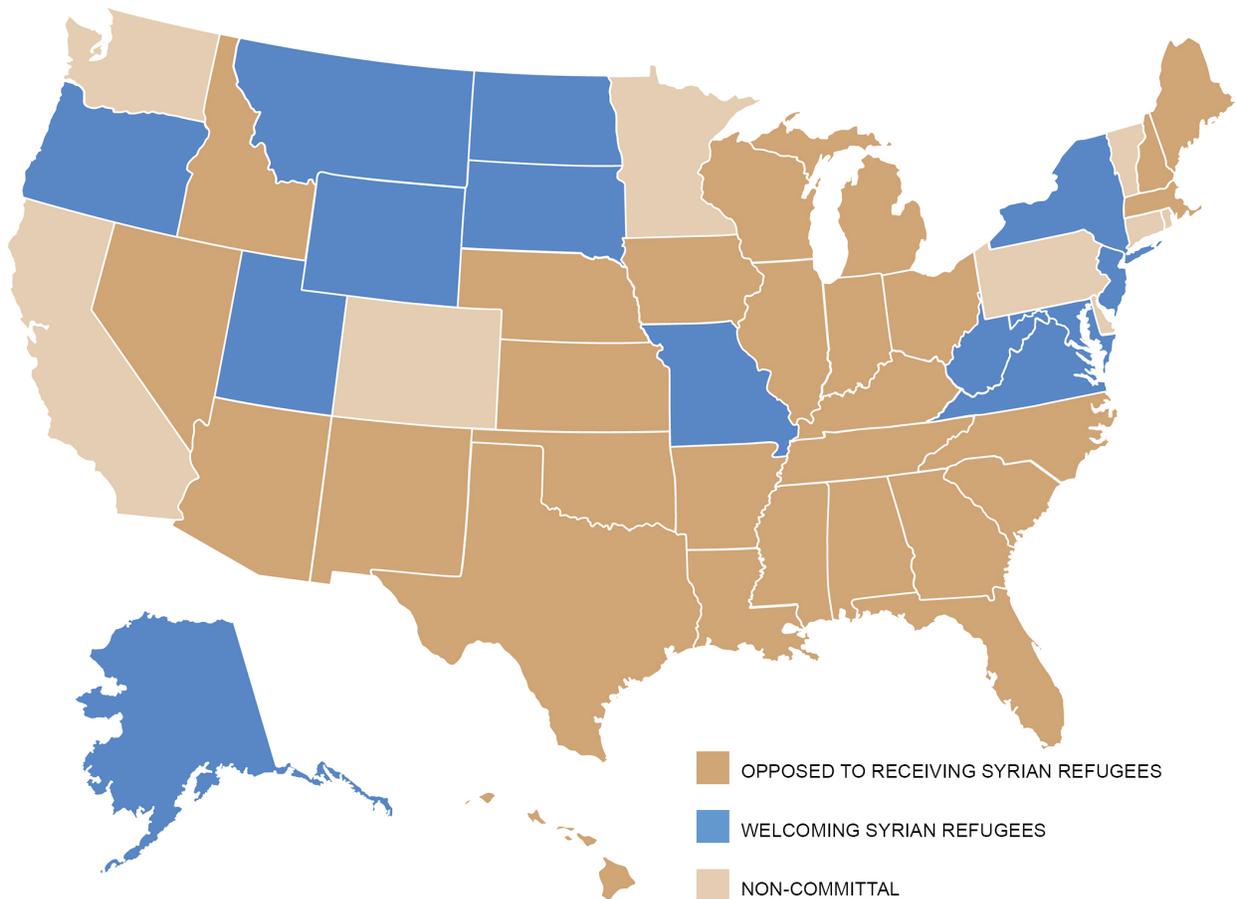




What is Your Governor Saying about Syrian Refugees?

November 2015

Governors around the country are rejecting President Obama's plans to resettle at least 10,000 Syrian refugees this fiscal year. Citing national security concerns, these executives are voicing their concerns over the federal government's admitted inability to conduct adequate background checks from those seeking to enter the United States from Syria.



