

OREGON STATE SENATE

November 24, 2015

The Honorable Governor Kate Brown
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Brown:

I am writing to you today about an issue that is of deep concern to numerous constituents. They have legitimate anxieties about the logistics and security screening of Syrian refugees being welcomed into the State of Oregon. According to "[The Oregonian](#)" your office has been vague about many aspects of the logistics and security screening process that these individuals will go through by our state *before* reaching our neighborhoods. Even more of a concern, what will happen to these individuals *after* they are in our state? The lack of a response from your office has led to much frustration and confusion about what is transpiring.

Many of us are sympathetic to the plight of these people and hope they can find refuge from the ravages of the civil war in their country. There is hardly a family from Syria that has not lost a child, mother, father or family member. One cannot look at a picture or read about the [malnourished, exploited, and disfigured Syrian children](#) without arousing the deepest sympathy. Even the most hardened of our society cannot deny their suffering. Endemic poverty and disease is a real weapon of mass destruction to the Syrian people. These people are subjected to suffer by a complete breakdown of civil society.

With that tragic reality acknowledged, it is also a logical concern that those who despise America's and Oregon's values would strategically attempt to infiltrate the wave of these fleeing refugees. [Hiding amongst innocent civilians](#) is what these psychopaths have consistently done time and time again. Infiltrating refugees is how some of these terrorists were able to get into Paris according to [CNN](#). This concern is a fact borne out of reality, not fear or xenophobia.

The residents of Senate District 13, amongst many others, have expressed serious concerns about the logistics and security aspects of Oregon's asylum process. Simply put, it is a necessary requirement before allowing questionably vetted refugees to live amongst us that due diligence be performed regarding the caliber and character of those individuals. To do otherwise would be highly irresponsible.

My constituents have many questions regarding this process. For example:

- Who are the people we are allowing into our great state?
- How can they prove who they are?
- Are they only Syrians?

- What is the vetting process for these individuals? This is a serious question for our state because even the [FBI director James Comey has expressed serious concerns](#) about the Federal government's ability to screen these individuals.

The Federal State Department according to "[US News](#)" has explained that they do not track refugees once they arrive in the United States and that "they can move wherever they want." So, in light of those facts, it is only natural to ask how the executive of our state government will handle its own vetting process. Do you have a plan or vetting process? If not, how can we help you achieve a plan that addresses these potential problems and perhaps other unintended consequences for our state?

Another concern is how much will this cost Oregon taxpayers? In Germany, according to the "[New York Times](#)" small rural towns have had certain difficulties integrating and covering the cost of refugees. If we are in fact taking on these refugees:


- What can our smaller rural communities, such as my district, expect in aiding these individuals when they're already struggling to help their own citizens?
- In fact, how many of the estimated ten thousand Syrians entering the United States are expected by your office to be sent to Oregon?

Although there have been many accusations recently about Republicans being "[fear mongers](#)" and "[xenophobes](#)" for simply asking the above questions, we need to elevate the conversation. These are very basic inquiries that any reasonable and compassionate citizen would have. Among other things, the citizens of Oregon are worried that there may be terrorists inadvertently placed in their community. This is a valid concern where no one wants to look back and say "I told you this would happen." In the land of the free and home of the brave we need to be able to look back and say, "We did all that we could to advance freedom and security." Freedom and security are often juxtaposed as an incompatibility between one another. Well, this is exactly the point in time where we must have a serious discussion about the logistics and security measures taken to protect the citizens of our state.

Being "good Samaritans" requires us to have this discussion not just for the safety of Oregonians but the safety of refugees as well. This means we must all acknowledge the need for compassion and also the genuine concerns of the citizens. We should not allow this issue to be reduced to platitudes by partisan demagogues. This is about human rights and America's security. Accountability and transparency on this issue is paramount to the physical and mental safety of Oregonians.

I look forward to working with your office to alleviate concerns and protect the people of our state.

Sincerely,



Kim Thatcher
Senate District 13