



Office of the Attorney General

Washington, D. C. 20530

December 11, 1979

The Honorable Peter W. Rodino, Jr.  
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Refugee Act of 1979 (H.R. 2816) is scheduled for consideration on the House floor this week. In response to your query, I wish to take this opportunity to restate the Administration's strong support for House passage of this bill as needed revision of our existing piecemeal legislative authorities governing refugee admissions and domestic resettlement assistance.

Refugee migration and resettlement have become chronic international concerns and are not, for the foreseeable future, the sporadic and limited problems that inspired existing law. The Administration believes that the Refugee Act is necessary to regularize the procedures and decisional processes by which the United States responds to refugee problems, recognizing both our long humanitarian tradition and the limits on our available resources.

The Senate passed the Refugee Act (S. 643) 85-0 on September 6. In expressing our hope for early completion of Congressional action, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, and I would like to advise you of our views on several key provisions of the bill reported by the House Judiciary Committee and on amendments that may be offered on the floor.

First, we continue to support a two-year limit on full federal funding for cash and medical assistance to new refugees. We believe that four years of such support, which is provided in the Judiciary Committee bill, is excessive and in some ways counterproductive to efforts to assimilate refugees quickly. The two-year period is, in our view, responsive to



several competing considerations: it recognizes the fiscal burdens of states, particularly those with concentrations of refugees; it encourages those involved with resettlement to concentrate their assistance efforts in the initial phase of economic and social adjustment; and it recognizes the impact on the federal budget. The Judiciary Committee bill would add more than \$100 million to federal costs in 1981, and as much as half a billion dollars over the period 1981-83.

Second, we strongly support Representative Fascell's proposed amendment to increase the authorized level of the Emergency Migration and Refugee Assistance Fund from \$25 million to \$50 million. This increased level will provide the resources to carry out provisions in the Act dealing with the admission of "emergency situation" refugees authorized by the President after consultations with the Congress. Refugee emergencies are by nature unpredictable, and adequate funds are absolutely essential to respond to these challenges.

Third, we support Representative Fascell's amendment to continue the four-year phase-down of special federal assistance to Cuban refugees, which the Committee bill eliminates after 1980. This phase-down was agreed to by the Administration and the Congress two years ago.

Finally, the Administration opposes any absolute limits on refugee admissions, whether effective immediately or in future years, as well as proposals forcing reductions in regular immigration when refugee admissions are increased. The Refugee Act authorizes the President -- in consultation with the Congress -- to adjust up or down the "normal flow" of 50,000 admissions if circumstances and national interests warrant. Given the unpredictable nature of refugee crises, we would oppose amendments limiting that flexibility or setting ceilings in any form.

Center for Migration Studies  
We urge you to consider and support our views on these issues. We continue to believe the Refugee Act provides the most appropriate framework for addressing the admission and resettlement of refugees in the United States.

Sincerely,

Wade H. McCree, Jr.

Wade McCree  
Acting Attorney General