



Refugee Resettlement Makes Tennessee Strong

Refugees contribute to Tennessee's economy. Refugees are a financial net gain for the state. According to the Tennessee General Assembly's own fiscal review committee, from 1990 to 2012, refugees contributed \$1.4 billion in state revenue or more than \$630 million net gain (1). In 2015 alone, refugees held nearly [\\$500 million in spending power](#), paying more than \$150 million in taxes (2).

Refugee resettlement agencies help refugees attain self-sufficiency within 6 months. The U.S. resettlement program emphasizes self-sufficiency. Even the cost of travel to the US is a loan, which refugees have to begin to pay back six months after arrival.

Welcoming refugees is the right thing to do. Tennessee and the United States have a proud history of welcoming refugees and serving as a beacon of hope for people fleeing persecution and violence.

Refugees enjoy bipartisan support. Refugees have long enjoyed bipartisan support because people across the political spectrum recognize that resettlement is not just the moral thing to do but a critical national security and foreign policy tool.

\$11.91

Average hourly wage of refugees in TN (3)

800+

TN employers and staffing agencies that have hired refugees over the last 5 years (4)

86%

TN refugees employed at jobs with health benefits provided by their

653

Refugees welcomed to TN in Fiscal Year 2019 (6)

\$43 million

TN and local taxes paid by refugees (7)

58 years

That TN nonprofits, volunteers, and churches have worked to welcome refugees and invest in their integration

43 governors

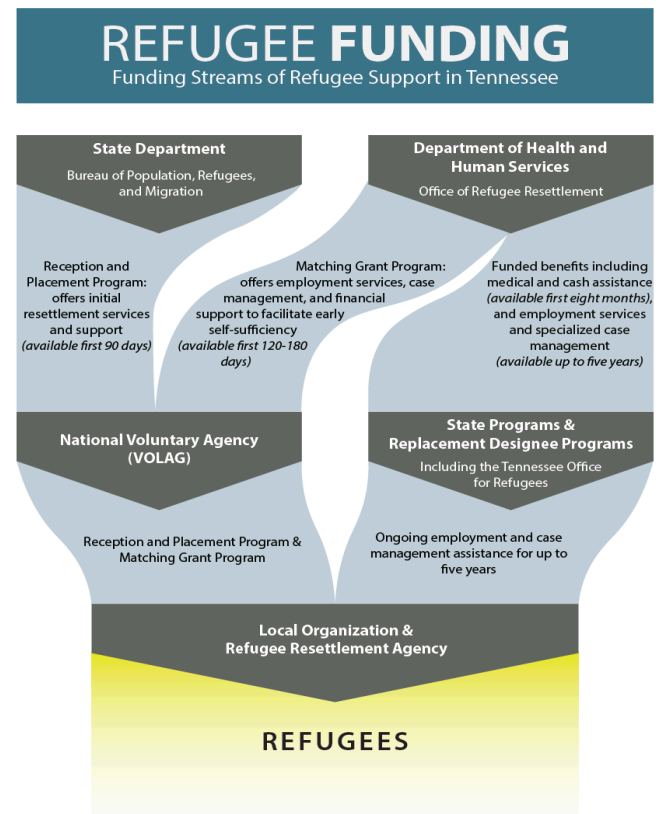
Who welcomed refugees to their states under Executive Order 13888

How is refugee resettlement funded?

The U.S. refugee resettlement program is a [federally-funded](#) public-private partnership.

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) [provides](#) time-limited cash and medical assistance to new arrivals, as well as support for case management services, English classes, and job readiness and employment services – all designed to facilitate refugees' successful transition to life in the United States and help them to attain self-sufficiency. These funds are administered by the Tennessee Office of Refugees (TOR), a department of Catholic Charities of Tennessee, Inc.

For more information contact:
Judith Clerjeune, Policy and Legislative Affairs
Manager judith@tnimmigrant.org or 615-612-9615



How is resettlement funded continued...

TOR [administers](#) refugee cash and medical assistance programs, and subcontracts with funded partners to coordinate initial medical screenings, provide employment and case management services, English language training, preventive health services, and support refugee integration into local school systems.

After refugees receive one-time initial assistance from PRM, refugees are [eligible for cash assistance](#), either via federally-funded TANF or federally-funded Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA). Refugees who meet certain strict criteria are also eligible for [medical assistance](#), either via-federally-funded TennCare or federally-funded Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA).

Refugee Resettlement in Tennessee: A Timeline

1962: The state of Tennessee begins welcoming Cuban refugees.

2007: Tennessee becomes a “Wilson-Fish” state. Tennessee is now one of sixteen states where refugee resettlement is coordinated by a non-profit organization instead of a state agency. Governor Bredesen explained the decision to effectively privatize resettlement by stating: *“We believe that the refugees arriving in our State will benefit from a more comprehensive approach to the provision of these social, language, employment, and medical services through refugee-specific service providers in their communities.”*

2011: Tennessee General Assembly passes the Refugee Absorptive Capacity Act, which requires the Tennessee Office for Refugees to provide quarterly reports to state and local governments about resettlement.

2013: Tennessee General Assembly commissions a report by the state fiscal review committee on the “federal cost-shifting” to the state, which found that refugees were a net economic gain for the state. **While the state had expended approximately \$753 million on refugees and their descendants, it was estimated that the state had earned at least \$1.386 billion during the same period from refugees and their descendants.**

2017: Tennessee General Assembly files a lawsuit against the federal government challenging its authority to resettle refugees in Tennessee based on the assertion that the state is bearing the costs of refugee resettlement. **The lawsuit has been dismissed by both the district court (2018) and federal appeals court (2019).**

2019: President Trump issues an executive order requiring the executive branches of state and local governments that resettle refugees to affirmatively offer their consent to continuing refugee resettlement. Pursuant to the executive order, Governor Lee and 42 other governors provided their consent to continue refugee resettlement in their state.

2020: A federal district court places a nationwide injunction on President Trump’s executive order, which means that resettlement will continue across the country

References: (1) Fiscal Review Committee, Tennessee General Assembly, Available here: <https://bit.ly/37CJkoY> (2) Refugees in Tennessee, New American Economy, Available here: <https://bit.ly/37whRoV> (3, 4, 5, 6) Tennessee Office for Refugees, Available at www.tnrefugees.org. (7) See No. 2

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