If your governor supports or is on the fence about sending Syrian refugees to your state, encourage him or her to oppose President Obama's reckless insistence on admitting individuals from countries from which the U.S. intelligence community cannot conduct proper screening.

Alabama: "After full consideration of this weekend's attacks of terror on innocent citizens in Paris, I will oppose any attempt to relocate Syrian refugees to Alabama through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. As your Governor, I will not stand complicit to a policy that places the citizens of Alabama in harm's way." – Excerpt from Letter to President Obama from Governor Robert Bentley

Alaska: "My highest concern is the safety of all Alaskans, and I appreciate the work being done by Catholic Social Services to help refugees settle in our state, and become valuable members of our community," Governor Walker said. "I am committed to working with the federal government to ensure the highest level of safety for the citizens of Alaska and the United States, and I want to make sure Alaska officials play a role in refugee relocations efforts in our state." – Governor Bill Walker Press Release

Arizona: "Given the horrifying events in Paris last week, I am calling for an immediate halt in the placement of any new refugees in Arizona. As governor, I am invoking our state's right under 8 USC, Section 1522 (a), to receive immediate consultation by federal authorities per the United States Refugee Act, and that the federal government take into account the concerns and recommendations of the state of Arizona as they are required to under federal law, in our efforts to keep our homeland safe. I also call on Congress and the President to immediately amend federal law to provide states greater oversight and authority in the administration of the placement of refugees. These acts serve as a reminder that the world remains at war with radical Islamic terrorists. Our national leaders must react with the urgency and leadership that every American expects to protect our citizens." – Statement by Governor Doug Ducey

Arkansas: "As governor, I oppose any facility or installation in Arkansas being used as a Syrian refugee center. Many of the Syrian refugees are fleeing violence in their own country but Europe, Asia or Africa are logically the best places for resettlement or temporary asylum. Syria is a war torn country and the United States will support our European friends in fighting ISIL in Syria and elsewhere; however, this is not the right strategy for the United States to become a permanent place of relocation. Again, I will oppose Arkansas being used as such a relocation center.

"The hardships facing these refugees and their families are beyond most of our understanding, and my thoughts and prayers are with them, but I will not support a policy that is not the best solution and that poses risks to Arkansans." – Governor Asa Hutchinson Press Release

California: “I intend to work closely with the President so that he can both uphold America’s traditional role as a place of asylum, but also ensure that anyone seeking refuge in America is fully vetted in a sophisticated and utterly reliable way,” Brown said. “You can be sure that we will do everything in our power to protect the people of our state.” – Statement from Governor Jerry Brown

Delaware: “As the highest-ranking official of my state, I take no responsibility more seriously than the safety of our residents. No one should suggest relaxing our process for approving refugees in any way. The situation in Syria in particular demands that we take every precaution before admitting someone inside our borders. But we must show empathy by taking into account their individual situations and ensuring they are treated humanely.”— Excerpt from Op-ed by Governor Jack Markell entitled Why my state won’t turn refugees away.

Colorado: “A few short days ago we witnessed another senseless act of terrorism. Our hearts go out to the families, friends and loved ones of those lost and injured in Paris, and in other acts of terror around the world. Our first priority remains the safety of our residents. We will work with the federal government and Homeland Security to ensure the national verification processes for refugees are as stringent as possible. We can protect our security and provide a place where the world’s most vulnerable can rebuild their lives.” — Statement by Governor Hickenlooper

Connecticut: “Obviously in light of the tragedy in Paris, we have questions about the Department of Homeland Security’s screening measures for refugees entering our country...” “We are continuing to work with and await guidance from the appropriate federal agencies on screening measures that will be taken. With that said, if refugees — many who are children fleeing a horrific, war-torn country — seek and are granted asylum after a rigorous security process, we should and will welcome them in Connecticut.” – Statement from Governor Daniel Malloy’s Communications Director

