



BILL LEE
GOVERNOR
STATE OF TENNESSEE

December 18, 2019

The Honorable Randy McNally
Lieutenant Governor
425 5th Avenue North
Suite 700 Cordell Hull Bldg.
Nashville, TN 37243

The Honorable Cameron Sexton
Speaker, Tennessee House of Representatives
425 5th Avenue North
Suite 600 Cordell Hull Bldg.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Lt. Gov. McNally and Speaker Sexton,

As part of Executive Order 13888, President Trump has strengthened our national security while enhancing our state's ability to cooperate and consult with his Administration in the process of resettling refugees who are fleeing persecution, including religious persecution. Public safety is of the utmost importance and the Trump Administration has strengthened the vetting process of those entering the U.S. through heightened screenings around terrorism, violent crime, fraud, and public health concerns. Border security, reducing illegal immigration, and upholding the rule of law are critical, and so it is important to note that each and every refugee that might potentially be resettled in Tennessee under the President's Executive Order will have been individually approved by the Trump Administration for legal immigrant status.

My administration has worked extensively to determine the best outcome for Tennessee, and I will consent to working with President Trump and his Administration to responsibly resettle refugees.

Resettlement will be facilitated by the Trump Administration and non-profit organizations with extensive experience in this area. The refugee population in Tennessee is small, and I believe our consent to cooperate and consult with the Trump Administration to provide a safe harbor for those who are fleeing religious persecution and violent conflict is the right decision. The United States and Tennessee have always been, since the very founding of our nation, a shining beacon of freedom and opportunity for the persecuted and oppressed, and particularly those suffering religious persecution. My commitment to these ideals is based on my faith, personally visiting refugee camps on multiple continents, and my years of experience ministering to refugees here in Tennessee.

I am aware that litigation is pending asserting that the federal government is required by statute to consult with states regarding refugee resettlement, and I support this effort. President Trump's Executive Order is certainly a step in the right direction while that litigation is pending, but I would note that Executive Orders are not necessarily binding on future presidents. So, while I am willing to trust and work with President

Trump on the refugee issue, I have consulted with appropriate legal authority, and I am confident that our current work with this President will not undermine the litigation seeking a more permanent statutory interpretation that would actually bind and require the federal government to consult with the states.

Our consent comes with a shared responsibility to both the character and livelihood of our state as a lawful and thriving place for all our citizens. My consent is valid initially for one year, and we will work closely with President Trump, you, and your colleagues to ensure this process is effective as we work together with the Trump Administration to facilitate and carefully monitor continued refugee resettlement for the next year.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bill Lee