



Office of Oregon State Senator Kayse Jama

Senate District 24 (D-Portland)

Native land of Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla, and many other tribes that made their homes along the Columbia and Willamette Rivers

PRESS RELEASE

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World Refugee Day Celebrations to Take Place on June 20 - 21

The two-day event will draw broad participation, including public officials and community leaders

SALEM, Oregon - On June 20th and June 21st, public officials and community leaders will join together to celebrate World Refugee Day. The celebration will kick off with the Second Annual Run, Walk, Play for Refugees as part of the [RefuTees](#) Run for Refugees national campaign at 8:30 AM at Governor Tom McCall Waterfront Park in Portland, at 6:00 PM at Riverfront City Park (Gerry Frank Amphitheater) in Salem, and at 6:00 PM at Beaverton City Library in Beaverton. Each program will conclude with a 5k walk around their respective communities. **No registration is needed.**

The celebration will continue on Tuesday, June 21st with a World Refugee Day Virtual Symposium, featuring the voices of public officials, nonprofit and state agency leaders, and immigrant and refugees advocates through a series of panels. For the detailed agenda, please visit Senator Jama's legislative website at oregonlegislature.gov/Jama. **Registration for the symposium is free but required at bit.ly/2022WRD.** If you would like to attend the event as a member of the press, please email Senator Jama's Chief of Staff Kien Truong at sen.kaysejama@oregonlegislature.gov to RSVP.

"As global refugee numbers are rising due to wars and regional conflicts, we must commit to supporting these vulnerable populations and be a welcoming state for those who seek safe havens," **said State Senator Kayse Jama (D-Portland), the first former refugee and Somali-American to serve in the Oregon State Senate.** "The well-being of Oregon society as a whole is inextricably intertwined with the well-being of its immigrant and refugee communities who comprised 10% of the state's total population in 2019. With over 430,000 living and contributing hundreds of billions of dollars in federal, state, and local taxes, this growth has helped promote diversity and strengthen Oregon's labor force."

Senator Jama has championed many pieces of legislation to improve resources for Oregon's refugee community members and reduce bias and discrimination in Oregon law. Most recently, Senator Jama co-led an effort to secure [\\$18 million to support Afghan families](#) with housing, legal aid, job training and culturally-specific support as they arrived in Oregon.

On March 4, 2022, Governor Kate Brown appointed Toc Soneoulay-Gillespie as the Director of the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement which is tasked with tracking legislation, advocating for federal resources, monitoring state and local investment, coordinating strategies, convening stakeholders, and providing policy support for immigrant and refugee communities across the state.

“As a refugee, this is a day where I experience the power of community and the power of humanity,” **said Director Toc Soneoulay-Gillespie**. “It’s a day that shines a bright light on the voices, faces, and stories of sacrifice, triumph, and gratitude – not just from refugees but all those who have a heart and hand in the welcoming and support of those who have fled war and persecution and a longing to find home.”

“Refugees have been an integral part of Beaverton’s story,” **said Mayor Lacey Beaty**. “We’re grateful to be part of a coordinated statewide effort to recognize World Refugee Day this year, an opportunity to show our values as a welcoming city and celebrate the contributions and resilience of refugees who have helped build this community. Beaverton was declared a Welcoming City in 2015 and we’ve been growing in what it means to live out that commitment ever since. This is one such opportunity to do that visibly.”

"Celebrating World Refugee Day is a paradox," **said Luke Glaze, Executive Director at Salem for Refugees, a Salem-based resettlement agency working to develop community supported resettlement services in our capital city**. “On one hand, we celebrate the rich beauty that refugee resettlement has brought to our communities, recognizing the positive impact of refugees on our culture, community, economy, and civic lives. While on the other hand, we raise awareness of the plight of displaced people globally and recognize that very few will have the opportunity to return to their homes or be resettled to a new country."

[World Refugee Day](#) was held globally for the first time on June 20th, 2001, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the [1951 Refugee Convention](#). In Oregon, World Refugee Day falls on the same day as when Juneteenth is being observed as a state holiday, which is significant for several communities.

“In 1978, the Black and African American community leaders in the U.S. called upon Congress to allow refugees from Southeast Asia impacted by the Vietnam War and the Secret War in Laos to enter the United States,” **said Representative Khanh Pham (D-Portland), the daughter of Vietnamese refugees and the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Oregon Legislature**. ”While Black Americans were fighting for civil rights and an end to racial discrimination, they linked their struggles with people displaced by war on the other side of the world. I am inspired by the powerful example of those who came before us as we celebrate and advocate for the dignity, freedom, and human rights of all people.”

About State Senator Kayse Jama: Senator Jama represents Senate District 24 which includes outer East Portland and North Clackamas. He currently serves as the Chairs of the Senate Committee On Housing and Development, and the Legislature Black, Indigenous and People of Color Caucus. Senator Jama is the first former refugee, Muslim, and Somali-American to serve in the Oregon State Senate. Before his appointment, Sen. Jama was a prominent community organizer and Executive Director of Unite Oregon.