

AILA Member Talking Points on the Welcoming Evacuees Coming from Overseas to Mitigate Effects of Displacement (WELCOMED) Act of 2021 ¹

Representatives Seth Moulton (D-MA) and Don Bacon (R-NE) introduced the [Welcoming Evacuees Coming from Overseas to Mitigate Effects of Displacement \(WELCOMED\) Act \(H.R. 5168\)](#) on September 3, 2021.²

Summary

The Act would make “Afghan entrants” eligible for any resettlement assistance, entitlement program, or other benefit that is available to a refugee as defined by § 207 of the INA. The Act defines “Afghan entrant” as any Afghan national entering the United States on humanitarian parole under INA § 212(d)(5) between July 1, 2021, and July 1, 2025.

Talking Points:

- Since President Biden announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops this past summer, thousands of Afghans have fled the country. The UNHCR estimates that as many as half a million Afghans will leave Afghanistan by the end of the year.³
- Because of the urgent nature of the evacuation, many Afghans have come to the U.S. through humanitarian parole, which does not offer the same benefits as formal refugee status.
- The need to assist our Afghan allies is evident on both sides of the aisle.
- The Act would not change eligibility for Afghans to enter the U.S.; it would simply allow those who do enter to make use of benefits that are currently not available to those on humanitarian parole.
- The socioeconomic needs of the Afghan evacuee community are similar to that of refugees even though their precise legal status is different.
- While the Act itself does not list them, federal refugee benefits include:⁴
 - Reception & Placement
 - 8 months of Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)
 - Refugee Support Services (RSS)
 - ORR Matching Grant (MG) Program
 - Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA)
 - Other federal welfare benefits such as SNAP, TANF, and SSI⁵

¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5168/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22welcomed+act%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=1>.

² <https://moulton.house.gov/press-releases/moulton-bacon-introduce-welcomed-act-so-afghan-evacuees-receive-refugee-benefits>.

³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/half-million-afghans-could-flee-across-borders-unhcr-2021-08-27/>

⁴ https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/orr/orr_asylee_fact_sheet.pdf;
<http://www.ccmaine.org/docs/Refugee%20Immigration%20Services/159-RefugeesandAccesstoFund.pdf>;

⁵ <https://www.nilc.org/issues/economic-support/overview-immeligfedprograms/>.

- These programs are necessary to provide refugees with the basic money and resources to resettle in the United States where they may have no personal connections.
- Allowing Afghan evacuees to access federal benefits will enable them to get on their feet in their new homes and lessen the financial burden on state and local communities.
- This legislative proposal has also been incorporated into the [FY 2022 Continuing Resolution](#).