

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS  
AND SHEILA KUEHL**

**DECEMBER 8, 2015**

**Reaffirming Los Angeles County’s Commitment to Hospitality**

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “[t]he ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

Since 2011, almost 12 million people, the equivalent to half of the Syrian population, have been displaced through no fault of their own by terrorism, religious persecution, war and conflict, including 7.6 million displaced within Syrian borders. Many have been forced to flee to other parts of Syria or to seek refuge in neighboring countries. Almost 70% are women and children.

The resulting humanitarian crisis is arguably the largest since World War II. The U.S. expects to admit 70,000 refugees from all over the world. The President has announced his intention to accept at least 10,000 Syrian refugees in the next fiscal year.

As the U.S. State Department notes on its website, “[t]he United States is proud of its history of welcoming immigrants and refugees. The U.S. refugee resettlement program reflects the United States’ highest values and aspirations to compassion, generosity and leadership. Since 1975, Americans have welcomed over 3 million refugees from all over the world. Refugees have built new lives, homes and communities in towns and cities in all 50 states.” Refugees have embraced American life, built businesses, earned leadership positions within the ranks of military and government services and enriched the lives of all

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MOTION

RIDLEY-THOMAS \_\_\_\_\_

KUEHL \_\_\_\_\_

KNABE \_\_\_\_\_

ANTONOVICH \_\_\_\_\_

SOLIS \_\_\_\_\_

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through their genius and hard work. The Board of Supervisors has regularly proclaimed June to be Refugee Awareness Month to raise awareness of the contributions that refugees make throughout Los Angeles County (County).

The County has a proud tradition of hospitality and embracing the cultural diversity of its residents. The County has been enriched by the skills and ingenuity of those who have come to live and work here from all over the world, including from countries in Eastern Europe, Central America and the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia.

The County also has a strong tradition of not tolerating hate crimes, racial antagonism, stereotypes, prejudice and bias especially in the wake of fear. In 2012, for example, the Board took action to revoke a 1942 resolution which supported the internment of Japanese Americans because of fear that they would side with the enemy in time of war. The Board also commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide earlier this year.

Refugees are subject to the strictest form of security screening of any class of traveler to the U.S. before they are allowed to enter, and are subject to extensive background, security and health checks. The process is slow and long and is considered the toughest way to legally enter the United States. Once in the U.S., refugees must pay back the cost of their travel tickets, get jobs, and pay rent like other tenants.

**WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS** declare it will honor the federal immigration policies of the United States and welcome refugees fleeing persecution in their home countries to adjust to a new, peaceful and productive life in Los Angeles County.

**WE FURTHER MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS** send a letter to the President of the United States and the Congressional delegation expressing the Board's support of federal efforts to help Syrians fleeing violence and oppression and to increase the overall number of refugees that the U.S. will resettle over the course of the next two years.

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