

## REFUGEES: Screening process typically takes 18 to 24 months

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fleeing war-torn Syria and Iraq into a high-stakes political issue in both the United States and Europe, and many congressional Democrats were willing to vote against Obama for fear of angering voters nervous about security at home.

Oregon Rep. Kurt Schrader was one of the Democrats to support the legislation. He says the bill does not shut down the asylum process, but makes it stronger.

Rep. Greg Walden, Oregon’s only Republican congressman, joined Schrader in voting for the legislation.

Democratic Reps. Earl Blumenauer and Suzanne Bonamici opposed it. Blumenauer says the action is shameful, unnecessary and makes the U.S. less safe.

Rep. Peter DeFazio missed the vote. *The Oregonian* reports he is recovering from eye surgery.

Democrats opposing the GOP bill said the U.S. has no business abandoning its age-old values, including being a safe haven for people fleeing countries racked by violence. The Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the Paris attacks and controls vast swathes of Syria and Iraq, despite a growing military campaign against them by the U.S. and other nations.

“Defeating terrorism should not mean slamming the door in the faces of those fleeing the terrorists. We might as well take down the Statue of Liberty,” said Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y.

Republicans said that in dangerous times, the government must first protect its own.

“It is against the values of our nation and the values of a free society to give terrorists the opening they are looking for” by not tightening entry restrictions, said House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.

The 47 Democrats who backed the bill, largely moderates and lawmakers facing potentially tough re-elections, were joined by 242 Republicans. Voting no were 135 Democrats and two Republicans, North Carolina Rep. Walter Jones and Iowa Rep. Steve King.

Before Thursday’s House vote, the White House sent chief of staff Denis McDonough and Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson to the Capitol to try winning over Democrats. Democratic aides said Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, D-N.Y., had a forceful exchange with Johnson, saying that opposition to the bill would be a terrible vote for Democrats that could cost them seats in next year’s elections.

With the House’s 246 Republicans ready to solidly support the legislation, the administration was eager to keep the final tally for the bill below the two-thirds margin required to override a veto. In a sign of the conflicting political undercurrents confronting Democrats, senior House Democrats said they did not push rank-and-file lawmakers to oppose the bill.

“We might as well take down the Statue of Liberty.”

— Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y.

“I’ve said to them from the start, ‘Nobody’s asked you to do anything. Do whatever works for you, for your district,’” House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who opposed the legislation, told journalists.

Freshman Rep. Brad Ashford, D-Neb., who faces a tough re-election fight next year, called the Paris attacks “a game changer” and supported the bill, saying, “I cannot sit back and ignore the concerns of my constituents and the American public.”

The measure, which in effect would suspend admissions of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, would require the FBI to conduct background checks on people coming to the U.S. from those countries. It would oblige the heads of the FBI and Homeland Security Department and the director of national intelligence to certify to Congress that each refugee “is not a threat to the security of the United States.”

On the campaign trail, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton said the U.S. should welcome refugees from the region and bolster America’s defenses and intelligence operations.

On the Senate floor, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who hasn’t yet scheduled debate on the issue, said Thursday it is time “to press pause” so policy makers could decide whether adequate vetting procedures are in place, calling it “the most responsible thing for the administration to do.”

Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said he’s been disgusted by the comments from Republicans he labeled “fear-mongering and bigotry.”

In a statement assuring a veto, the White House said the GOP bill would not improve Americans’ security. It said the legislation “would unacceptably hamper our efforts to assist some of the most vulnerable people in the world, many of whom are victims of terrorism, and would undermine our partners in the Middle East and Europe in addressing the Syrian refugee crisis.”

The refugee screening process typically takes 18 to 24 months and includes interviews, fingerprinting and database crosschecks by several federal agencies. Syrians undergo additional screening involving data from the U.N. Refugee Agency and interviews by Homeland Security Department officials trained to question Syrians.

The Obama administration wants to increase the 70,000 refugees to be admitted from around the world this year by 10,000, with much of the increase for Syrians.

The White House said that of 2,174 Syrians admitted to the U.S. since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, none has been arrested or deported because of allegations they harbored extremist ambitions.

## MEXICANS: Lack of jobs in U.S. motivating them to leave

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The findings counter the narrative of an out-of-control border that has figured prominently in U.S. presidential campaigns, with Republican Donald Trump calling for Mexico pay for a fence to run the entire length of the 1,954-mile frontier. Pew said there were 11.7 million Mexicans living in the U.S. last year, down from a peak of 12.8 million in 2007. That includes 5.6 million living in the U.S. illegally, down from 6.9 million in 2007.