Florida: “[S]everal organizations have requested that our state Department of Children and Families support the relocation of 425 possible Syrian refugees to Florida, as they receive federal funding to house these refugees in our state. Following the terrorist attacks by ISIS in Paris that killed over 120 people and wounded more than 350, and the news that at least one of the terror attack suspects gained access to France by posing as a Syrian refugee, our state agency will not support the requests we have received.” – Letter to Congress from Governor Rick Scott

Georgia: Executive Order: “Ordered: That all agencies from the State of Georgia halt any involvement in accepting refugees from Syria for resettlement in the State of Georgia until such time as the United States Department of State has re-examined the security concerns and established new processes for accepting refugees from Syria. In addition, no agency of

the State of Georgia shall accept any refugees from Syria for resettlement in this state until such time as Congress has approved of the new processes for accepting refugees from Syria.

“Ordered: The Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) shall confirm that any refugees from Syria who have been resettled in this state do not pose a public safety risk. A report shall be provided to the Office of the Governor as soon as practicable.” – Executive Order by Governor Nathan Deal

Hawaii: “Our first priority is the safety of the American people, including the people of the State of Hawaii. The U.S. accepts refugees, including Syrians, only after they are subjected to the most vigorous and highest level of screening and security vetting. As President Obama has said – slamming the door in their face would be a betrayal of our values. Hawaii and our nation have a long history of welcoming refugees impacted by war and oppression. Hawaii is the Aloha State, known for its tradition of welcoming all people with tolerance and mutual respect. I am confident that our state will work closely with the federal government to ensure that appropriate resources and support are available before any refugees arrive in Hawaii.” – Statement by Governor David Ige

Idaho: “While I understand that immigration and refugee resettlement are authorized under federal law, I am duty-bound to do whatever I can to protect the people of Idaho from harm. Instead of Congress rubber-stamping this program each year, we ask that you and Congress work with states and governors thoroughly to review this process and how states are affected... Again, our safety must come first and be a shared priority. I recognize that my authority is limited on this issue, but I will use any legal means available to protect the citizens I serve.” – Excerpt from Letter to President Obama from Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter

Illinois “Our nation and our state have a shared history of providing safe haven for those displaced by conflict, but the news surrounding the Paris terror attacks reminds us of the all-too-real security threats facing America. We must find a way to balance our tradition as a state welcoming of refugees while ensuring the safety and security of our citizens. Therefore, the state of Illinois will temporarily suspend accepting new Syrian refugees and consider all of our legal options pending a full review of our country’s acceptance and security processes by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.” – Governor Bruce Rauner Press Release

Indiana: “In the wake of the horrific attacks in Paris, effective immediately, I am directing all state agencies to suspend the resettlement of additional Syrian refugees in the state of Indiana pending assurances from the federal government that proper security measures have been achieved. Indiana has a long tradition of opening our arms and homes to refugees from around the world but, as governor, my first responsibility is to ensure the safety and security of all Hoosiers. Unless and until the state of Indiana receives assurances that proper security measures are in place, this policy will remain in full force and effect.” – Governor Mike Pence Press Release

Iowa: “Today, Gov. Terry Branstad ordered all state agencies to halt any work on Syrian refugee resettlements immediately in order to ensure the security and safety of Iowans. In light of the Paris attacks, resettlement of Syrian refugees in Iowa should cease until a thorough review of the process can be conducted by the U.S. intelligence community and the safety of Iowans can be assured.” – Governor Terry Branstad Press Release

Kansas: Executive Order 15-07: “No department, commission, board, or agency of the government of the State of Kansas shall aid, cooperate with, or assist in any way the relocation of refugees from Syria to the State of Kansas. This order includes, but is not limited to, the Kansas Refugee Program, the Refugee Resettlement Program, and the Refugee Social Service Program administered within the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and the Kansas Refugee Preventative Health Program administered within the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Furthermore, this Order also includes the funding or administration of any grant program under the authority of the State of Kansas.” – Executive Order by Governor Sam Brownback

