700 refugees from all over the world here in Southern Nevada, as well as providing guidance and support to the Ethiopian Community Development Council, the only other resettlement agency in Las Vegas. I can personally attest to many wonderful success stories of our brothers and sisters who have come here from far-away places seeking asylum, and a chance for a better life for themselves and their families. They have become independent, productive and self-sustaining members of our community, enriching us with their culture, and contributing their talents and skills as members of our workplaces, schools, churches and neighborhoods. I invite you to take a tour of our campus, and to see the work that we do to help these immigrants become productive and value added members of our city.

These refugee resettlement programs are funded by a federal grant that is authorized by the Department of Health and Human Services, and administered by the national Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). These immigrants who are supported by this program are here as legal recipients of these services, and we can report powerful outcomes, great human success stories and lives saved through these services. Unfortunately, the federal ORR office is seeking to re-direct some of these funds away from our existing refugee resettlement programs to help fund the crisis of the unaccompanied children issues, which would devastate our existing refugee programs, potentially eliminating services for up to 1,000 refugees who are already here, and cost the jobs of up to 15 employees.

Now is the time to act.

Please read on how you can take action

**Please contact your Congressional Representatives, and ask them to:**

- Support the Administration’s emergency supplemental funding request from Congress to provide for the necessary and compassionate resources needed to address this humanitarian crisis happening now to some of God’s most vulnerable children;
- Support the existing funding stream for the current ORR programs that successfully resettles refugees in our community; do not redirect funds away from this outcome based program.

Listed herein you will find contact information for you to reach out to our elected members of Congress from Nevada, so that your voice can be heard:

Senator Harry Reid  
333 Las Vegas Blvd. South, Suite 8016  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101  
(702) 388-5020  
[www.reid.senate.gov](http://www.reid.senate.gov)

Senator Dean Heller  
8930 West Sunset Rd., Suite 230  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89148  
(702) 388-6605  
[www.heller.senate.gov](http://www.heller.senate.gov)

Congressman Joe Heck  
8872 South Eastern Ave., Suite 220  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89123  
(702) 387-4941  
[www.heck.house.gov](http://www.heck.house.gov)

Congresswoman Dina Titus  
550 East Charleston Blvd., Suite B  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89104  
(702) 220-9823  
[www.titus.house.gov](http://www.titus.house.gov)

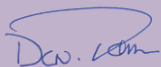
Congressman Steven Horsford  
2250 Las Vegas Blvd. North, Suite 500  
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89030  
(702) 802-4500  
[www.horsford.house.gov](http://www.horsford.house.gov)

Pope Francis has also called for the care and protection of these children. In a recent letter, the Holy Father wrote: *“Such a humanitarian emergency demands as its first measure the urgent protection and properly taking in of these children”*. The Holy Father also said that the root causes of their flight should be addressed, such as violence and endemic poverty. I am also attaching a summary from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that provides some additional background information on these issues, and a call to action for you, your family, and friends to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

We must compel Congress to act now – before the August recess – to fund the components of the supplemental funding request, and to protect the funds for the existing ORR refugee programs.

This is not a partisan issue; it is not a political issue; it is a humanitarian crisis. We are compelled to engage, and to help to save the lives of those of our brothers and sisters that were not blessed to be born in this country. They are fleeing for their lives. Please – now is the time to act.

Respectfully,



Deacon Thomas A. Roberts  
President & Chief Executive Officer

**Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada**

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[www.CatholicCharities.com](http://www.CatholicCharities.com)

# Action Alert to Congress:

## Protect Vulnerable Unaccompanied Children and Restore Critical Funding for Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations



**Immediate Action Needed:** Please urge your Senators and Representative to oppose legislative efforts to strip protections away from unaccompanied children who are fleeing from violence in Central America and seeking refuge in the United States. This includes, among others, efforts to reduce protections by changing the Trafficking Victims Reauthorization Act (2008) or the Homeland Security Act (2002). Urge them to pass a supplemental that provides for the care and protection of vulnerable children, ensures that their due process rights are preserved, and addresses the root causes of their flight, particularly violence in their home countries. Also, use part of the supplemental to fully restore critical ORR FY2014 funding for refugees and all the other vulnerable populations under the care of ORR.

