

Why House Republicans Are Serious About Refugee Security

Nearly one-third of the Republicans in the House of Representatives signed a letter calling on party leaders to ensure that a must-pass spending bill block any use of federal funding to resettle refugees from Syria and nearby countries, the bill's sponsor said on Tuesday.

Seventy-four of the 246 House Republicans signed the letter, which was circulated by Republican Representative Brian Babin.

It urges Speaker Paul Ryan and other House leaders to include a provision in an upcoming appropriations bill that would block President Barack Obama's plan to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees in the next year.

Passage of a bill with such language by the Republican-controlled Congress could set up a showdown with Obama, who has promised to veto a standalone bill passed by the House last week setting tighter controls on refugee resettlement.

Congressional aides are negotiating the \$1 trillion-plus spending bill, facing a Dec. 11 deadline for it to pass the House and Senate and be signed into law by Obama to avoid a government shutdown.

Ryan's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the letter.

The attacks in Paris earlier this month fueled a wave of anti-refugee sentiment in the United States that had been rising since Obama announced his plan to admit Syrians in September. Many Americans worry that the mostly Muslim newcomers would pose a national security threat, although they go through up to two years of screening before they are allowed into the country.

The Babin letter said Congress must “exercise greater authority” over the refugee resettlement program to ensure the safety of the U.S. public.

“ISIS (Islamic State) has repeatedly declared that they would infiltrate the refugee community that is leaving the Middle East and flooding into Europe. The November 13 attacks in Paris appear to have been a fulfillment of that threat,” the letter said. {eo}

(Reporting by Patricia Zengerle; Editing by Steve Orlofsky)
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