***Kentucky:** “The recent terrorist attacks in Paris serve as a warning to the entire civilized world that we must remain vigilant. It is imperative that we do everything in our power to prevent any similar attack by evildoers from taking place here in America. “My primary responsibility as Governor of Kentucky will be to protect the citizens of the Commonwealth. This is why I am joining with other governors across the country in opposing the resettlement of Syrian nationals until we can better determine the full extent of any risks to our citizens.” – Statement by Governor-Elect Matt Bevin (*Governor-Elect Bevin is scheduled to take office on December 8, 2015)

Louisiana: Executive Order BJ 2015- 27: “NOW THEREFORE, I, BOBBY JINDAL, Governor of the State of Louisiana, by virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution and laws of the State of Louisiana, do hereby order and direct as follows:

SECTION 1: All departments, budget units, agencies, offices, entities, and officers of the executive branch of the State of Louisiana are authorized and directed to utilize all lawful means to prevent the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the State of Louisiana while this Order is in effect.

SECTION 2: The Louisiana State Police, upon receiving information of a Syrian refugee already relocated within the State of Louisiana, are authorized and directed to utilize all lawful means to monitor and avert threats within the State of Louisiana.

SECTION 3: All departments, budget units, agencies, offices, entities, and officers of the executive branch of the State of Louisiana are authorized and directed to cooperate in the implementation of the provisions of this Order.

SECTION 4: The Order is effective November 16, 2015 and shall remain in effect until amended, modified, terminated, or rescinded by the Governor, or terminated by operation of law.” – Executive Order by Governor Bobby Jindal

Maine: “To bring Syrian refugees into our country without knowing who they are is to invite an attack on American soil just like the one we saw in Paris last week and in New York City on 9/11. That is why I adamantly oppose any attempt by the federal government to place Syrian refugees in Maine, and will take every lawful measure in my power to prevent it from happening. The safety of Maine citizens comes first, and it is about time the United States and Europe wake up to the nature of the threat against us in the form of radical terrorism.” – Governor Paul LePage Press Release

Maryland: “As governor of Maryland, the safety and security of Marylanders remains my first priority. Following the terrorist attacks on Paris just four days ago, and after careful consideration, I am now requesting that federal authorities cease any additional settlements of refugees from Syria in Maryland until the U.S. government can provide appropriate assurances that refugees from Syria pose no threat to public safety.” – Facebook post by Governor Larry Hogan

Massachusetts: “Syria is a very complicated place. What I’m looking for is some guidance from the feds about how they plan to incorporate that into the decision making process that they pursue. So that the commonwealth has some idea about how this is going to work because in the end the safety and security of the people of Massachusetts is my highest priority....

“I got asked several times does this mean you want a ban. And I said no, what I want is information, but until I have that information I want to look out for the safety and security of the people of the commonwealth in Mass and I think it is incumbent on the federal government given some of this issues that have been raised in Paris and some of the issues that have been raised by members of the federal government themselves that some of these questions especially for states like ours, which have a long and storied history of being collaborators on refugee resettlement that they should be willing to answer those questions. ” – Statement at news conference by Governor Charlie Baker

Michigan: “Given the terrible situations in Paris and Lebanon, I am asking for a full review of the security clearances and procedures for all refugees who have the potential to be placed in Michigan. I know that background checks are an important component in a long and detailed process. In times of great challenges such as this, I think it would be proper to take a closer look at these processes to determine if there are areas that could be strengthened.” – Letter to DHS Secretary Johnson and Secretary of State Kerry from Governor Rick Snyder

Minnesota: “[T]o stand up there with swagger, and say ‘I’m going to prevent the wrong people from entering my state to me is just ludicrous.... I wouldn’t say we would welcome, but

I trust our churches and nonprofit refugee organizations to make the determination about what's appropriate and the social costs involved with bringing in people who are indigent refugees." – Statement from Governor Mark Dayton

Mississippi: "I'm currently working with the Mississippi Department of Public Safety and Mississippi Office of Homeland Security to determine the current status of any Syrian refugees that may be brought to our state in the near future. I will do everything humanly possible to stop any plans from the Obama administration to put Syrian refugees in Mississippi. The policy of bringing these individuals into the country is not only misguided, it is extremely dangerous. I'll be notifying President Obama of my decision today to resist this potential action." – Statement by Governor Phil Bryant

Missouri: "The safety of Missourians is my highest priority, and the terrorists who were involved in planning and perpetrating the attacks in Paris must be caught and brought to justice.

