



Most Governors Now Openly Oppose Obama's Syrian Refugee Plan

Since last weekend, when the world was stunned by the violent terrorist attacks in Paris, more and more U.S. governors have openly opposed allowing refugees from Syria to settle in their states. As this story is being written, the total number is at least 27.

The first governors to make public statements on the matter were Rick Snyder of Michigan and Robert Bentley of Alabama, both Republicans issued individual statements on November 15 declaring that their states would not be open to the Syrian refugees that the Obama administration plans on "resettling" in the United States.



In his statement, Snyder made note of Michigan's "rich history of immigration," before saying: "But our first priority is protecting the safety of our residents."

"It's also important to remember that these [Paris] attacks are the efforts of extremists and do not reflect the peaceful ways of people of Middle Eastern descent here and around the world."

That same day, in Alabama, Bentley said in his statement: "As your Governor, I will not stand complicit to a policy that places the citizens of Alabama in harm's way. The acts of terror committed over the weekend are a tragic reminder to the world that evil exists and takes the form of terrorists who seek to destroy the basic freedoms we will always fight to preserve."

Both statements, and a growing list from other governors, were prompted by the Obama administration's announced policy to admit thousands of refugees fleeing conflict in Syria and other Middle East nations during upcoming months. During a joint press appearance in Berlin with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier on September 20, Secretary of State John Kerry revealed the Obama administration's plan to drastically increase the flow of refugees into the United States, citing specifically refugees from Syria.

"We are now going to go up to 85,000 with at least, and I underscore the 'at least' — it is not a ceiling, it's a floor — of 10,000 over the next year from Syria specifically even as we also receive more refugees from other areas," said Kerry "And in the next fiscal year, we'll target 100,000, and if it's possible to do more, we'll do [more]."

On November 6, just one week before the terrorist attacks in Paris that killed 129 people and wounded more than 350 others, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Danna Van Brand said that the United States plans to open a refugee settlement processing center in Erbil, Iraq, before the end of 2015, and will also resume refugee processing in Lebanon in early 2016.

On November 16, five more governors (all Republicans) joined Snyder and Bentley in issuing similar policy statements. These included Greg Abbott of Texas (shown above), Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas,



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Mike Pence of Indiana, Bobby Jindal of Louisiana, and Phil Bryant of Mississippi. Abbott, the governor of the nation's second largest state in both area and population, sent an open letter to President Obama that stated, in part:

As governor of Texas, I write to inform you that the State of Texas will not accept any refugees from Syria in the wake of the deadly terrorist attack in Paris.

Further, I — and millions of Americans — implore you to halt your plans to accept more Syrian refugees in the United States. A Syrian “refugee” appears to have been part of the Paris terror attack. American humanitarian compassion could be exploited to expose Americans to similar deadly danger. The reasons for such concerns are plentiful.

The FBI director testified to Congress that the federal government does not have the background information that is necessary to effectively conduct proper security checks on Syrian nationals, Director Comey explained: “We can query our database until the cows come home, but there will be nothing show up because we have no record of them.”

Abbott stated that, effective November 16, he is directing the Texas Health & Human Services Commission's Refugee Resettlement Program to not participate in the resettlement of any Syrian refugees in the State of Texas.

Abbott's assertion that “a Syrian ‘refugee’ appears to have been part of the Paris terror attack” has merit. Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the individual that French and Belgian officials suspect is the mastermind of the attacks is the child of Moroccan immigrants who grew up in Brussels. Back in October, Abaaoud falsely identified himself as Ahmad al Muhammad and was allowed to enter Greece among the waves of Syrian refugees flooding into Europe. Abaaoud became radicalized as a young man and began working with radicals in Syria, even recruiting his 13-year-old brother to join him in that country. Abaaoud fled Belgium to Syria following a January 15 police raid on a terrorist operation he belonged to. In February, he was quoted by the Islamic State's [ISIS] English-language magazine, *Dabiq*, as saying that he had secretly returned to Belgium to lead the terror cell. That he reentered the country so easily, despite his picture having been broadcast in the news, is indicative of the very poor border security prevalent in Europe.

The decision on September 22, by heads of government from the European Union to approve a plan to distribute 120,000 migrants fleeing turmoil in the Middle East across Europe certainly does nothing to help the EU's border security. This weakness led Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban to say on September 7: “As long as we can't defend Europe's outer borders, it is not worth talking about how many people we can take in....”

If the Obama administration has learned nothing from Europe's crisis, many American governors have. They are unwilling to subject the people of their states to the risks that contributed to the terrorist attacks in Paris. After the first seven governors said on November 15 and 16 that they were unwilling to accept refugees from Syria in their states, others followed suit.

Even as we write, the number of governors registering their public opposition to such resettlement keeps growing. ACNN report on November 16 placed the number at 27, with only one Democrat among them — New Hampshire Governor Maggie Hassan. Hassan, who is running for the Senate in 2016, said the federal government should “halt acceptance of refugees from Syria until intelligence and defense officials can assure that the process for vetting all refugees ... is as strong as possible.”

In addition to the governors we have mentioned, NBC News on November 17 named Illinois Gov. Illinois



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Gov. Bruce Rauner as being among those who announced that their states would “suspend” the resettlement of Syrian refugees. NBC also listed the states of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin as places where the governors have gone on record in opposition to refugee settlement in their states.

Photo of Texas Governor Greg Abbott: AP Images

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