

# Closing the Door to America: US Politics and the Refugee Debate

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*If I err, it will be on the side of not having another Paris, France. – Tennessee State Rep. Glen Casada, Nov 19, 2015*

*Even in the face of expert warnings and reassurances; even in the face of those who spoke with assuring conviction that the border screening of refugees coming to the United States was credible and thorough, House bill HR 4038 still passed.*

The House measure, passed with 289 votes to 137 on Thursday, was intended to provide a temporary block on refugees from Syria and Iraq seeking entry into the United States in light of the Paris attacks. The Senate has not officially indicated if it will follow suit, while President Barack Obama has made it clear he will veto it should it make it to his desk.

Representative Richard Hudson of North Carolina noted a sentiment that crossed the political aisles. “Republicans and Democrats have come together in a veto-proof majority to respond to the will of the American people and do our primary job to keep them safe.”[1] According to the House speaker, Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, “it will take longer than six months... to put these kinds of security” measures into place.

Within the United States, Governors of over two dozen states, heavily representing the GOP, have decided to do their little bit in making sure that refugees do not get through their state doors, ignoring the basic fact the attacks in Paris did also allegedly feature European nationals such as Belgian-born Salah Abdeslam. (A review of the visa-waiver program which features many European countries has been floated in some circles on the Hill.)

It should also be placed in perspective that the United States, historically sensitive to accepting immigrants in number, is scheduled to receive a paltry 10,000 Syrian refugees next year as part of a resettlement program that is looking more troubled by the day. All this, despite the 18 to 24 month vetting process in place prior to giving the green light for entry into the country.

It started with Gov. Rick Snyder from Michigan. Despite calling himself “the most pro-immigration governor in the country” he has not let compassion get in the way of paralytic caution. He insists, despite conversations with the White House, FBI, State, Homeland and Security and counter-terrorism officials, on an answer to a letter he dispatched to Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson and Secretary of State John Kerry. Respond, he suggested, “that you’re confident that we have the appropriate response in place”. [2]

Some state law makers are going so far as to revive memories of detention and expulsion of “aliens” from other episodes of US history. A Tennessee legislative leader has insisted that

refugees already in his state should suffer a fate similar to that of Japanese Americans during World War II, calling for the National Guard to assist in rounding up Syrians.

House GOP Caucus leader Glen Casada is certainly not unique in that regard, feeding a growing tendency in that state dating back to the proposed Refugee Absorptive Capacity Act of 2011, to combat the perceived problems such arrivals cause.[3]

The pearl of gory revelation on the refugee settlement program had to come from GOP presidential contender Ben Carson. To last week's debate, he added a well directed if unfathomable zinger at a campaign event in Mobile, Alabama: "If there is a rabid dog running around your neighbourhood, you're probably not going to assume something good about that dog." [4]

Placing the refugee debate in the context of canine rabidity is admirably astonishing, and something that other GOP contenders probably wish they had come up with. In a more disturbing sense, Carson's sentiments are resonating across the electorate in various degrees of coarseness.

A Bloomberg Politics national poll on Wednesday found that 53 percent of US adults surveyed wanted the country to stop letting in Syrian refugees, fearing terrorist infiltration.[5] Only 28 percent agreed with continuing "the plan to settle 10,000 refugees without religious screening." Such figures suggest an attitude of closure and restriction, the policeman's innate suspicions for humans who just might turn at any given moment.

Even CNN has been doing its bit to clean the stables of restraining critique, suspending journalist Elise Labott for tweeting in the wake of HR 4308's passage that the "Statue of Liberty bows head in anguish."

Leaving aside Labott's mild form of "editorializing," claims by anchors on the same network that French Muslims were somehow directly responsible for the onslaughts in Paris did not land them in the soup.[6] Ditto the increasingly militant behaviour on the part of some journalists to step up efforts to combat the Islamic State. The closing society, from across Europe, to the United States, is upon us.

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## Notes

[1]

<http://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2015-11-18/house-democrats-said-to-mull-alternative-bill-on-syria-refugees>

[2]

<http://www.npr.org/2015/11/20/456713306/governor-who-started-stampede-on-refugees-says-he-only-wants-answers>

[3]

<http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/politics/2015/11/21/islamaphobia-threatens-tennessees-tradition-accepting-refugees/76102686/>

[4]

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/20/us-usa-election-carson-idUSKCN0T82TJ20151120#43PyVcgKYlqUCefm.97>

[5]

<http://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2015-11-18/bloomberg-poll-most-americans-oppose-syria-refugee-resettlement>

[6]

<https://theintercept.com/2015/11/20/cnns-punishment-of-refugee-defending-journalist-highlights-media-abdication/>

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