"The screening process for refugees is the responsibility of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and I call on our federal partners to implement the strongest possible safeguards to protect our state and nation." – Statement by Governor Jay Nixon

Montana: "Montana will not allow any terrorist organizations to intimidate us and to abandoning (sic) our values. The safety of Montanans is Gov. Bullock's top priority. No Syrian refugees have been settled in the state and we've had no formal request to do so. Montana has a process in place for considering refugee settlement requests. We are reviewing these protocols to ensure that if a request comes, we take all appropriate steps to ensure that the safety of Montanans will not be jeopardized by the replacement." – Spokesman for Governor Steve Bullock

Nebraska: "I am writing to advise you that in light of the terrorist attacks in Paris my administration opposes efforts to resettle Syrian refugees in Nebraska until security concerns have been fully addressed. While it is my understanding that no Syrian refugees have been resettled in Nebraska to date, I am requesting that your organization and all refugee resettlement agencies in our state decline to participate in potential resettlement efforts.

"Very shortly, I will be sharing a similar letter with President Obama urging him to end resettlement efforts until these concerns have been addressed. I have also instructed the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to oppose any potential resettlement efforts in our state. Once again, I urge your organization not to pursue efforts to resettle Syrian refugees in the United States until our country has surveyed and addressed these concerns." – Governor Pete Ricketts, Letter to Nebraska refugee resettlement agencies

Nevada: “I am writing today to request that you direct a comprehensive review of the refugee eligibility, security oversight, and resettlement process in our nation. My staff has reviewed current guidelines from the U.S. State Department but I am encouraging you to make a further review and to consider necessary refinements to these policies and practices given the tragedy in France. I am specifically concerned about the background checks performed for Syrian refugees sent to Nevada for resettlement, and I would appreciate further guidance on the benefits eligibility of such persons while they reside here. I would also request that until your administration has completed the review of these programs, no additional Syrian refugees be admitted for resettlement in Nevada.” – Excerpt from Letter to President Obama from Governor Brian Sandoval

New Hampshire: “The Governor believes that the federal government should halt acceptance of refugees from Syria until intelligence and defense officials can assure that the process for vetting all refugees, including those from Syria, is as strong as possible to ensure the safety of the American people.”

“As the federal government has the exclusive legal authority for resettling refugees, the Governor cannot block resettlement but believes that the federal government should work closely with emergency management and safety officials from the states to ensure local safety concerns are addressed before resuming any resettlement plans.” – Statement from Governor Maggie Hassan’s Communications Director

New Jersey: “I urge you to halt your plans to accept more Syrian refugees in the United States. I have no doubt that ISIS will try to exploit American humanitarianism to expose Americans to similar deadly risk. Instead, the United States should channel the compassionate urge to protect innocent lives to encouraging our allies in the region to accept these refugees with our support.

“I cannot allow New Jersey to participate in any program that will result in Syrian refugees- any one of whom could be connected to terrorism- being placed in our State. Effective today, I am directing the New Jersey Department of human Services not to participate in the resettlement of any Syrian refugees in the State of New Jersey, and am requesting that all nongovernmental organizations assisting with the resettlement of refugees in New Jersey notify the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and Department of Human Services of their placement of any refugees from Syria.” – Excerpt from Letter to President Obama from Governor Chris Christie

New Mexico: “The Governor’s top priority is keeping New Mexico’s families safe. In light of the attacks in Paris, she has directed all relevant state agencies to work closely with federal authorities to help prevent and respond to threats of any nature.