**Background:** Central American children are continuing to flee the rampant violence in their countries. Some travel to the United States seeking refuge and are placed under ORR's care. With the fourth quarter just beginning, the number of arriving children has well-exceeded projections for the full fiscal year. ORR notified Congress that it will reprogram \$94 million to begin to meet the needs of the vulnerable children by taking funding from refugees and the other vulnerable populations under its care. These populations include refugees, unaccompanied refugee minors, asylees, Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrants, Cuban/Haitian entrants, and victims of torture, trafficking, and serious crime. Without critical supplemental funding in FY2014 and continued robust funding in FY2015, vital programs that assist refugees, unaccompanied children and other vulnerable populations and support communities that welcome them will continue facing the loss of significant funding and capacity. ORR is already chronically underfunded. These cuts would have devastating consequences for ORR's vulnerable populations and the communities that welcome them.

The White House has asked Congress for more discretionary enforcement authority over the children. This would reduce the children's due process, refugee protections, child protections, and protection from human traffickers. The Administration also has asked Congress to pass an FY2014 emergency supplemental of \$3.7 billion to address the urgent humanitarian situation, including \$1.83 billion for ORR to assure proper care of the children and to assure proper funding for FY2014 for refugees and all other populations under ORR's care.

**Please take the following actions and spread the word about this urgent alert:**

**Call** both your Senators and your Representative. You can call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 or find their direct office lines on their websites at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov). Tell them:

- I'm your constituent from [city, state] and I care about refugees, unaccompanied children, and other vulnerable populations.*
- I urge you to oppose statutory changes that would strip protections from vulnerable, unaccompanied refugee children and send them back to danger in their home countries.*
- The children deserve and need the protections as children seeking refuge from violence. The protections help keep them from harm in this country and their home countries.*
- I urge you to support supplemental funding that provides for the care and protection of vulnerable unaccompanied children, ensures that their due process rights are preserved, and addresses the root causes of their flight, particularly violence in their home countries.*
- Without these increases, ORR will not have sufficient funds to serve refugees, unaccompanied children, and other vulnerable groups under its care and will be forced to continue cutting services to refugees and other vulnerable populations.*
- I urge that you also use part of the supplemental to fully restore critical ORR FY2014 funding for refugees and all vulnerable populations under ORR's care.*
- These critical services help refugees and other vulnerable populations learn English and find jobs so they can support themselves and their families and better contribute to their new communities.*

**Meet** with your Senators and Representative or their staff members in your local home state and district. A toolkit for meeting with your Members of Congress can be found at [rcusa.org/wrd2014](http://rcusa.org/wrd2014). Use the above asks and messages. *Protect Vulnerable Unaccompanied Children and Restore Critical Funding for Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations July 17, 2014 FINAL mjw/ka/meh*

**Write** your Representative and Senators. Find their addresses on their websites at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov). See accompanying sample letter.

**Spread the word** through social media. Find your Representative's and Senators' Twitter Handles at <https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/members-of-congress> and urge them to increase ORR funding. See samples below:

- @[their twitter handle] Please stop all legislative efforts to strip protections from unaccomp children#UAC fleeing from Central American violence and seeking refuge in the United States.*
- @[their twitter handle] Please support supplemental funding that provides for the care and protection of vulnerable Central American unaccomp children#UAC, ensures that their due process rights are preserved, and addresses the root causes of their flight, particularly violence in their home countries.*
- @[their twitter handle] Please also use part of the supplemental to fully restore critical ORR FY2014 funding for refugees and all vulnerable populations under ORR's care.*

**Contact:** Matthew Wilch, Refugee Policy Advisor, USCCB/MRS, [mwilch@usccb.org](mailto:mwilch@usccb.org) ; 202-541-3448.