

In Memory of...

Patricia L. Wheeler



Patricia L. Wheeler, 82, a resident of Vernonia and Portland passed Tuesday morning, February 4, 2020 at Willamette View Manor Retirement Center in Milwaukie, Oregon.

Patricia was born November 3, 1937 in Portland to parents Cyprian and Frieda Inman. She graduated from Beaverton High School in 1955 and received a Masters Degree in Special Education from Portland State University. Pat was united in marriage to John Forrest Wheeler on August 16, 1958. The two soon after purchased property in Vernonia.

Pat taught in the Portland Public School system and in 1970, moved to Singapore, Indonesia where she taught International children from around the world. She retired from teaching after 35 years from the Medford School district in 1996 and made her home in Vernonia. Pat was involved with a number of organizations including: The Eastern Star, Nile, PEO, Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers, Red Hats, Natal Grange, and further served as Regent for the Daughters of the American Revolution. She also enjoyed being a member of the Golden Oldies Band in Vernonia.

Pat is survived by her husband Forrest Wheeler; son and daughter-in-law John and Kelly Wheeler of Sherwood, Oregon, and her daughter and son-in-law Myrrhina and Charles Kibben of Vernonia. She is further survived by her grandson Wesley Kibben and Robyn Painter of Olympia, Washington; and two great grandchildren Julian and William Kibben, also of Olympia.

A family burial ceremony was held at Astoria's Greenwood Cemetery on February 17, 2020 at 1:00 pm with a presiding minister from Astoria Presbyterian Church.

The family suggests that remembrances may be contributions to Vernonia Cares, PO Box 126, Vernonia, Oregon 97064, (503) 429-1414, an organization near and dear to her, in her memory.

In Loving Memory Ronald D. Smith

August 19, 1935 – January 15, 2020



Celebration of Life Service
Saturday, March 21, 2020,
2:00-4:00 pm
Vernonia Christian Church
410 North St.
Vernonia, OR 97064

Western States Support Refugee Resettlement *continued from page 13*

The law eventually opened the door to hundreds of thousands of Europeans and others fleeing persecution in places like China, Korea, and Cuba. After the Vietnam War, Congress was tasked with helping resettle refugees, leading to a monumental piece of legislation: The Refugee Act of 1980. Since then, the U.S. President has had the ability to set caps on refugee numbers.

Today, with a new historically low cap, several governors are using their letters to express a desire to bring back earlier resettlement numbers. Utah Governor Gary Herbert, R, cited his state's "unique history," noting that Utah was founded by Mormons fleeing religious persecution. "As a result, we empathize deeply with individuals and groups who have been forced from their homes," he wrote. According to the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, a demographic research center, the state had approximately 60,000 refugee residents as of 2017.

Washington Governor Jay Inslee, D, made a similar request. "I ask that our state be willing to accept at least as many refugees as previous years, and should other states be unable or unwilling to accept refugee families into their jurisdictions, they will be welcomed here," he wrote. Since 1975, the state has resettled over 150,000 refugees from Iraq and Somalia, among other countries, and has the second-most arrivals after Texas, according to The Refugee Processing Center. Two other Western states, Arizona and California, are also among the top states for refugee resettlement.

Alejandro Sanchez, a staff member from Inslee's office, said that the low resettlement numbers for fiscal year 2020 would prove a problem for agencies in the state. "Resettlement agencies will be strained because they have an infrastructure that has been built up to support all of these individuals," he said.

With lower demand comes less federal funding for agencies, which can result in office closures at the local level and fewer services for the existing refugee population. According to a report by the advocacy group Refugee Council USA, between the end of 2016 and the spring of 2019, 92 offices across the country have had to either close their refugee programs or suspend some of their services due to lack

of funding. This impacts refugees who have already been resettled, leaving them without the important resources — from assistance in finding housing to enrolling in school — they need to navigate their new lives.

Many state officials cited the economy as one reason why refugees were welcome. Arizona, which in 2019 accepted 1,200 refugees, down from over 4,000 in 2016, works with a resettlement agency that trains refugees for jobs in manufacturing, an industry that generated \$19 billion in exports in 2018. In rural Idaho, refugees fill employment needs in the dairy sector. In Colorado, they work in meatpacking plants. Many others go on to work in professional fields, or start their own businesses.

They also bring their own dollars to the economy. According to a report by the New American Economy, refugees held a spending power of \$17.2 billion in California in 2015 alone. Colorado Governor Jared Polis, D, harped on this point in his letter of consent, writing, "For every dollar Colorado invests in refugees, we receive a \$1.23 return on investment in tax revenue." Last year, Colorado passed a bill codifying the state's Refugee Services Program into law, an important move that prevents a future governor from using executive action to pull out of the federal program.

For Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, CEO and president of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, a national resettlement agency, the vocal acceptance of refugees across the West was not surprising. "I expected most communities to continue to welcome refugees," she said. Yet, she added, "I always fear that these issues can become politicized because it is so easy to weaponize fear of the unknown."

While the future of the executive order is still up in the air, the immediate response has been positive for advocates: over the course of a month, it prompted 42 states and 107 local leaders to offer public support for the resettlement program, a program that has been historically bipartisan.

Jessica Kutz is an assistant editor for High Country News. Email her at jessicak@hcn.org. This article was originally published in High Country News on February 13, 2020

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