“The Governor strongly opposes the Obama Administration’s plan to accept more Syrian refugees until there is a very clear plan in place to properly vet and place the refugees, and

the voices of governors and the public can be heard.” – Press Secretary for Governor Susana Martinez

New York: “It’s up to the federal government. If the federal government lets refugees in and places them in your state, the Governor has no authority to turn them down. Having said that, the question is a bona fide question. We have to protect Americans and not lose our soul as America in the process. Right? The day America says, ‘Close the gates, build the wall,’ then I say take down the Statue of Liberty because you’ve gone to a different place.” – Governor Andrew Cuomo Press Release

North Carolina: “[B]ecause President Obama has increased the number of refugees from Syria coming into the United States from 2,000 to 10,000 and because of the terrorist attacks in Paris and the very real possibility that one of the terrorists entered France as a recent refugee, I am requesting that the federal government cease sending refugees from Syria to North Carolina.” –Governor Pat McCrory Press Release

North Dakota: “For generations, our country has welcomed individuals and families seeking safety and asylum within the borders of the United States,” said Dalrymple. “However, I am deeply concerned about the recent terrorist attacks carried out in France and the potential for this situation to arise in the U.S., especially given the testimony by FBI Director James Comey revealing gaps in the refugee screening system.

“Ensuring the safety and security of North Dakotans, as well as all Americans, is a top priority for us all, and so I urge the administration to halt the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the U.S. until the system has been reviewed and we can be assured that our citizens will be safe.” – Governor Jack Dalrymple Press Release

Ohio: “As the governor of a large state that participates in the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, with a history of welcoming individuals who were persecuted in their own country, I empathize with the plight of Syrians who are running from violent conditions and civil war. However, I am not confident in the processes and procedures for adequately investigating security threats posed by potential refugees who may be resettled to the United States, specifically Ohio, and as governor it is my duty to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of my state. Until the rigor and depth of background checks are improved and their results are more transparently shared with states, I urge the federal government not to accept more Syrian refugees. In addition, I respectfully request that the federal government take no further action in resettling Syrian refugees in Ohio.” – Excerpt from Letter to President Obama from Governor John Kasich

Oklahoma: “The Obama administration needs to assure the public that the background checks they are doing are rigorous, and that American lives will not be endangered in the process. Until then, I call on the Obama administration to suspend any Syrian refugees into the United States. During these uncertain times, the Obama administration needs to make

sure those entering the United States are not terrorists.... The American people need to be assured that national security will not be compromised. We must maintain a strict verification process against possible terrorists.” – Governor Mary Fallin Press Release

Oregon: “Clearly, Oregon will continue to accept refugees. They seek safe haven and we will continue to open the doors of opportunity to them. The words on the Statue of Liberty apply in Oregon just as they do in every other state.” – Tweet by Governor Kate Brown

Pennsylvania: “Pennsylvania will not seek to disrupt efforts to resettle refugees from humanitarian crises throughout the world, including Syria. To this end, I will work with the state and national partners to ensure that the federal government takes every precaution to make sure refugees from Syria and elsewhere are properly screened prior to admittance to the United States. At the same time, I want to remain true to Pennsylvania’s long and noble tradition of being a welcoming place.” – Excerpt from Letter to Members from Governor Tom Wolf

Rhode Island: “We haven’t received any requests to assist the settlement of refugees from Syria, so there’s nothing to decide at the moment. If a request is made, we will coordinate closely with the White House and with the State Police. Anything Rhode Island may do in the future to support our nation’s efforts to respond to this humanitarian crisis and help those in need must include robust background checks and security procedures to keep Rhode Islanders safe.” – Governor Gina Raimondo Press Release

South Carolina: “After reviewing recent public statements and personally speaking today with intelligence officials, it is my understanding that while our national security agencies are working tirelessly to vet potential refugees, there remains gaps in available intelligence for those fleeing Syria. This lack of historical and verifiable intelligence with many Syrian refugees makes it difficult, if not impossible, to thoroughly vet individuals seeking to enter the United States as a refugee.

