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House of Representatives

November 16, 2015

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The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I join with Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas, to implore you to halt your plans to allow Syrians to be resettled anywhere in the United States. Further, I support Governor Abbott's refusal to accept any Syrian refugees in Texas.

The recent terrorist attacks in Paris are a tragedy, but a tragedy that cannot be repeated in the United States. These events bring into focus the urgent need for an effective strategy to eliminate threats to the United States. This strategy must include restrictions on the admittance of dangerous individuals.

On October 20, 2015, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Anne Richard, testified at a Helsinki Commission hearing that the vetting process for refugee applicants is split between at least five different federal agencies. It is clear to me that there is no single entity in charge of coordinating the refugee admittance process, creating holes in the system that can easily be exploited.

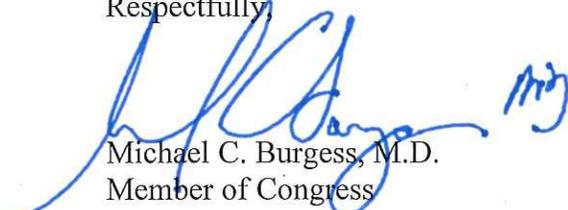
The lack of an effective process to vet individuals from war-torn areas is exacerbated by the fact that Congress, in its oversight role, cannot get any clear information on the status of refugee applicants or an indication of a coherent strategy. During the Helsinki Commission hearing, I requested information from Assistant Secretary Richard on the number of individuals whose refugee applications are rejected, as well as data generated from meetings between the Office of Refugee Resettlement and local officials that is supposed to occur four times a year. I have yet to receive anything.

Assistant Secretary Richard admitted that DHS would face a scalability problem if your Administration moved forward with the plan to admit 85,000 refugees within the next year. As a result, she said DHS needed more funding to hire more interviewers. But this isn't a funding issue. We cannot continue to throw money at agencies that FBI Director Comey admitted do not

have the background information necessary to effectively conduct proper security checks on Syrian nationals.

This must stop today. We cannot continue to allow would-be terrorists to be processed through a broken system. Until your Administration can demonstrate an effective and coherent strategy to vet refugees, as well as combat the root of the problem, ISIL, the admittance of Syrian refugees must be halted immediately.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Burgess" with a small flourish to the right.

Michael C. Burgess, M.D.  
Member of Congress

MB:rh