In another first, the Border Patrol arrested more non-Mexicans than Mexicans in the 2014 fiscal year, as more Central Americans came to the U.S., mostly

through South Texas, and many of them turned themselves in to authorities.

The authors analyzed U.S. and Mexican census data and a 2014 survey by Mexico’s National Institute of Statistics and Geography. The Mexican questionnaire asked about residential history, and found that 61 percent of those who reported living in the U.S. in 2009 but were back in Mexico last year had returned to join or start a family. An additional 14 percent had been deported, and 6 percent said they returned for jobs in Mexico.

Dowell Myers, a public policy professor at the University of Southern California, said it’s lack of jobs in the U.S. — not

family ties — that is mostly motivating Mexicans to leave. Construction is a huge draw for young immigrants, but has yet to approach the levels of last decade’s housing boom, he said.

“It’s not like all of a sudden they decided they missed their mothers,” Myers said. “The fact is, our recovery from the Great Recession has been miserable. It’s been miserable for everyone.”

Also, Mexico’s population is aging, meaning there’s less competition for young people looking for work. That’s a big change from the 1990s, when many people entering the workforce felt they had no choice but to migrate north of the border, Myers said.

While the U.S. economic

recovery is sluggish, Mexico has been free in recent years from the economic tailspins that drove earlier generations north in the 1980s and 1990s. While many parts of Mexico suffer grinding poverty and violence, others have become thriving manufacturing centers under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Automakers including Volkswagen AG, Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Corp. have built plants across central and northern Mexico that employ thousands, spawning auto-parts plants and other ripple effects. Highways and rail lines that connect to the world’s largest economy north of the border have attracted more investors.

## CBARC: Corp spent 13 years as a dryland cropping agent for Umatilla Co.

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Jeliaskov discussed new developments at the station in 2015 before revealing he is stepping down as director to focus on his own research projects.

Jeliaskov, a native of Bulgaria, joined CBARC in December 2014 after working as director for the University of Wyoming agricultural experiment station in Sheridan. However, Jeliaskov said he wanted to free himself of administrative duties to advance what he described as “innovative” research.

Jeliaskov did not elaborate on the project, saying only that it had to do with wheat experiments.

“I think I have some innovative ideas that may result in intellectual property work,” he said.

Rather than launching an external hiring process, Arp said the college

decided to look in-house for Jeliaskov’s replacement. It didn’t take them long before finding Corp, he said.

Corp, who lives in Hermiston, has served four years as administrator for OSU Extension in the Columbia Plateau Region. She also spent 13 years as a dryland cropping agent for Umatilla County.

Corp said she understands the needs of the local growers, and plans to strengthen ties between the station and extension office.

“It was an interesting and exciting opportunity,” she said. “Our desire at OSU is to solve our growers’ most pressing issues and problems. When we find solutions, we need to communicate them.”

Liaison committee members also discussed ways they can improve communication and engagement with CBARC. Rowe, who serves as

CEO of Oregon Wheat, wrote a column in October reminding growers of their role cultivating relationships. He reiterated that position Thursday.

“Our hope is the liaison committee will get back to being interactive,” Rowe said.

That also applies to scientists at the ARS station — a separate research center not to be confused with CBARC, though the two programs share the same location north of Pendleton.

Dan Long, director of the ARS’ Columbia Plateau Conservation Research Center, reviewed ongoing research and discussed the station’s budget, which at one point appeared it might lose nearly half its normal funding from the federal government.

However, thanks to lobbying from the Wheat Growers League and support from Democratic Sens. Jeff

Merkley and Ron Wyden, and Republican Rep. Greg Walden, Congress passed a budget bill that maintains ARS funding at its current level.

“They didn’t want to see our Pendleton program negatively affected,” Long said.

With that in mind, Long noted the station needs to make sure its research is relevant and accessible to growers. He supported ideas from the committee to improve engagement, such as visiting farmers at their fields to get a better idea of the issues they face.

“If the stakeholders are willing to support us — not only the growers, but the OSU College of Agriculture — then we’ve got to make sure our research is relevant to their needs,” Long said.

Contact George Plaven at [gplaven@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplaven@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0825.

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