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Immigration

DOS Launches ‘Welcome Corps’ for Private Sponsorship of Refugees

Legal Update

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This article was prepared with the assistance of ABIL, the Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers, of which Loan Huynh, Fredrikson Immigration Department Chair, is a member.

The Department of State (DOS), in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services, announced the launch of Welcome Corps, a new private sponsorship program to welcome refugees arriving through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and support their resettlement and integration into the United States. The initiative is pursuant to President Biden’s Executive Order 14301, “Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees.”

Welcome Corps “creates new opportunities for everyday Americans to engage directly in refugee resettlement through private sponsorship, independent of and complementary to existing avenues for volunteering with resettlement agencies,” DOS said. Groups of at least five U.S. citizens or permanent resident adults will be able to apply to Welcome Corps to privately sponsor the resettlement of refugees in the United States. Private sponsors will be responsible for independently raising funds and directly providing essential assistance to refugees for their first 90 days in their new community, DOS said. Such assistance includes helping refugees find housing and employment, enrolling children in school and connecting refugees to essential services in the community.

In the first year of Welcome Corps, DOS will seek to mobilize 10,000 Americans as private sponsors for at least 5,000 refugees. If more than 10,000 individual Americans join Welcome Corps in 2023, DOS will seek to pair additional private sponsors with refugees. DOS said it is funding a consortium of nonprofit organizations with expertise in welcoming, resettling and integrating refugees into U.S. communities to support Welcome Corps.