“Therefore, until I can be assured that all potential refugees from Syria have no ties to terrorist organizations, I am requesting that the State Department not resettle any Syrian refugees in South Carolina.” – Letter to Secretary of State Kerry from Governor Nikki Haley

South Dakota: “South Dakota has not received any Syrian refugees, and we do not believe we are going to,” Tony Venhuizen, chief of staff to Gov. Dennis Daugaard said in a statement. “If that changes, the governor would explore the state’s options, but it is not at all clear that the state has any say over this.” – Statement by Chief of Staff to Governor Dennis Daugaard

Tennessee: “We are currently working to get specifics from the U.S. Department of State on the status of any Syrian refugees currently slated to come to Tennessee. While screening, acceptance and placement is legally under the authority of the federal government, they have

said in the past they would be open to cooperating with receiving states. Today, I'm asking the federal government to suspend placements in the Tennessee until states can become more of a partner in the vetting process." – Governor Bill Haslam Press Release

Texas: "Effective today, I am directing the Texas Health & Human Services Commission's Refugee Resettlement Program not to participate in the resettlement of any Syrian refugees in the State of Texas. And I urge you, as president, to halt your plans to allow Syrians be resettled anywhere in the United States. Neither you nor any federal official can guarantee that Syrian refugees will not be a part of terroristic activity. As such, opening our door to them irresponsibly exposes our fellow Americans to unacceptable peril." – Excerpt from Letter to President Obama from Governor Greg Abbott

Utah: "Gov. Herbert joins with those who mourn the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, France. In the wake of these attacks, the governor will aggressively pursue a course of action that provides for the safety and security of Utahns. The governor has directed the Utah Department of Public Safety to immediately reevaluate the security checks currently used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of State, and the Department of Homeland Security as part of Utah's refugee program. The highest duty of a governor is to protect public safety. Working together with our congressional delegation, the governor will diligently assess these security protocols, and if warranted, implement a change in state policy.

"Utahns are well known for our compassion for those who are fleeing the violence in their homeland, and we will work to do all we can to ease their suffering without compromising public safety." – Spokesman for Governor Gary R. Herbert

Vermont: "America was built on the values of acceptance and compassion... And that's exactly what we should be showing to these poor families who are fleeing unimaginable violence... We should be asking how we can help, not how we can divide and give in to fear and hatred." – Statement from Governor Peter Shumlin

Virginia: "With respect to refugees, the Governor and his public safety team are in constant communication with federal authorities about all refugee resettlements, including those involving refugees from Syria. Every refugee who is settled in the U.S. undergoes intensive security screening, and the Governor has asked Secretary Moran to ensure that every proper precaution is taken to keep Virginians safe." – Statement from Office of Governor Terry McAuliffe

Washington: "That's the price of leadership. Maybe Franklin Roosevelt was thinking about that when he locked up the Japanese American citizens, who were good neighbors and put them in camps. But it was a bad decision and it wasn't consistent with who we are as a country and we look back at that now and say you know, we lost our way. It's really easy to lose your way in moments like this in moments like this when we are so fearful." – Interview

with Governor Jay Inslee Discussing other Governors' Opposition to Syrian Refugee Resettlement

West Virginia: “The Governor’s Office has not been contacted by the federal Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement regarding large-scale placements of Syrian refugees. We do not anticipate a federal request for placement of refugees in West Virginia.” – Statement from Press Secretary for Governor Earl Tomblin

Wisconsin: “As Chief Executive of the State of Wisconsin, I take seriously my obligation to ensure the safety and protection of the citizens of this state. It has become apparent there are not proper security procedures in place to appropriately background and accurately ascertain the identities of those entering our country through the Syrian refugee program. This deficiency in the program poses a threat to the safety and security of our people. At this time, I cannot authorize the cooperation of our state in any efforts to resettle Syrian refugees in Wisconsin.” – Excerpt from Letter to Secretary of State Kerry and Secretary of HHS Burwell from Governor Scott Walker

Wyoming: “The President needs to make certain an absolutely thorough vetting system is in place that will not allow terrorists from Syria or any other part of the world into our country. In light of the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris, I have joined other governors in demanding the refugee process be halted until it is guaranteed to provide the security demanded by Wyoming and United States citizens.” – Governor Matt Mead Press Release

[For more information on Refugees and Asylum Seekers visit FAIRus.org.](http://FAIRus.org)